



Germany's Responsibility in International Politics (III): Strengthening the Capability to Act in the Security Realm

Working Group of Young Foreign Policy Experts

Key Points

- Germany has benefited from the security guarantees provided by its partners for a long time. The country's current strength and its fundamental interest in a stable environment now demand that Germany should strengthen its own capability to act in the security realm.
- Germany should enhance its presence at the eastern flank of the Alliance while simultaneously promoting the establishment of a permanent concept for empowering unstable partners in the South in order to contain the arc of crisis around Europe.
- To enable Germany to take on greater responsibility in security matters in collaboration with its partners, efforts to gain public support must be stepped up.
- The German government should encourage the strengthening of security-related knowledge in the Bundestag and at the universities to inform the public debate and to build up a wealth of expertise for the long term.

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Preface: Germany's responsibility in international politics

Germany must take on greater responsibility in the area of foreign policy. This was what President Joachim Gauck called for at the Munich Security Conference in early 2014, flanked by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defence. Germany's new strength forms the starting point of the debate. Unlike other countries, it has survived the economic and financial crisis virtually unscathed and is on a sound economic footing. Germany also enjoys outstanding political stability. Out of this strength arises the responsibility to make greater efforts for maintaining the liberal world order, particularly since Germany derives great benefits from it as a trading nation. In view of the wars and conflicts in Europe and at its periphery, in the Ukraine and in the Middle East, the debate about Germany's new responsibility in international politics has particular resonance.

But what form should Germany's new responsibility take in a world that is becoming increasingly unstable? Which instruments should be strengthened? And what initiatives should the German government initiate and further?

Against the backdrop of this debate, the Working Group of Young Foreign Policy Experts of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has written three papers relating to the three areas where the acceptance of greater responsibility appears to be particularly urgent: the upcoming German OSCE Chairmanship (I) as well as the topics of Partnerships (II) and Security Policy (III). The authors provide concrete recommendations on how and where "responsibility" can be imbued with political life.

I. Strengthening Germany's capability to act in the security realm

Two parallel and mutually reinforcing developments underline the need for Germany to play a more assertive role in the area of security policy: the diminishing engagement of the USA in Europe and the weakness of other European states. The re-orientation of the USA towards the Asia-Pacific region goes hand in hand with the country's withdrawal from its leadership role in security matters in Europe, notwithstanding all the declarations of solidarity. Europe must therefore take responsibility for its own security in the future. At the same time, France and the UK in particular, the traditional pillars of European security, are currently not applying adequate political or financial means to make up for the USA's diminishing engagement.

The resulting vacuum in the security sphere happens to fall into a period when Europe and NATO are confronted by two simultaneous threats at its eastern and southern borders, which demand decisive action. The dangers emanating from the so-called Islamic State are equally concerning as Russia's aggression in Ukraine and its increasing sabre-rattling in the Baltic Sea and the entire Baltic Region.

After Germany having benefited from the security guarantees provided by its partners for decades, the opinion is now growing among its allies that in view of its political and economic strength Germany must in turn take on greater responsibility for the security of its allies. Germany has a fundamental interest in a stable and secure environment in its immediate neighbourhood and beyond. More so than in the past, Germany must therefore take on a leadership role in the creation of such an environment and play its part in guaranteeing Europe's continued capability to act in the security sphere. To be able to respond to the dangers and threats it is facing together with its partners in Eastern Europe and the MENA region, it will continue to have to rely on the use of military means. The German government should

To be able to counter the simultaneous threats at the southern and eastern flanks, Germany must take on greater security responsibility within NATO and the EU.

implement the five following measures and thereby show leadership in the international security policy arena.

II. Measures – strengthening German capabilities

1. Strengthen Germany's role in NATO: a credible presence at the eastern flank

The least expected threat scenario Germany currently has to contend with is the reemergence of a "conventional" threat at NATO's eastern border. NATO's key purposes, the defence of the Alliance and the associated deterrence concept, are coming back into the focus of attention. Germany has already taken on leadership responsibility within the defence and deterrence measures of the NATO Readiness Action Plan through its pioneering role in establishing the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) and in enhancing the Multinational Corps Northeast.

It is still not clear, however, whether the measures of the Readiness Action Plan exert a sufficient deterrence effect against the Russian strategy of hybrid warfare. The VJTF can only play the deterrent role of a "tripwire", which would see the opponent immediately drawing all of NATO into any conflict it might initiate. As it is limited to the size of one brigade at most, the VJTF would be too small to regain lost territory. However, it is precisely this function as a tripwire that is negated by the current concept of a VJTF stationed outside the Baltic. Redeployment would require a decision by the North Atlantic Council and possibly also the approval of national parliaments. Russia will therefore organise any action in the Baltic in such a way as to create sufficient confusion that the decision-making bodies of NATO and of its members will be paralysed until Russia has control over the respective territories and the VJTF can no longer exert its deterrent effect.

For now, the US troops stationed in various Baltic countries on a rotating basis since 2014 represent an adequate tripwire to deter any potential Russian undertakings. At the same time, there is no certainty about how long this interim measure, which is being funded outside the regular budget, will remain in place. Over the medium and long term, Europe will therefore have to take on the responsibility for conventional deterrence within NATO. Endowing the Supreme Allied Commander Europe with the power to redeploy the troops let alone a permanent redeployment of the entire VJTF to the Baltic are currently not politically acceptable options that are achievable in the short term due to the NATO-Russia Act as well as for cost reasons. That said, Germany should advocate that a battalion from the VJTF army contingent should be stationed in the Baltic as a European tripwire. As long as the individual battalions of each VJTF were deployed in the region on a rotation basis throughout its tour of duty this would be compatible with the NATO-Russia Act. In the longer term, it would make sense not to choke off deliberations about having soldiers and equipment stationed permanently in the Baltic, as well as in Poland. Although there is not much likelihood of these options being realised, NATO should not let Moscow's sensitivities dictate its strategic orientation in case the security situation at NATO's eastern flank was to remain tense.

2. Crises in the south: establish enable and enhance as a permanent function

While Germany took the lead in the response to the Ukraine crisis, its contribution to overcoming the crises at Europe's southern flank has been limited mainly to supportive measures such as training and equipment. In providing support to the Kurdish

In the medium and long term, Europe will have to take on responsibility for conventional deterrence within NATO. Berlin should play a major role in this.

Enable and enhance should be established before a crisis even develops.

Autonomous Region in Iraq, Germany even broke the principle of not sending arms to areas of conflict. To rationalise its approach, the German government can refer to its concept of “empowering” partners (“*Ertüchtigung*”), which it has publicly promoted since 2011. The idea behind it is that Germany cannot play an active peacekeeping role all over the world and therefore helps trustworthy partners to help themselves. The intention is for Germany to act as a “partner to lean on”, who provides training and equipment, if necessary involving arms exports. The German government has also successfully introduced this concept at CSDP level with the Enable and Enhance Initiative (E2I).

To date, the instrument of enable and enhance has been used mainly as a means of crisis management, for instance in Mali and Somalia. However, training and strengthening partners will only make a significant impact if they begin in good time and are not left until a crisis has broken out. Empowerment should therefore be used at the stage of crisis prevention rather than for crisis management. If empowerment is truly to become an element of German security policy, the 100 million euros earmarked by the government for budget item E2I will only represent the first drop in the ocean.

The position of a Commissioner for Empowerment should be created at the Chancellery.

It will also be necessary to create an institutional framework for this undertaking. Under the auspices of the Federal Chancellery, the position of a Commissioner for Security Cooperation and Empowerment should be created, whose office would bundle and coordinate the competences in this area across departments.

This official could also liaise with the corresponding initiatives in NATO and the EU, specifically the Defence and Security Related Capacity Building Initiative and the initiative for capacity building in support of security and development. This could prevent a lack of networking hampering the work to achieve the objectives.

Empowerment must be seen as an additional function, not as a replacement for military action.

One must bear in mind, however, that in some cases the security sector of a partner state represents part of the problem. While in advanced crises in particular the Train & Equip approach should be given high priority, in longer-term security cooperation special attention should be directed at security sector reforms and at strengthening the democratic oversight of the armed forces. The ultimate destination of armaments represents a further problem. Any supplied equipment must remain under the control of institutions that can be called to account in the event of violations. But the greatest danger with respect to empowerment is the temptation to laud it as a generally acceptable, low-cost and bloodless alternative to unpopular military action, thus raising unrealistic expectations. Particularly in crisis management, indirect training and civilian measures also always need a stable environment to operate in. Training missions therefore have to rely on simultaneous robust protection and stabilisation action. In the case of Mali, the French initially performed this function. The German empowerment initiative will only remain credible if this type of division of labour is not set in stone and Germany is also prepared to take part in the stabilisation of the environment in which the measures are to be conducted.

3. Greater engagement at a global level

There is one further measure Germany should take to pursue a broad approach of deterrence and crisis prevention: greater engagement in UN missions. While Germany is the fourth-largest net donor within the UN, its personnel contribution to missions is vanishingly small in an international comparison. It is ranked 59th among the 126 states providing troops and police personnel. It is in Germany's

interest to increase the number of “Blue Helmets” and police officers as well as that of the UN personnel it provides. That is the only way to both strengthen the UN as an institution and emphasise Berlin’s willingness to take on international responsibility.

4. Framework Nation without depth? Greater capacities for the Bundeswehr

To enable Germany to take on greater responsibility within NATO, in the area of empowerment as well as globally, it will also be necessary to review the “breadth before depth” approach of the Bundeswehr. In line with the Framework Nations Concept (FNC) initiated by Berlin, Germany will be acting as a Framework Nation, providing key capabilities in the areas of logistics, reconnaissance and control facilities for the implementation of military operations, which are then complemented by niche competences of smaller states. There is, however, a danger that “breadth before depth” may degenerate into “breadth instead of depth”. As one of the largest European armed forces, the Bundeswehr must not only be ready for a wide range of challenges, but it must also be prepared to conduct operations over lengthy periods. It is therefore high time for Berlin to communicate clearly what its intentions are in relation to the Framework Nations Concept it initiated and to take appropriate action. 16 clusters suitable for closer cooperation have, in fact, already been identified, and 16 nations have expressed willingness to take part in the FNC. But it is still unclear whether the concept will entail a multinational unit operating under German control, or whether the concept is to serve as a framework, within which different nations can join in different areas of cooperation. Clear guidelines would allow capabilities of the German armed forces to be bundled with those of our partners.

To provide an effective deterrent, the upgrading capability of the VJTF must not remain purely theoretical. As resources have already been stretched through the operations on foreign soil in recent decades, this will present a challenge to the Bundeswehr forces across the board, which will require sustained additional funding even after the latest budget adjustment.

Germany should also remain prepared to take part in combat missions if the worst comes to the worst. While there is currently no indication where and in what scope such deployment may become necessary in the future, one cannot exclude the possibility that Germany may need to conduct a mission similar to that in Afghanistan in collaboration with its partners. This makes it all the more urgent to equip the Bundeswehr adequately to enable it to respond to a wide range of security challenges.

5. Keep pace with technology

With the current focus is on conventional capabilities, the Bundeswehr must not fall behind where new technology is concerned either. In the impending military era involving networked weapons systems, the Bundeswehr needs to be capable of operating sophisticated systems to be able to act independently and in collaboration with its partners.

The current plans of the Ministry of Defence for enhancing the Bundeswehr’s capabilities in the area of cyber defence point in the right direction. Besides adjustments in terms of equipment and personnel, the advent of new technologies also requires a dialogue with wider society. Attacks by hackers and the use of unmanned or even autonomous weapons systems not only pose new challenges to the international

The “breadth before depth” Bundeswehr guideline should be reviewed to ensure that Berlin will be able to respond to the challenges at the periphery.

Despite the recent budget adjustment, the German government will perforce have to provide the Bundeswehr with greater funding in the long term.

law of war, they also pose the question of whether the use of such weapons is compatible with our values. The German people must realise the new threat scenarios they could be facing as well as where the “red lines” should be drawn with respect to the use of new technologies. First and foremost, the use of combat drones must be considered for delimited scenarios – particularly close air support – to provide even better protection to our own soldiers in future. Now that the Ministry of Defence has decided to go ahead with the development of weaponised drones in collaboration with France and Italy, a debate about the benefits and potential downsides of such weapons must be conducted publicly in order to reduce potential resentment within society.

III. Prerequisites – strengthen German reliability

Even with Germany’s increased engagement in the security sphere, military deployment only remains one of many options that can be used to prevent, fend off and combat threats. However, in order to be able to deploy the armed forces effectively in the worst-case scenario, Germany will urgently need to improve the political and material framework of German security policy. Strengthening German reliability is one of the most important prerequisites for enhancing the country’s leadership role.

1. Honing security expertise in the Bundestag

The report by the Rühle Commission made clear that the Bundestag will continue to play a decisive role in any Bundeswehr deployment and that the parliamentary prerogative will therefore remain in place. The German army will remain a parliamentary army.

Over the last 20 years, the Bundestag has shown consistency in its approval of deployments, including the length of the operations. To continue strengthening the competences in the Bundestag, steps should be taken first of all to consolidate and enhance the security expertise of the Members of Parliament. The recommendation by the Rühle Commission to update the Bundestag about the commitments of the Bundeswehr in multinational groupings on an annual basis points in the right direction.

Another step to be considered is to provide regular workshops on the latest developments for parliamentarians’ staff dealing with matters of security policy. The Federal Academy for Security Policy, for instance, would represent an appropriate organisation for hosting such events.

2. Seeking dialogue with partners and the people

Keeping the Members of Parliament informed can also be used as a starting point for the equally important discussion with two further target groups: Germany’s partners and the German people. A public debate would demonstrate to the partners within the EU and NATO that Germany is aware of its responsibility. Informing the Bundestag regularly in a transparent manner about the means required for maintaining Germany’s NATO commitments could help to strengthen the partners’ confidence in Germany’s reliability. At the same time, government statements in the Bundestag provide an opportunity for dialogue with the country’s own population. This debate should therefore be initiated under the auspices of the Chancellor herself. It is a matter of concern that now that conscription has ended the Bundeswehr is under threat from “benign indifference”. The debate about Germany’s increased leadership responsibility with the German people must therefore be intensified, par-

In particular, the recommendation by the Rühle Commission to update the Bundestag about the commitments of the Bundeswehr in multinational groupings on an annual basis should be implemented.

ticularly in connection with the potential use of military means. Schools have a special responsibility to enable young people to gain informed insights into German security policy and into the role the armed forces play as part of society. Security policy and the Bundeswehr must be embedded in public discourse more strongly than has been the case in the past.

3. Consolidating security expertise at universities

There are now very few remaining chairs of international relations dealing with security-related issues. While the number of students has increased steadily over recent years, the number of chairs has stayed largely unchanged. Countermeasures can be taken by establishing university chairs focusing on security policy issues and increasing research funding for German security and peace research institutes. Both these measures can help to establish security expertise in Germany for the long term. The introduction of civil clauses or the exclusion of Youth Officers from universities is detrimental to this goal. Instead, greater efforts should be made to seek and offer discussions and debates with Youth Officers about Germany's scope for action in the security realm in schools and universities. The initiative for this must come from the Federal States, more precisely the Ministers for Education. To give this undertaking additional impetus, it would be helpful if the Federal Government were to offer support for such an initiative. The current crises in the east and south in particular have created sufficient cause for prompting a debate throughout society about the possible responses – including the possible deployment of Bundeswehr troops.

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*Further information at
<http://www.kas.de/wf/en/71.6391/>*

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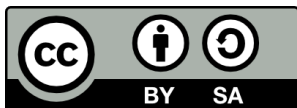
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