

The Significance of the Balkans as a Strategic-Operational Area for the Bundeswehr

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I have said: I will not advise Germany to take an active part of any kind in these efforts as long as I cannot see that Germany has any interest in the whole matter that – please excuse the coarseness of expression – would be worth the healthy bones of a single Pomeranian musketeer. What I wanted to express was that we should use the blood of our countrymen more sparingly instead of expending it for an arbitrary policy which no interest forces us to pursue.¹

This is how the German Reich Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in 1876 judged the conflict on the Balkans at that time. Almost 120 years later, more than 3,000 Bundeswehr servicemen and women have been permanently deployed in the region since 1995.² Unlike Bismarck at the time, the Federal Republic of Germany considers that its interests are affected on the Balkans. This development began in 1990 with the lengthy and cruel process of disintegration in Yugoslavia.³ The fact that this chapter is

¹ *Protokolle des Deutschen Reichstages*, Bd. 45, 2. Legislaturperiode, 4. Session 1876, 24. Sitzung am 5. Dezember 1876, p. 585.

² The documents used for this paper from the area of responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Defense are still classified and are therefore not accessible to the public at the Military Division of the Federal Archives (BA-MA), Freiburg i.Br.

³ Vgl. zur zahlreichen, auch parteilichen Literatur u.a. Viktor Meier, *Wie Jugoslawien verspielt wurde*, 3. durchges. und aktual. Auflage, München 1999; William A. Schabas, *The UN international criminal tribunals: the former Yugoslavia, Ruanda and Sierra Leone*, Repr., Cambridge [u.a.] 2008; Jürgen Elsässer, *Kriegslügen: Der NATO-Angriff auf Jugoslawien*, vollst. aktual. Fassung, Berlin 2008; *Der Krieg um das Kosovo 1998/99*. Hrsg. von Erich Reiter, Mainz 2000; Rudolf Scharping, *Wir dürfen nicht wegsehen. Der Kosovo-Krieg und Europa*, Berlin 1999.

not yet closed became obvious again only recently following the arrest of the alleged Bosnian Serb war criminal Radovan Karadzic.⁴

In addition to the Yugoslav secession process, the Bundeswehr has faced two other challenges since 1989: the unification of the two German states and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. This coincidence resulted in a redefinition of NATO as a political and military alliance. There is no doubt that these drastic changes have had a positive effect for Germany.⁵ For the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, however, there began a decline that lasted for almost 20 years,⁶ while for the Bundeswehr, these changes in foreign affairs also meant an important turning point. No other sector of the German executive in the Federal Republic had to deal with similar changes.⁷ The NVA was disbanded and some of its personnel and materiel were integrated into the Bundeswehr. At the same time, the Bundeswehr – like the NATO Alliance – further developed its strategic and operational concepts and adopted them to the new reality. What is more, a war broke out in Europe's “backyard” in which the Bundeswehr had to intervene.

This drastic change in the conditions made it necessary for Germany to redefine its role in several respects. For the “sleeping European giant” returned to the world

⁴ There have been repeated accusations that IFOR, SFOR or EUFOR did not take action against alleged war criminals or did so only hesitantly. However, their “Rules of Engagement” (ROE) solely granted them the power to temporarily arrest war criminals. An obligation to arrest them or even to actively search for them could not be derived from them. Instead, the ROE provided legal security for IFOR personnel in case they encountered such people rather by chance. Even in those cases, all information regarding the situation must be considered in order to determine whether an arrest is worth the risks involved for the military personnel or civilian passers-by. Soldiers simply were not police officers. Soldiers could merely be requested to temporarily perform police support tasks if there were free capacities. On this cf. BA-MA, BW 2/34946, Ordner 15, Fü S III 6 an den Minister vom 15.12.1995 betr. »SACEUR ROEREQ für IFOR-Hauptkräfte«, 2; BA-MA, BW 2/34946, Ordner 16, VR II an den Minister vom 24.5.1996 betr. »Verfolgung von Kriegsverbrechern im früheren Jugoslawien«, 2; BA-MA, BW 2/34946, Ordner 18, Fü S III 6 an den GI [= Generalinspekteur] vom 11.3.1997 betr. »Gajevi-Zwischenfall und Anschlussaktionen«, S. 1: »[...] der OPLAN für SFOR Polizeifunktionen und Aufruhr-Kontrolle ausdrücklich ausschlossen [...]«.

⁵ Cf. inter alia. Manfred Görtemaker, *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Von der Gründung bis zur Gegenwart*, Frankfurt a.M. 2004; Gregor Schöllgen, *Die Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, Munich 1999.

⁶ Holm Sundhausen, *Geschichte Serbiens: 19.-21. Jahrhundert*, Vienna [et al.] 2007.

⁷ Cf. also the reports of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces on the acceptance and integration of members of the NVA in the Bundeswehr.

stage. This became more than clear from its very membership in international organizations.⁸ The unified Federal Republic labeled itself a power for peace and has since claimed a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. In the past, NATO membership first and foremost served the purpose of offering protection from the Soviet Union. This purpose was fulfilled completely when the Warsaw Pact and its leading power went into self-dissolution. Whereas, the Federal Republic had hitherto been an importer of security and a major beneficiary of NATO, the former beneficiary in the 1990s became an – initially reluctant – exporter of security. The civil war on the Balkans pointed its open European flank out to Germany where a serious danger might arise in the “backyard” of the previous security and stabilization zones of NATO and European Union.⁹

These changes in the field of foreign affairs also had implications for the home affairs situation. The society of the Federal Republic had to relate its desire and motivation for defense to intervention and stabilization missions in addition to national defense, although it did so with a great deal of reluctance and an almost naïve disinterest. The public was apparently not so much worried about the fundamental changes in the political and military foundations and their consequences. Instead, it emphasized the ethical and political implications regarding the past. This debate revealed that even after the Bundeswehr had existed for more than 35 years, a considerable share of the German population was still unable to make peace with their country's armed forces. That is why the political and military leadership at the time decided to approach this process by gradually accustoming the population to “out-of-area operations”.¹⁰ This in turn was often met with incomprehension within the Bundeswehr.¹¹

⁸ Cf. Carsten Giersch, *Konfliktregulierung in Jugoslawien 1991-1995. Die Rolle von OSZE, EU, UNO und NATO*, Baden-Baden 1998.

⁹ Cf. Thomas M. Wandinger, ‘Ursachen von Konflikten und Kriegen im 21. Jahrhundert. Konsequenzen für die westlichen Industriestaaten’. In: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte (APuZG)*, 2001, B 20, 6 and 13, URL: http://www.bpb.de/popup_druckversion.html?guid=LTV7P9&page=0 (18.12.2008).

¹⁰ Cf. Klaus Naumann, ‘Der Wandel des Einsatzes von Katastrophenhilfe und NATO-Manövern zur Anwendung von Waffengewalt und Friedenserzwingung’. In: *Die Bundeswehr 1955 bis 2005. Rückblenden - Einsichten - Perspektiven*. Edited by Frank Nögler on behalf of MGFA, Munich 2007 (= *Sicherheitspolitik und Streitkräfte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 7), pp. 477-494, here 485.

¹¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 478-481.

The new military commitment outside Germany meant not only political, social and moral burdens, but also considerable financial ones. In addition to development aid and membership fees for international organizations, the taxpayer also paid for the Bundeswehr's operations abroad – even if the costs usually had to be met from the defense budget.¹² With the reduction of the Bundeswehr's strength since 1990, the amount of funds allocated in the 1990s also considerably declined. It is only a few years ago that it started to go up again. The Bundeswehr leadership hardly had any financial leeway for major investments, and the strategic capabilities, operational possibilities and tactical maneuver areas further aggravated the precarious situation.¹³

Since 1990, Germany stood at a crossroads in terms of foreign and security policy. With the bloody events in the southeast of Europe, war returned to the continent through the “backyard”. “Migrant workers” from Yugoslavia, hundreds of thousands of war refugees and the omnipresence of armed conflicts in the media had a direct impact on the society of the Federal Republic. The Balkans as a region and the development of the Bundeswehr were henceforth closely connected. The following questions therefore arise: What importance did the otherwise “far-away Balkans” gain for the Bundeswehr? Why was it – to come back to Bismarck – worth the “bones” of Bundeswehr personnel? And how did the Bundeswehr transform at the strategic and operational levels from an alliance army in the Cold War to an expeditionary force?

¹² The costs for the operation had to be met from the defense budget. In 1997, the ceiling for SFOR was 350 million Marks (approx. 178 952 160 €) – money, which in turn would later not be available for urgently required investments. Cf. BA-MA, BW 2/34947, Bd 9, Ordner 17, Tischvorlage FÜ S III 6 vom 11.12.1996, Gemeinsame Kabinettsache des Bundesministers der Verteidigung und des Bundesministers des Auswärtigen, Beschlussache, 3. In 1996, the total contribution made by Germany was stated as more than 17 billion DM. Cf. BA-MA, BW 2/34947, Ordner 17, FÜ S III 6 an den GI vom 8.10.1996 betr. »Political Guidance for a Study of Possible Security Options for Bosnia after 1996«, p. 1.

¹³ At the tactical level, this notably became clear from the lack of a combat helicopter, which is an indispensable asset for operations. The obsolete Bo 105 could accomplish its national defense tasks, but was unsuitable for use in mountainous regions like the Balkans.

From the “old” to a “new” Bundeswehr: Adjustment of the strategic concept from national defense within the Alliance via multinational intervention to state reconstruction

Until 1989/90, the political and military camps in the world were clearly defined. Although there several instances during the Cold War when there was the danger of a conventional and nuclear war between the power blocs, the military balance always evoked the risk of each one facing its own annihilation. Violent regional conflicts or proxy wars were waged in Africa or Asia, but no longer in Europe. The stalemate caused a lackadaisical interest, and it was the secret services that waged their war.¹⁴ The Federal Republic and the GDR came to an arrangement by which they lived sometimes more apart, sometimes less so in a kind of co-existence. With the end of this era and the unification of the two German states, the situation in the Federal Republic changed as well in almost all fields of politics and areas of life. This also involved the full acceptance of responsibility from the past. The Kohl doctrine¹⁵ stipulated that German armed forces would not be deployed to countries where NS organizations and the Wehrmacht had rampaged. This policy, which took account of Germany's disastrous past, was meant to show its European neighbors and the rest of the world that Germany was aware of its responsibility and did not want to cause unnecessary distrust by making new shows of military force.¹⁶

At the beginning of the war in Yugoslavia, the United Nations (United Nation Protection Force, abbreviated: UNPROFOR) and the European Union/West European Union (EU/WEU) tried to contain the conflict with a blue helmet mission and an embargo. It was, however, not possible to enforce the Vance Plan of 1991-92¹⁷, and so in the medium term the Croatians had to be expected to try and recapture local areas, primarily in the Krajina and Western Slavonia.¹⁸ As a consequence of the UN sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as it was then called, social tensions grew in

¹⁴ Cf. Armin Wagner and Matthias Uhl, *BND contra Sowjetarmee in der DDR*, Berlin 2007; Dieter Krüger and Armin Wagner, *Konspiration als Beruf: Deutsche Geheimdienstchefs im Kalten Krieg*, Berlin 2003.

¹⁵ Named after Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl, the chancellor who was largely responsible for German reunification.

¹⁶ Cf. Naumann, *Der Wandel des Einsatzes* (see note 10), p. 480.

¹⁷ This refers to the deployment of UNPROFOR and not to the Vance Owen Plan of 1993.

¹⁸ BA-MA, BW 2/34941, Ordner 6, Nr. 14, FÜ S II 2 an den Herrn Minister betr. »Jugoslawien - Krisenherd Balkan (Lageunterrichtung) vom 16.12.1993«, p. 4.

the largest and – in military terms – strongest autonomous Republic of Serbia. The economy had hit rock bottom and the people suffered severely from the shortages.¹⁹ Until 1994, the Bundeswehr took part in the Sarajevo airlift and embargo monitoring operations. Both operations were conducted without Bundeswehr ground forces. In August 1994, it was still assumed that Germany would make a conceptual contribution to the preparation of possible UN resolutions. Further-reaching demands from the allies for a military and financial commitment remained the exception.²⁰ By the end of the year, it became more and more obvious that the distance between historical burden and current alliance solidarity would grow smaller and smaller:

It is noticeable that in this context the partners increasingly focus on Germany although our Allies know that the Federal government is fundamentally against using combat troops on the territory of former Yugoslavia for special historical reasons. Five months after the ruling of the Federal Constitutional Court on Germany's participation in international peace missions and after the Federal elections, expectations are high. With respect to the Yugoslav conflict, there was also the implicit issue that since Germany had pressed for the early recognition of Croatia and Slovenia; it now had to actively contribute to dealing with the consequences. Added to that are expectations for active alliance solidarity in the attempt to manage the conflict. The proposal was for the Federal Republic of Germany to, for the time being, continue to exercise particular restraint with respect to military operations on the territory of former Yugoslavia. This applies to both the use of combat troops on the ground and the use of combat aircraft in the airspace of the former Yugoslav states. (Both would probably tend to aggravate the conflict rather than contain it)."²¹

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 2

²⁰ BA-MA, BW 2/34942, Ordner 8, Nr. 25, FÜ S II 3 an den Herrn Minister betr. »Jugoslawien - Krisenherd Balkan (Lageunterrichtung) vom 16.12.1993«, p. 4. 3: »Forderungen an die deutsche militärische oder finanzielle Leistungsfähigkeit sind derzeit nicht erkennbar. Die erweiterte deutsche Beteiligung an DENY FLIGHT und SHARP GUARD hat hier wohl zunächst für eine gewisse Entspannung gesorgt.« (Currently, there is no evidence of demands for German military or financial capabilities, The extended German participation in DENY FLIGHT and SHARP GUARD has obviously eased some tensions for the time being.)

²¹ BA-MA, BW 2/34943, Ordner 9, Nr. 27, Referat 201 [the original is given as 291 by mistake], Az.: 201-360.90 SO-JUG, 1. Anlage zu FÜ S III 6 vom 28.11.1994 regarding »NATO-Engagement im Jugoslawien-Konflikt«, 2 f.

Four players shaped the political situation: on the one hand, the United Nations, which hitherto saw itself as a peacekeeper and preserver of the status quo and on the other, the EU/WEU, which aimed at finding a specific European solution for Yugoslavia. However, they did not exert a direct influence on the war. The Contact Group (USA, Russia, Germany, UK, France, Italy) served as a consultation body and eventually NATO, the fourth player, basically took up the implementation options to force the warring parties to return to the negotiation table and adopt a peace plan.²²

Germany was a member of all the bodies and took part in all the decision-making processes. According to NATO considerations, a minimum of 50,000 soldiers were needed to implement a peace plan which had been promised as early as in 1994. The previous, mostly European troop contributing nations were neither able nor willing to provide the required forces on their own. Therefore, the United States was expected to make a decisive contribution, though the firm assurance that had been given only applied if a peace plan was implemented.

The United States regarded Yugoslavia as a primarily "European" problem, and other European nations were already making a visible, and in some cases substantial, contribution within the scope of UNPROFOR. Hence, it was more than obvious that not only European states, but also the United States would exert great pressure on Germany to actively involve its armed forces, including ground forces.²³ The German side played for time without taking a very prominent stance. It agreed to support all the political and military measures which would prevent or delay a clear change in the military situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in favor of Serbia. The intention was, of course, to maintain the status quo for as long as possible. No active support was allowed to be given for measures that might put the Serbs at a clear military disadvantage and thus increase the danger of military panic reactions. This also applied to a unilateral lifting of the arms embargo.²⁴ In February 1995, the defense ministry made a correct estimate of the situation when it stated that if there was "no breakthrough in the peace negotiations in the spring/summer, fighting [would] break

²² BA-MA, BW 2/34943, Ordner 9, Nr. 21, FÜ S II 6 an den Herrn Minister betr. »Jugoslawien - Krisenherd Balkan (Lageunterrichtung) vom 16.12.1993«, p. 4.

²³ Ibid., p. 3

²⁴ Ibid., p. 4

out between Bosnian Serbs and Bosnians as well as between Croatians and Croatian Serbs in all severity".²⁵ .

After the warring parties had been forced to the negotiation table in Dayton in the summer/autumn of 1995, Germany joined NATO's Peace Implementation Force (IFOR) operation for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The German army contingent, numbering some 3,000 soldiers, was deployed to Croatia as a logistic support unit. Added to that were air force and navy components and the German elements in the international headquarters. In a status report on the implementation efforts of June 1997, the situation was summed up as follows: "The military implementation of the Dayton Peace Accord continues to go smoothly and provides the basis for a full implementation of the civilian aspects of the accord. No headway is being made, however, in the implementation of those civilian aspects of Dayton."²⁶ This assessment of the civilian stabilization and reconstruction efforts addresses a main problem. The High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the numerous civilian agencies and relief organizations were just not able to meet the demands placed on them in the time available. So, again and again, they tried to request support from the NATO-led armed forces.²⁷

In the event of an – albeit rather improbable - confrontation on the Balkans, the NATO forces faced an opponent who was not to be underestimated from the military viewpoint. In February 1995, more than 229,000 armed Serbs, 100,000 Croatians, 75,000 Muslims and some 5000 fighters of the Bosnian warlord Fikret Abdic faced each other on the territory of former Yugoslavia. At least 410,000 soldiers from the regular land forces and irregular paramilitary units fought each other, sometimes in changing coalitions, to maintain or capture as much territory as possible for their own ethnic groups. In Bosnia and Herzegovina alone, 175,000 men²⁸, including foreign troops such as around 100-200 Mujahidin, were fighting each other. After the conclusion of the

²⁵ BA-MA, BW 2/34943, Ordner 10, Nr. 30, Fü S II 3 an den Herrn Minister betr. »Jugoslawien - Krisenherd Balkan (Lageunterrichtung) vom 16.12.1993«, p. 4.

²⁶ BA-MA, BW 2/34948, Ordner 19, Nr. 11, Fü S II 3, *Intelligence Assessment Bosnia* vom 17.6.1997, p. 11.

²⁷ BA-MA, BW 2/34946, Ordner 15, Fü S III 6 an den GI vom 11.3.1996 regarding »IFOR-Unterstützung für die zivile Implementierung«; BA-MA, BW 2/34946, Ordner 16, Fü S III 6 an den Minister vom 11.4.1996 regarding »Unterstützung des Hohen Repräsentanten durch IFOR«.

²⁸ BA-MA, BW 2/34943, Ordner 10, Nr. 30, Fü S II 3 an den Herrn Minister betr. »Jugoslawien - Krisenherd Balkan (Lageunterrichtung) vom 16.12.1993«, p. 4.

Dayton Peace Accord, it was them who caused problems when they were required to return to their home countries.²⁹

The number and quality of the fighters posed a considerable threat to the NATO forces in the initial stages. If the NATO units and their allies were added to these figures, the result meant that an enormous military potential was concentrated on the Balkans from the mid-1990s. This rendered it necessary for NATO to mount the largest military ground operation in its history.³⁰ The Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) acted as commander-in-chief, with command of the contingents assigned by the NATO member states and the states from the Partnership for Peace (PFP) program, of course with the relative national restrictions regarding areas of operations or strategic and operational level reserves.³¹ In the SFOR (Stabilization Force) operation in particular, it was necessary to have strategic reserves quickly available on account of the low strength of the force. Specific information campaigns and exercises were conducted to show the former warring parties in Bosnia how quickly such an operation could be mounted and the resolve with which NATO would proceed. The strategic reserves, which could quickly deploy to the country of operation upon the alert and, ready for combat, reinforce the operational level and tactical reserves at the points of main effort, made it possible over time to considerably reduce the already limited force strengths in the country in order to cut the financial and social costs for the troop-contributing nations. On the other hand, this meant that it was possible to relieve units that were urgently needed for other operations and scenarios.

In October 1995, the ministry of defense began to develop plans for Germany to make a contribution towards the military aspects of the peace settlement for Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Operation "Joint Endeavor", the IFOR contingent included elements of the field hospital stationed in Trogir and Split, the 1st Operational Wing of the German Air Force stationed in Piacenza/Italy and the German Air Force Air Transport Wing with a German army element. The theatre of operations for the German army

²⁹ BA-MA, BW 2/34946, Ordner 15, FÜ S III 6 an den Minister vom 13.1.1996 regarding »*Status of Compliance der Parteien im ehemaligen Jugoslawien*«, p. 3.

³⁰ BA-MA, BVV 2/34946, Ordner 17, North Atlantic Assembly, Draft Interim Report IFOR: A transatlantic coalition for peace, 4 November 1996, p. 1.

³¹ BA-MA, BW 2/34946, Classified document.

³² Ibid.

contingent (GECONIFOR), which had an overall strength of 2,600 troops, was Croatia, from where it was to support the forces of the allied states deployed in Bosnia. The mission included temporary operations in Bosnia.³³ More than 200 German soldiers were employed at allied headquarters in Croatia and Bosnia.³⁴ The German Navy contingent continued "Sharp Guard", the operation NATO and WEU naval and naval air forces had launched in 1993.³⁵ Before the operation plan could be developed in further detail and implemented, a peace agreement between the parties to the conflict, a UN Security Council resolution and a North Atlantic Council decision were required.³⁶ On December 16, 1995, Minister of Defense Volker Rühle was informed that all the prerequisites for the operation had been met. On that day, the North Atlantic Council approved the plan, the deployment order and the rules of engagement (ROE) for the main body of the force. The UN Security Council had passed Resolution 1031 the day before, while the Dayton Peace Accords had been initialed on November 21 and signed shortly afterwards, on December 14 in Paris. The German Bundestag had already given its approval to the IFOR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina on December 6, 1995, thus authorizing SACEUR to issue the ACTORD (action order) for the main body of the force and the ROE. The transfer of authority from UNPROFOR to IFOR was planned for December 20, 1995.³⁷ The process from the elaboration of the operation plan to its implementation was complex, involving approval and coordination procedures within NATO, the Contact Group and the PfP associated states in parallel with the peace treaty negotiations and the approval of the operation plan to the deployment of the main body of the force. Military command and control of the overall operation remained with

³³ In parallel with IFOR, the Agreement on Eastern Slavonia had to be implemented. Cf. BA-MA, BW 2/34946, Ordner 15, Fü S III 5 an Sts [= Staatssekretär] Schönbohm vom 21.12.1995 regarding »Implementierung Ostslawonien-Abkommen«.

³⁴ BA-MA, BW 2/34946, Ordner 15, Fü ZBw Einsatzplanung an den GI vom 16.12.1996 regarding »Rückverlegung des DEU Heereskontingents im Rahmen IFOR«.

³⁵ BA-MA, BW 2/34946, Ordner 15, Fü ZBw EF an den Minister vom 29.12.1995 regarding »Hinsatz See- und Seeluftstreitkräfte für SHARP GUARD und IFOR«.

³⁶ BA-MA, BW 2/34946, Ordner 15, Fü ZBw EF an den Minister vom 15.12.1995 regarding »Deutscher Beitrag zur Absicherung des Friedensvertrages für Bosnien-Herzegowina«, and Weisung Nr. 2 zur Beteiligung der Bundeswehr an der Friedenstruppe (IFOR) zur Unterstützung und Durchsetzung einer Friedensvereinbarung für das frühere Jugoslawien.

³⁷ BA-MA, BW 2/34946, Ordner 15, Fü S III 6 an den Minister vom 16.12.1995 regarding »Abschließende Billigung des OPLAN 10405«.

SACEUR, while the North Atlantic Council issued the political guidelines and exercised control, with the involvement of the Russian contingent.³⁸

NATO's Operation Plans and the Role of the Bundeswehr

SACEUR's NATO operation plans for IFOR, SFOR or (since 1999) KFOR had to be prepared and approved in a complex coordination procedure with the members involved.³⁹ They each consisted of a military main part and the politically significant annexes. The annexes included Command Arrangements,⁴⁰ Legal⁴¹, Civil-Military Co-Operation⁴², Rules of Engagement⁴³ and Public Information⁴⁴ The operation plans were examined at the Federal Ministry of Defense on the basis of four principles:

³⁸ Cf. BA-MA, BW 2/34946, Ordner 15, FÜ S III 6 an den Minister vom 14.10.1996 regarding »Politische NATO-Richtlinien für Studien zu möglichen Sicherheitsoptionen für Bosnien nach 1996 sowie zeitliche Rahmendaten im Entscheidungsprozeß zur Vorbereitung einer möglichen IFOR-Folgeoperation«.

³⁹ BA-MA, BW 2/34947, Ordner 17, FÜ S III 6 an den Minister vom 3.12.1996 regarding »SACEUR's Operation Plan 10406 Joint Guard«.

⁴⁰ They ensured the unified command of follow-up operations by NATO. Unified command in the area of operations within the scope of proven and well-established structures and relevant procedures was of crucial importance for the success of such a large-scale operation in which so many NATO and non-NATO states were involved.

⁴¹ This annex clarified the principles of exercising the administration of justice and the employment of legal advisors. A fully qualified lawyer was assigned to each commander as an advisor in all legal matters.

⁴² Civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) ensured effective cooperation between NATO commanders and national, international and non-governmental relief organizations. The permanent exchange of information at all levels and the coordination of measures and means were meant to allow a line to be drawn between competences/tasks.

⁴³ The ROE included constraints for land, air and maritime force operations, notes to the commanders and rules of conduct for individual soldiers. Their guideline was the legal principles of the adequacy of means and minimum use of force. The fact that there were no restrictions on the right of self-defense according to German legal understanding, consideration of German interests as well as conformity with German laws and international law were indispensable requirements. The ROE were meant to give each soldier assurance in any action they took. Therefore, great importance was placed in deployment training places on conveying these principles. The discrepancy between general theory and practice in a given situation, however, must always be viewed with a critical eye.

⁴⁴ Lays down the rules for coordination, procedures and areas of responsibility between national and NATO public information activities. "Information warfare" and public relations activities were of key importance. In Germany, where the majority of the population still had a critical attitude towards the

1. The operations were regarded as basic support for the overall implementation of the peace accord.
2. There had to be clarity as regards the chain of command, which had to comply with Germany's interests as a troop-contributing nation.
3. The concept of operations had to above all maintain a potential for development as a "living document" with regard to its political requirements and to guarantee that political influence could be exerted at any time.
4. The concept of operations had to be flexible so as to ensure that the armed force could respond adequately to any situation.⁴⁵

The operation plan for "Joint Guard" (SFOR), which followed "Joint Endeavor" (IFOR), was divided into four sections in the main part. In the centre of the military order, in which the commander's intent was delegated to the execution level, SACEUR defined a variety of phases with individual activities:

Phase I (Transition), Deployment of SFOR and redeployment of IFOR, establishment of reserves at all levels, reorganization of forces in the area of operations, increase in air surveillance and reconnaissance to compensate for force reductions in the area of operations. This phase ended when the deployment of SFOR was completed and the force had established readiness to accomplish the missions and tasks it was assigned and when the establishment of strategic and operational level reserves outside and in Bosnia and Herzegovina had also been completed.

Phase II (Stabilization), had the objective to establish a safe and secure environment so that the political and civilian authorities could act. The main task of the stabilization force was to show presence and to unequivocally demonstrate its capability to take military action. The aim was to ensure that the refugees would be able to return to their homes. In addition to the setup of national institutions, support was provided for local elections and the efforts of the former parties to the conflict to acquire defense materiel were monitored.

deployment of German soldiers abroad, it was of crucial political importance to achieve positive coverage of the operations both in the national and international media.

⁴⁵ BA-MA, BW 2/34947, Ordner 17, FÜ S III 6 an den Minister vom 3.12.1996 regarding »SACEUR's Operation Plan 10406 Joint Guard«.

Phase III (Deterrence), was a further reduction in military operations and support for civilian organizations. Only risk and deterrence forces remained in Bosnia and Herzegovina and a major share of the SFOR units were repatriated. Strategic, operational level and tactical reserves guaranteed that quick and direct responses could be made to events. For instance, the A(rmed) M(obile) F(orces) [L(and)] were earmarked to be NATO's strategic reserve, though without the German elements. This phase was planned to end after 18 months at the latest.

Phase IV (Mission Completion), meant that SFOR was to leave the area of operations with all its forces under the supervision of the Commander Stabilization Force (COMSFOR) and to have completed the "transfer of authority" (TOA) within four weeks.⁴⁶

The operation plans for IFOR and SFOR worked inasmuch as they allowed the forces to be downsized. In the SFOR operation in particular, it was possible to reduce the overall strength of the force due to the fact that reserves were available at short notice and so the financial and social costs for the sending countries could be cut. This would have significantly eased the burden on the troop-contributing nations in the medium term if the Kosovo problem had not come up on the political agenda of 1998/99.

Although the Dayton Accord of 1995 ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it also confirmed the boundaries of the ethnic "cleansings" conducted by the parties to the civil war to a certain degree. Added to that was the fact that the accord deliberately excluded Kosovo. For it was initially believed that successful implementation and stabilization in Bosnia and Herzegovina would have a positive effect on the turbulent Serbian province – a considerable error of judgment, in particular on the part of German diplomats – since Kosovo remained the "problem container" it had been known to be since 1980. The consequence was that in 1999 NATO embarked on a war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – which at the time consisted only of the Republics of Serbia and Montenegro – even though the United Nations had not issued a mandate. This war was ushered in and accompanied by a propagandist information and media

⁴⁶ BA-MA, BW 2/34947, Ordner 17, FÜ S III 6 an den Minister vom 3.12.1996 regarding »SACEUR's Operation Plan 10406 Joint Guard«.

campaign.⁴⁷ After several weeks of air attacks which primarily destroyed infrastructure in Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic eventually accepted NATO troops in Kosovo.⁴⁸ After the large-scale IFOR and SFOR operations, NATO demonstrated within a short time that it was capable of conducting another intervention, implementation and stabilization operation.⁴⁹ And after the United States, the Bundeswehr was again among the nations that made the largest troop contributions. Only this time, it took part in the air war from the very beginning and after the cease-fire deployed combat units in the invasion of Kosovo. Account of this political and military weight within NATO and the international community in general⁵⁰ was taken by the fact that it was assigned an area of responsibility (AOR) of its own.

The new mission under Minister of Defense Rudolf Scharping, the military quality of which had transformed from a limited military operation into an *ultima ratio* uncontained Kosovo war, was accompanied by a change in Germany's orientation in foreign affairs. The Kohl-Kinkel doctrine, which had been the initial guideline in the early 1990s, turned into a Schröder-Fischer doctrine for KFOR as a result of the adaptations IFOR and SFOR had gone through. The reasons given for Germany's inability to deploy Bundeswehr forces to places where NS organizations and the Wehrmacht had committed their crimes changed into an endorsement of operations in places where genocide was imminent or already in progress.

With an eye to both positions, Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, in 1999, addressed the question in the media of whether it was permissible to send German troops into regions where Germans had committed atrocities in World War II and gave

⁴⁷ Cf. Walter Jertz, *Krieg der Worte - Macht der Bilder: Manipulation oder Wahrheit im Kosovo-Konflikt*, Bonn 2001; Scharping, *Wir dürfen nicht wegsehen* (cf. note 3); Heinz Loquai, *Der Kosovo-Konflikt - Wege in einen vermeidbaren Krieg: die Zeit von Ende November 1997 bis März 1999*, Baden-Baden 2000.

⁴⁸ BA-MA, BW 2/34950, Classified document.

⁴⁹ The "ALLIED FORCE" operations plan consisted of the main part and the important annexes like Concept of Operations, Task Organization and Command Relationship, Intelligence, ROH, Information Warfare and Public Information

⁵⁰ In the case of IFOR and SFOR, the German contingents had been incorporated into the French AORs.

⁵¹ It is said that Scharping internally opposed the participation of German ground forces in a possible combat operation since it was not possible for him to communicate this either to his party or to the public. In the event of another international escalation, however, the Federal Republic would hardly have been able to hide behind "Germany's past" again. Information provided by a former assistant branch chief from III Division of the Armed Forces Staff at the Federal Ministry of Defense in September 2008.

the following answer: "That we are not allowed to do so is an argument I take very seriously. But for me the opposite argument applies: Because we committed crimes there, Germans also have a particular responsibility to make a stand for human rights, against deportations, against brutalities. For me, our past, in which we intervened for the wrong political objectives, obliges us not to stand aside when others are making a stand for the right objectives."⁵² In contrast to the Gulf War of January 1991, in which Germany did not participate directly and on the subject of which there had been a national consensus that the participation of Bundeswehr soldiers in out-of-area operations, particularly in combat action, was out of the question, the earlier restraint become increasingly obsolete after 1993.⁵³ In the case of the Kosovo War, the majority opinion leaned towards an armed military intervention operation by NATO comprising all options.⁵⁴

The accusation that the Kosovo War was a violation of international law and a criminal act, which in particular the political left in Germany voiced in a manner that got it good publicity, of course revealed a fundamental dissent. In it, NATO was equated with West Germany and Yugoslavia with the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). The tenor was that just like the Treuhand Agency, the agency set up to privatize the East German VEB enterprises, had destroyed the GDR, NATO was now destroying what left of Yugoslavia.⁵⁵ The debate showed that a national consensus about the war could only be achieved in Germany by pursuing humanitarian objectives and by coming to terms with the past. Catchphrases like "genocide", "deportations", "concentration camps", "horseshoe plan" or old national stereotypes⁵⁶ were used in this context in the same way as others like a "level of humanitarian justification" or "humanitarian intervention", which allegedly could be derived from international law. This was all done to get the German people to swear to the war and to suggest that this time they would definitely be on the right side. Public and political debates revealed

⁵² Der Spiegel, Heft 15, 1999. Cited in: Michael Schwab-Trapp, *Kriegsdiskurse. Die politische Kultur des Krieges im Wandel 1991 - 1999*, Opladen 2002, p. 296.

⁵³ Cf. Schöllgen, *Die Außenpolitik* (like note 5), pp. 207-216.

⁵⁴ Schwab-Trapp, *Kriegsdiskurse* (see note 52), pp. 292-308.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 308-315.

⁵⁶ Cf. in particular the anti-Serb headlines and comments in the BILD newspaper at the beginning of and during the Kosovo War.

that the political leaders were hardly sure that they could get the people to back their course. However, since 1993, the objective of Germany's foreign policy and, in particular, its alliance policy had clearly been to get the country to assume a share of the global responsibility and the burdens this entailed. Unified Germany no longer wanted to be suspected of lacking loyalty to the alliance as it had been in the early 1990s.⁵⁷

War as a Means for Achieving Regional Stabilization

The new role of the Federal Republic was a controversial subject both in Germany and abroad. The former advisor of US Vice President Richard Cheney, Robert Kagan, made a provocative statement with respect to Europe's military capabilities and thus the Germans:

Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus. [...] As some Europeans put it, the real division of labor consisted of the United States "making the dinner" and the Europeans "doing the dishes". [...] American military strength has produced a propensity to use that strength. Europe's military weakness has produced a perfectly understandable aversion to the exercise of military power. [...] If Europe's strategic culture today places less value on power and military strength and more value on such soft-power tools as economics and trade, isn't it partly because Europe is militarily weak and economically strong? [...] The Europeans [...] are not entirely sure that [...] the "German problem" really has been solved. [...] the French are still not confident they can trust the Germans, and the Germans are still not sure they can trust themselves."⁵⁸ A similar question was raised by John Petersen with regard to the Balkans: "US and EU in the Balkans: America fights the Wars, Europe does the Dishes?"⁵⁹

These assessments may certainly have been quite right from an American perspective as far as the Germans and the Bundeswehr are concerned. An army, however, must be measured with a view to its mission, and in the Federal Republic this

⁵⁷ Cf. Schöllgen, *Die Außenpolitik* (see note 5), p. 215, and Naumann, *Der Wandel des Umsatzes* (see note 10), 480 f.

⁵⁸ Robert Kagan, 'Power and Weakness. Why the United States and Europe see the World differently'. In: *Policy Review*, 2 (2002), pp. 3, 1, 5, 7, 9, 14.

⁵⁹ John Petersen, 'US and EU in the Balkans: »America Fights the Wars, Europe does the Dishes?«'. In: *RSCAS Working Papers*, URL: <http://hdl.dandle.net/1814/1758> (5.12.2007).

mission is defined by politicians. Bundeswehr soldiers had undoubtedly shown that they were capable of fighting during the civil war in former Yugoslavia because they were trained to be able to fight. Of course, they were not allowed to and supposed to do so for a long time in order to gradually accustom people to reality and to the new tasks of the armed forces in the process of adaptation that was in progress in security and military affairs. In the Federal Republic of Germany in particular, it was necessary to first have the “helper in uniform” before re-establishing the “fighter”. Realistically, the assessment made in a 1996 NATO report on IFOR still applies: “Operations Deliberate Force and Endeavor have shown the unique military structure, the planning capacity, the flexibility of integrated headquarters and the motivation of multinational troops. The participation of many non-NATO countries has confirmed that international peacekeeping is really possible. Both operations, however, have also made it absolutely clear that, without the United States, European NATO countries lack the capability to mount similar missions⁶⁰.” Is this further confirmation of Kagan? Only at first glance, because even in the military sector, the USA is not really able to achieve success with an intervention operation without the Europeans, and the Europeans are even less able to do so without the United States. The two form a kind of symbiosis both in combat and sustainability.

Initially, IFOR was planned to last twelve months and SFOR afterwards 18 months, but it was extended again and again until the EU was finally assigned the responsibility for Bosnia and Herzegovina with Operation “Althea” in 2004. The Bundeswehr is meanwhile in the 13th year of its military commitment, and there is still no end in sight. The same is true for Kosovo and Afghanistan. Where intervention, implementation, stabilization and reconstruction are meant to have a lasting effect, an “exit strategy” can only be developed in a perspective of years. (Other principles applied to the limited operation in the Congo in 2006)

Military-strategic capabilities alone are no guarantee for sustainability in this context if the commitment in a crisis zone does not have the support of the majority of the people. Operational and tactical capabilities quickly reach their limits unless they

⁶⁰ BA-MA, BW 2/34946, Ordner 17, *North Atlantic Assembly, Draft Interim Report IFOR: A transatlantic coalition for peace*, 4 November 1996, p. 11.

are embedded in a strategic concept. This, in turn, requires both a civilian and a military exit strategy. The development of such a strategy is a general political task.⁶¹

The media repeatedly raise the question of whether the time and effort put into a military operation are equal to its benefit. Usually, little thought is given to the matter and the conclusion drawn is that in relation to the costs, there is not much to be seen. This only appears to be an irrefutable argument. The purpose of modern multinational military operations is never to take charge of reconstruction and development in the country in which they are conducted. The intention is merely to implement accompanying and – capacities permitting – supporting measures for civilian governmental and non-governmental organizations.⁶² Otherwise it would be necessary in the case of civilian reconstruction efforts to make a cost-benefit calculation. In the case of IFOR, for instance, the units deployed to former Yugoslavia were tasked with supporting the forces of the multinational peacekeeping force.

There were no intentions at either the national or NATO level to have IFOR units participate in the reconstruction efforts; instead, the peacekeeping force was not allowed to be overburdened with tasks that were considered to be for the civilian forces.⁶³ This even applied to “humanitarian demining”, which was the sole responsibility of civilian organizations and companies.⁶⁴ The military mission of IFOR or SFOR was to establish a safe and secure environment for the civilian organizations to operate in.⁶⁵ Of course, it was not possible to give the production of security and arms control – both extremely sensitive tasks – the same media attention as activities such as the construction of a new school or a newly drilled well. Despite all the pointed emphasis, one thing should always be made clear: The latest military operations

⁶¹ The redeployment plans were initiated at an early stage. BA-MA, BW 2/34946, Ordner 15, Fü ZBW Einsatzplanung an den GI vom 16.12.1996 regarding »*Rückverlegung des DEU Heereskontingents im Rahmen IFOR*«.

⁶² BA-MA, BW 2/34946, Ordner 15, Fü S III 6 an den Minister vom 16.12.1995 regarding »*Abschließende Billigung des OPLAN 10405*«.

⁶³ BA-MA, BW 2/34946, Ordner 15, Fü S III 6 an den Parlamentarischen Staatssekretär Wilz vom 23.1.1996 betr. »Die Lage der Bürger in Bosnien-Herzegowina, Kroatien und Serbien und die Bedingungen für die rasche Hilfe beim Wiederaufbau nach einem Friedensschluss«.

⁶⁴ BA-MA, BW 2/34946, Ordner 15, Fü S III 6 an den Minister vom 16.12.1995 regarding »*Abschließende Billigung des OPLAN 10405*«.

⁶⁵ BA-MA, BW 2/34947, Ordner 18, Fü S III 6 an den Minister vom 3.12.1996 regarding »*SACEUR's Operation Plan 1 Joint Guard*«.

conducted by the Bundeswehr have not been primarily humanitarian, have been rarely seen to be productive and above all have not been cheap – neither in financial terms nor with respect to human losses. Anyone who uses military forces to demonstrate power in foreign affairs accepts the possibility of there being victims among them.

Summary

The coordinate system by which the Federal Republic of Germany, NATO and the Bundeswehr determined their foreign and domestic policy positions changed fundamentally in the 1990s. From the post-heroic society of the old Bonn republic to the neo-heroic society of the new Berlin republic,⁶⁶ from an assistance alliance in the Cold War to an intervention alliance, from a training and defense force to an international response and stabilization force. The Bundeswehr made the leap from “collective defense” to “collective security”. It had no alternative in the changed international environment since the only choice was between “out of area” or “out of business”.⁶⁷

Although Kagan’s theses followed a certain logic, they lacked a debate of the changes in the role of modern armed forces. Of course, soldiers must be able to fight, but this is only one side of the coin. The question is rather what comes immediately after the fighting? The small or asymmetric war is not a recent development.⁶⁸ The following saying is attributed to the Emperor of France, Napoleon Bonaparte, whose Grande Armée had suffered heavy losses in a guerilla war in Spain: “It is easier to start a war than to end one.” In multinational military operations, modern armed forces in particular must be just as capable of conducting prevention activities (conflict prevention), intervention activities (conflict management) and post-intervention activities (stabilization, reconstruction) as international organizations.

⁶⁶ Schwab-Trapp, *Kriegsdiskurse* (see note. 52).

⁶⁷ Lothar Rühl, ‘Die NATO und ethnische Konflikte’. In: *APuZG*, 2001, B 20, URL: http://www.bpb/popup/popup_druckversion.html?guid=GB1LVE&page=0, S. 1 (17 March 2008).

⁶⁸ A broad range of research on this topic has since been done. The author would like to mention only one important piece of work on the early modern era: Martin Rink, ‘Der kleine Krieg. Entwicklungen und Trends asymmetrischer Gewalt 1740 bis 1815’. In: *MGZ*, 65 (2006), pp. 355-388.

From this point of view, the US Armed Forces and their European allies, in particular the Bundeswehr, represent symbiotic capabilities as it were. Both sides must be able to assume the role of the other, at least partially. As a result, participation in the decision-making process and fair burden-sharing in accordance with capabilities remain a key driving force of the alliance. "For decades, the Bundeswehr was meant to be able to fight so that it never had to. In the future, the armed forces are threatened by the opposite: that of having to fight without being able to."⁶⁹

For the Bundeswehr, the Balkans War of the 1990s was the "moment of truth"⁷⁰ and the beginning of a vital change. The change of foreign and domestic policy premises necessitated a reorientation of the armed forces. The four key results of that decade are therefore these: firstly, at the beginning of the 1990s, the Bundeswehr was still a pure defense force with the NATO alliance, and because of the task spectrum that had applied until then, it was extremely limited in its strategic capabilities. So the operational possibilities and sustainability beyond the national borders were clearly limited. Secondly, with German foreign policy being adapted to the country's new role in the international power structure, the tasks spectrum and capability profile of the Bundeswehr had to change as well. The murder of the European Jews during the rule of the NS regime served as a negative paradigm, in particular, in defining Germany's foreign policy position. Thirdly, in the period between 1990 and 2000, the Bundeswehr evolved from being a crisis prevention force and a crisis post-intervention force and became an intervention force. Such a fundamental change from the lethargy of the Cold War was only possible in such a short period because of the cruel civil war in "Europe's backyard". Fourthly, because of the social reservations and the caution of the political decision-makers, the Bundeswehr had modernized sufficiently by 2000 to have reached the stage of an army "doing the dishes", but it was still far from "making the dinner".

The Balkans was an area in which the Bundeswehr could experiment, make its mark and gain experience in order to prepare what had been a defense force that had previously operated primarily in its own area for out-of-area operations and to

⁶⁹ Jochen Bitter, Bundeswehr: »Das kann uns Blut kosten«. In: *Die Zeit*, 20 October 2005, Nr. 43 (Zeit-online), URL: <http://www.zeit.de/2005/43/NeueBundeswehr> (15 October 2008).

⁷⁰ Sandra Eisenecker and Rudolf J. Schlaffer, 'Stunde der Wahrheit'. In: *Y. - Magazin der Bundeswehr*, 2(2008), 10-13, URL: http://www.y-punkt.de/portal/a/ypunkt/kcxml/04_Sj9Spykssy0xPI.MnMz0vM0Y_Qj... (15 October 2008).

transform it for this purpose. Without the cruel civil war in Europe's "backyard", the armed forces would have continued to have the mission of preparing for an at least contourless opponent, if not indeed an imaginary one, or to concentrate on themselves. Not only NATO had to develop new strategic, operational and tactical concepts; the Bundeswehr had to adapt or modernize as well. The Balkans was the moment of truth for the Bundeswehr und is therefore a symbol of its coming into the real world. And this coming has, of course, also cost the "bones" of some soldiers.