German defence politics – a view from abroad

Tom Dyson

Introduction: German defence politics and burden-sharing

Germany lags behind its main European partners – Britain and France – across three key dimensions of defence reform: force structures, military capabilities and doctrine (Breuer, 2006: 206-20; Dyson, 2010: 47-60). These deficiencies raise important implications, not only for Germany’s ability to wield power and influence in the international system, but also for the future of the Atlantic Alliance (Spiegel, 2012). The full participation of Europe’s most sizeable and prosperous nation is central to NATO’s success in meeting contemporary security challenges. Germany’s 2011 Defence Policy Guidelines boldly emphasise the status of the Atlantic Alliance as the ‘centrepiece’ of its defence and security policy and recognise the imperative of burden-sharing: ‘making a reliable and credible contribution to the Alliance is part of Germany’s raison d’état’ (VPR, 2011: 6). However, as this chapter will highlight, this statement appears insubstantial given the relatively restricted capacity of the Bundeswehr to burden-share within the Alliance. Similarly, for CSDP to be a credible organisation it must be in a position to pick up the security burden left by a US that is increasingly focused on the Middle East and Asia, by tackling security problems arising from the EU’s geopolitical neighbourhood. Both CSDP and NATO require a strong German contribution, not only to civilian crisis-management capabilities, but also investment in strategic and tactical lift capabilities and command, control, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) capabilities to facilitate participation in networked operations across the conflict spectrum.

This chapter will contextualise German defence politics by drawing comparisons with the defence politics of Western Europe’s other Great Powers: Britain and France. In so doing, it sheds new light on the dynamics of German defence policy and politics. The majority of scholarship on post-Cold War German defence policy and politics emphasises the impact of Germany’s anti-militaristic ‘strategic culture’ on the willingness and ability of actors within the defence and security policy-making community to sanction an expanded role for the Bundeswehr and develop the military structures, capabilities and doctrine necessary to permit full-spectrum operations (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2006; Longhurst, 2004). However, this chapter will argue that Germany’s laggard defence reform is, to a great extent, a result of the institutional structures of German defence politics, which create incentives amongst both the political elite and the military to man-

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783845250120-373
Das Erstellen und Weitergeben von Kopien dieses PDFs ist nicht zulässig.
age the temporality of reform. It posits that poor civilian control over management of military input to defence planning and a federal system that incentivises the prioritisation of domestic political interests over convergence with international security imperatives, have left Germany at risk of remaining a relative consumer of security and of playing a backseat role in multinational deployments.

At the heart of the chapter lies the issue of the appropriate balance that should be struck between ‘top-down’ civilian and ‘bottom-up’ military input to effective defence planning. The topic of civil-military relations in defence planning is highly contested. While civilian control over the military is paramount in democracies, excessive civilian control can also act to the detriment of efficient military adaptation. As Huntington (1957: 57) notes, particular areas of defence planning processes require a strong degree of military autonomy: ‘The fact that war has its own grammar requires that the military professionals be permitted to develop their expertise at this grammar without extraneous interference’.

The chapter finds that in areas where militaries should be permitted a significant level of autonomy to develop expertise, notably in military doctrine, the Bundeswehr has been subject to heavy-handed and inappropriate levels of civilian intervention. This intervention has stunted the capacity of the Bundeswehr to conform to military ‘best practice’, as illustrated by the slow adaptation of doctrine and training to operational exigencies under KFOR and ISAF (Dyson, 2012; Matlary, 2009: 151). Yet, in other crucial areas, such as defence procurement, where a stronger level of civilian oversight is necessary in order to align procurement plans with strategic priorities, the military has been able to exert excessive influence, leading to a lack of coherence in procurement. Furthermore, the chapter highlights that civilian intervention has not promoted an atmosphere of sufficient critical reflection and intellectual dynamism within the military. The chapter finds that the reform processes which have been set in place by Defence Ministers Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg (2009-11) and Thomas de Maizière (2011-present) will go some way to rectifying these problems. However, the institutional structures of German defence politics, both within the military and broader political system, continue to suffer from deficits which impede the Bundeswehr from convergence with the model of military ‘best practice’ that has emerged in post-Cold War Europe.

The chapter begins by outlining the state of German defence policy and politics. It briefly describes the selective emulation\(^1\) of the Revolution in Military

---

\(^1\) Waltz (1979: 127) argues that states emulate the military practises of the dominant state in the international system. However, this chapter concurs with the insights of Resende-Santos (2007: 58-61) who posits that secondary states in a unipolar international system (such as the European Great Powers), will seek to minimise the risks associated with
Affairs (RMA) that has formed the basis of European states’ defence reforms and assesses Germany’s progress across three key areas: force structures; military capabilities; concepts, doctrine and the capacity to learn lessons from operations. Each of these three sections undertakes an analysis of the impact of the institutional structures of the BMVg and Bundeswehr upon these areas of policy. These sections also examine the proposals of the Weise Commission and the subsequent reform enacted by de Maizière in April 2012 on the deficiencies identified in the institutional structures of the BMVg and Bundeswehr. The chapter then turns to the impact of the broader German political system on German defence reform and analyses the role that the German federal system has played in incentivising ineffective civilian oversight of military input to defence planning.

The state of German defence policy and the institutional structures of the Defence Ministry

British and French defence reforms have involved a partial and selective emulation of the RMA. This emulation has three main characteristics. Firstly the restructuring of command structures and development of joint, expeditionary forces, a process that began in France in 1995/96 and in Britain in 1997/98. Secondly, during the early-mid 2000s, the development of a Network-Enabled Capability (NEC) that seeks to exploit technology’s tactical and operational advantages, but is more wary than US ‘Network Centric Warfare’ about networking’s potential to transform the nature of warfare and deliver strategic effects (Farrell, 2008: 786-7). NEC has a technical dimension (the procurement of C4ISTAR systems) and a doctrinal dimension (the reconfiguration of thinking on command and control and military organisation in the context of the introduction of these new technologies).

their self-help efforts by emulating on the basis of proven effectiveness in conflict, rather than aggregate capabilities.

2 A frequently-cited definition of the RMA is provided by Krepinevic (1994: 30): ‘It is what occurs when the application of new technologies into a significant number of military systems combines with innovative operational concepts and organisational adaptation in a way that fundamentally alters the character and conduct of conflict. It does so by producing a dramatic increase – often an order of magnitude or greater – in the combat potential or military effectiveness of armed forces.’

3 The Weise Commission was an independent Commission chaired by Frank-Jürgen Weise. It was established by the Cabinet to propose measures to streamline the Bundeswehr’s command and administrative structures and delivered its report in October 2010.
British and French doctrinal development in the context of the RMA has also cohered around the Effects-Based Approach to Operations (EBAO). In contrast to US Effects-Based Operations (EBO), which focus on the application of largely kinetic effects against near-peer competitors, EBAO recognises that it is not military operations themselves which have changed in character, but the approach to operations. It is conceived of as an approach that, embedded within the Comprehensive Approach (a multi-agency, cross-government approach to the planning and execution of operations), can facilitate the integration of all agencies of government in the delivery of both kinetic and non-kinetic effects (JD 7/06). Since EBO were stripped from US Joint Doctrine in 2008, UK EBAO has given way to an emphasis on ‘Effects-Based Thinking’ that shuns EBAO’s determinism, while recognising EBAO’s utility in targeting ‘closed systems’. In addition, following operational experience in Africa, the Balkans and Afghanistan/Iraq, UK and French defence reform has also focused on doctrine and training for Stabilisation and Counterinsurgency operations and the appropriate role of networked capabilities within these operational contexts (Alderson, 2009; De Durand, 2009).

German emulation of the RMA has been threefold. Firstly, through reforms to command structures, it has focused upon improving the Bundeswehr’s jointness, deployability and interoperability. German defence reform has also been characterised by C2ISR capability investment to facilitate networked operations, as well as investment in the capabilities required to project power within and outside of Europe’s geopolitical neighbourhood. Thirdly, reform has involved doctrinal development around the implications of networking for Command and Control and, to a limited extent, on EBAO (Dyson, 2010: 47-56). Doctrinal development has also cohered around the development of Stabilisation doctrine (Noetzel/Schreer 2009). In this regard German defence reforms represent a case of convergence with those of its closest European partners (Dyson, 2010: 28-60).

However, German emulation of the RMA and the development of Stabilisation/Counterinsurgency doctrine have taken place at a slow pace. The British (in 1997/98) and French (in 1994) abandoned territorial defence in favour of expeditionary crisis-management operations of varying intensity (Irondelle, 2003: 162; McInnes, 1998; 833-36). Yet it was only in 2003 that Germany placed crisis-management at the heart of its defence policy (Dalggaard-Nielsen, 2006: 123-26). As the following sections highlight, this delay in changes to policy objectives has been matched by deficiencies in force structures, military capabilities, doctrine, as well as the capacity of the military to learn lessons from operations, which weaken Germany’s capacity to undertake expeditionary operations. These deficiencies derive, to a great extent, from the dysfunctional management of military input to defence planning; a problem that has only been partially addressed by the reform of de Maizière.
Force structures: gradually enhancing deployability and jointness

The 1996 establishment of the Permanent Joint Headquarters formed an important step by the British military in the establishment of joint, interoperable command structures and rapidly deployable forces; a development that was given greater embeddedness in the 1997/98 SDR (McInnes, 1998: 837). The reconfiguring of French command structures to facilitate the generation of joint, modular forces also took place in the mid 1990s (1996). In contrast, it was only after the turn of the Century that deployability and jointness was placed centre-stage in German defence reform, notably through the 2001 creation of the Operations Command and Response Forces Operations Command. Since 2004 the Leadership Academy’s Advanced Joint Staff Course has also played an important role in reinforcing the principle of jointness throughout the services (Interviews, Führungsakademie, 2010).

However, problems remain, most notably in the capacity of the Bundeswehr to deploy significant numbers of troops overseas. Although the 2006 Defence White Paper (DWP) outlined the intention to develop the capacity to deploy 14,000 troops abroad (from a total force of 245,000) in support of complex crisis-management operations, the Bundeswehr is currently struggling to maintain the approximately 7,100 troops currently deployed overseas (Brune et al, 2010: 2). Despite the tight fiscal constraints on British defence spending, these modest goals contrast markedly with the UK’s ambitions in the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR). The SDSR plans to develop the capacity to deploy a one-off intervention force of 30,000 from a total force of 154,000 troops. Alternatively it proposes the capacity to undertake (concurrently) a long-term stabilisation operation of 6,500, a short-term complex intervention of up to 2,000 personnel as well as a short-term simple intervention of up to 1,000 troops (SDSR: 2010: 19). Furthermore, French defence planning assumptions aim (from 225,000 troops) to simultaneously deploy up to 30,000 troops in a major expeditionary operation for up to one year (FWP, 2008: 11).

The Bundeswehr’s poor deployability is highlighted by the level of support required by each individual combat solider when compared with the UK and France. As Hodge (2012) notes: ‘Its tooth-to-tail ratio requires 35 uniformed and 15 civil personnel to support each solider in combat duty, while France gets by with a ratio of 1:8:2 and Britain with 1:9:4’. Moreover the separation between initial entry and stabilisation forces has undermined the capacity of the Bundeswehr to act effectively in complex crisis-management operations where the intensity of conflict can vary at speed. Germany’s ability to undertake expeditionary operations has also been hampered by the persistence of conscription until 2010 (Dyson, 2007: 74).
The current reform process makes two key changes for German force structures. Crucially a reduction of the Bundeswehr to 185,000 troops will take place, accompanied by the suspension of conscription and the introduction of a voluntary, up to 23 month, civil-service that will enable young people to undertake either community service or serve in the Bundeswehr (a maximum of 15,000 posts in the Bundeswehr) (Weise, 2010: 28). Secondly, in recognition of the tendency of operations to vary in intensity, the separation between attack, stabilisation and support forces will be abolished (Weise, 2010: 31).

The reforms will also make significant reforms to command structures to reduce their complexity and enhance the efficiency of operational leadership. The Weise Commission had recommended strengthening the role of the Generalinspekteur (General Inspector) by placing the Generalinspekteur on the same level as the Permanent State Secretaries. This would have embedded the Generalinspekteur firmly within the executive group of the Ministry (Weise, 2010: 31). The proposal was rejected by de Maizière, due to the fear of vesting too much power in a single military actor (Siebert, 2012: 65). Nevertheless, the position of the Generalinspekteur has been strengthened, as he will now take ultimate responsibility for all aspects of the planning, preparation, leadership and follow-up of military operations (Siebert, 2012: 64-5).

The Weise Commission’s recommendations to reduce the levels of hierarchy across the Bundeswehr in order to increase the transparency, simplicity and speed of decision-making processes have also been adopted (Weise, 2010: 31). The Commission included proposals to avoid overlapping responsibilities between the services by bringing together the civil and military sections of the Ministry on the basis of function, through a reduction of the ministry from 3,000 to 1,500 posts and moving all sections of the BMVg to Berlin, thereby reducing the number of departments in the Ministry by seven (Weise, 2010: 35). De Maizière has proved unwilling to challenge the division of the Defence Ministry between Berlin and Bonn, reflecting the political and bureaucratic difficulties in overcoming the Berlin-Bonn Gesetz that stipulated the distribution of government departments following reunification (Interview, SWP, 2012; Interview, BMVg, 2012).

However, de Maizière’s reform has adopted the Commission’s proposals to overcome duplication within the Ministry of Defence. The simplified Ministerial structures will include eight Departments: Politics; Budget; Law; Planning; Forces Leadership; Personnel; Armament and IT and Infrastructure. This is an important development, as it abolishes the division between civilian and military staff in the Defence Ministry that has existed since the creation of the Bundeswehr in 1955 and has fostered unnecessary complexity in policy planning and implementation (Siebert, 2012: 65). Finally, in order to reduce the complexity of operational leadership, the role of the services’ leadership commands in interna-
tional and national operations will also be diminished by further strengthening the Operations Command in Potsdam that will be placed under the direct leadership of the Generalinspekteur (Weise, 2010: 35). In short, these reforms to command structures are a very positive step towards enhancing the deployability and jointness of the Bundeswehr by reducing duplication, simplifying operational leadership and fostering a stronger Generalinspekteur who is able to overcome the more parochial concerns of the single services.

Military capabilities: the politics of procurement

Since 2003 a set of major C2ISR investment programmes have been instigated, which have put in place the foundations for a network-enabled Bundeswehr. The first key area of investment is the development of networkable radio equipment in order to boost C2 capabilities and interoperability with EU and NATO partners (Adams/Ben-Ari, 2006: 55-8; Dyson, 2010: 52-3). Secondly, investment has cohered around the creation of an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance network (ISR) including space-based reconnaissance systems, as well as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (Adams/Ben-Ari, 2006: 56-7; Flournoy/Smith, 2005: 91-3).

Despite these acquisitions, the Bundeswehr continues to lag behind its key NATO partners in networked capabilities. NEC is composed of three stages: an initial stage, where links between existing equipment are enhanced; a transitional phase where the integration of systems is improved and finally, a mature state in which all possible military equipment is synchronised. By 2007 British and French forces reached an initial networked capability (Dyson, 2010: 40-43). A demonstrator exercise had been planned for late 2013 to test the Bundeswehr’s initial network-enabled capability, but in late 2011 this exercise was postponed indefinitely. As the following section will demonstrate, this postponement is a consequence of doctrinal disagreement between the individual services over the implications of networking for command and control as well as the need to integrate the lessons of participation in the Afghan Mission Network (ISAF’s C4ISR network).

However, it is also the result of technical problems in interoperability between the command and control systems of the services as too little consideration was given to jointness and interoperability in procurement. The individual services have developed their own C2 systems which are unable to properly communicate with each other (Interview, BTC, 2012). Indeed, of the Bundeswehr’s 70 procurement programmes in 2010 only 6 were network-ready, 11 had limited NCW capability, while the remaining programmes were not network-ready (Wiesner, 2011: 15). Yet, as Wiesner (2011: 15) highlights: ‘the identification of these
problems did not result in a refocusing of command-and-control systems projects. Quite the contrary, service-specific communication platforms (…) continue to be funded’. In addition to problems in C2ISR acquisition, until recently Germany has continued to invest too heavily in capabilities more suitable for Cold War conflict scenarios than for expeditionary warfare (Dyson, 2011).

The lack of responsiveness and incoherence of the weapons acquisition system is a result of three deficits in the acquisition process. The first problem is the structuring of military input to defence planning. The Bundeswehr’s Budgetary and Armament Departments are composed of a significant number of civilian personnel who stay in post for several years. This allows civilian personnel to develop expertise and endows them with the capacity to challenge the proposals of military personnel, whose tenure in these Departments is usually no longer than two years (Interview, SWP, 2012). However, until de Maizière’s reform, the key organs responsible for decisions on changes and additions to the Bundeswehr’s acquisition programme were dominated by military input (Dyson, 2011: 261-64). These organs include the Integrated Working Group for Capability Analysis (responsible for translating the broader direction on capabilities provided by the 2006 DWP into decisions on force structures, doctrine and capability procurement), and the Military Advisory Board (that has ultimate decision-making authority on major projects). The Generalinspekteure of the individual services have therefore been able to trade-off support for their key projects. As a consequence, weapon systems can be purchased without significant consideration for the implications for the overall capability profile of the Bundeswehr (Dyson, 2011: 261-64; Interviews, BTC, 2009).

Secondly, the performance of the German procurement programme is undermined by the weak role of the German SAI. While the SAI is mandated to oversee procurement, it is only able to devote a small pool of manpower to the task (Dyson, 2011: 261-64). Finally, although the Bundestag enjoys the power to approve projects costing over €25 million, its capacity to hold the Defence Minister to account for delays and cost over-runs is limited. A culture of secrecy surrounds defence policy that undermines the ability of actors from civil society and Government institutions to properly sanction the Bundeswehr for the mismanagement of defence capability acquisition. There is, for example, no information available in the public realm from either the SAI or the Bundeswehr’s Armament Division on time-slippages and budget over-runs on major defence capability procurement programmes (Dyson, 2011: 261-64).

Poor civilian oversight of defence planning on military capabilities is not confined to Germany. The 2009 Independent Review of Acquisition conducted by Bernard Gray points to significant deficiencies in UK procurement, concluding that the costs of programmes are on average 40 per cent greater than planned and delivered 80 per cent later than estimated (Gray, 2009: 16). The report emphasis-
es the urgent need to reform the acquisition process to allow civilian actors to exert greater control over the services’ procurement plans (Gray, 2006: 9). Combined with the poor management of relations with industry, these deficits in the structuring of military input to defence planning in the UK have reduced the responsiveness of the procurement programme to ongoing operations by leaving a deficit of £36 Billion in the defence budget.

However, the Report of Lord Levene (who was mandated by the UK Government with developing reform proposals for the MoD’s procurement structures) of June 2011, outlines a number of reforms to the institutional structures of capability procurement. Changes include removing the single service chiefs from the Defence Board (the key decision-making organ on defence procurement) and replacing them with the Chief of Defence Staff (Levene, 2011: 4). In addition, military and civilian personnel will stay in post for longer at Defence Equipment and Support (the MoD’s procurement and support organisation). This will allow civilian staff to develop the expertise to challenge military opinion and give military staff the opportunity to focus on delivering capabilities, rather than individual weapon systems for their services (Levene, 2011: 4). Furthermore, by creating the Joint Forces Command (JFC) that will be overseen by a four star General, the reform also enhances jointness in procurement. The JFC is mandated with strengthening joint warfare development by acting as a ‘service-agnostic’ institution that ensures lessons learned from operations are fed more effectively into high-level decision-making on procurement (Levene, 2011: 4).

France enjoys a more efficient system of procurement. The French acquisition programme suffers from an average delay of only 1.5 months per year, compared to the average delay of 6 months per year in the UK, and is also subject to lower cost over-runs that the UK (Gray, 2009: 215). In contrast to Germany and the UK, decision-making on capability acquisition is highly-centralised and streamlined. Three staff work under the Defence Minister’s direct authority on acquisition: the Chief of the Defence Staff, the Chief Executive of the French Armament Agency (DGA) and the General Secretary of the Administration (Gray, 2009: 220-23). The Defence Minister takes full responsibility for project delivery that is coordinated through the Ministerial Investment Board (MIB). While the single services are represented on the MIB, the Minister must balance the services’ competing perspectives (Gray, 2009: 220-23). Finally, in contrast to the UK and Germany, the French National Assembly enjoys strong oversight powers on the defence budget through the Military Programme Law (LPM). The LPM establishes the military budget and major capability investment projects over a six year period and the Defence Minister must provide annual reports to parliament on the cost, timing and performance of projects (Gray, 2009: 220-23).

The reform proposals of de Maizière make a number of important changes to the process of procurement. Firstly, the reform establishes a central purchasing
organisation to foster a clear delineation of responsibility in acquisition by abolishing the overlapping structures of the BMVg’s Armament Division, Federal Office of Defence Technology and Procurement and the IT Division (Weise, 2010: 37). Furthermore, procurement process will be optimised by avoiding maximalist project specifications and through the use of off-the-shelf technology wherever possible to avoid the complexities associated with new projects (Weise, 2010: 37).

In addition, by making the Generalinspekteur responsible for combat readiness, the reform appears to provide an opportunity to foster greater coherence in procurement. While the Generalinspekteur previously only had a decisive decision-making role on the Military Advisory Board in cases where the services could not reach agreement, he now enjoys veto power (Interview, BMVg, 2012). Finally, the creation of the Planungsamt (that will work under the Bundeswehr’s new Political Division) will help ensure that jointness infuses the development of concepts and procurement. The reform process establishes a new Integrated Planning Process (IPP) that aims to ensure that fewer, but more coherent procurement plans are put forward to the upper echelons of the Ministry for approval. The IPP will be led by the Planungsamt who will exert strong centralised control and ensure that greater consideration is given to impact of procurement decisions for the overall capability profile of the Bundeswehr. As the single service commands are now located outside the structures of the Defence Ministry, all their input to capability development must be routed through the Planungsamt. Furthermore, the Planungsamt will be composed of a significant number of civilian personnel. This will not only permit the development of a greater level of knowledge and ‘institutional memory’, but will also ensure a higher level of impartiality in procurement.

However, problems remain. Firstly, the coordinative power of the Generalinspekteur may be stymied by his reliance on the services for information. Although the number of civilian staff dealing with procurement will increase, the military staff of the Planungsamt will consist of officers from the services whose tenure will only last two years. During these years they will be expected to act primarily in the interests of their service. Failure to do so would be likely to result in reduced promotion prospects (Interview, SWP, 2012). Secondly, in contrast to the high-level of civilian control exhibited by the French procurement process, the reform fails to strengthen the capacity of external actors, like the Bundestag and the SAI, to hold the BMVg to account for time slippages and cost-over-runs. Finally, while the Weise Commission recognised the need focus on off-the-shelf solutions and acknowledges the necessity for fundamental change in cooperation between the Bundeswehr and industry, the Commission and the reform do not propose specific measures which will allow the BMVg to
exert greater control over industry when projects are not delivered on time and to cost.

Concepts, doctrine and learning from operations

Germany exhibits highly-reactive doctrinal development, undermining Germany’s performance in operations and reducing its capacity to burden-share in CSDP and the NATO. As the introductory section highlighted, British and French thinking on concepts and doctrine associated with the RMA is highly developed. Both countries have converged around the ‘Effects Based Approach to Operations’ (EBAO) and more recently, ‘Effects-Based Thinking’. Significant conceptual development has also take place around NEC (Dyson, 2010: 28-47). German thinking on NEC has taken the form of Vernetzte Operationsführung (Networked Operational Command, Doctrine NetOpFü). The selective emulation of the RMA undertaken by Britain and France that focused on the adaptation of RMA technologies to deliver kinetic and non-kinetic effects, provided a strong indication of ‘best practice’ in networking (Dyson, 2010: 50-1). Hence while initial thinking on networking cohered closely with that of the US, these observations of Alliance partners have combined with Germany’s experiences in the Balkans and Afghanistan to ensure that NetOpFü emphasises the capacity of RMA technologies to facilitate the speedy, efficient application of military action across the conflict spectrum. There is also a broad consensus across that the principle of ‘Mission Command’ should stand at the heart of NetOpFü (Interview, BTC, 2012). However, significant contestation remains about EBAO and NetOpFü. Indeed, the 2009 Common Shield experiment, that formed an early test of the Bundeswehr’s networking capabilities, identified the lack of a common position on NetOpFü between the services as a major problem (Heitmüller 2009).

The Bundeswehr also suffers from deficits in Stabilisation and Counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine. In the UK and France, doctrine provides a detailed account of how to undertake Stabilisation and COIN operations (Alderson, 2010: 28-40; De Durand, 2010: 11-28). Crucially, British and French army doctrine has, since 1997, recognised that expeditionary crisis-management operations are characterised by conflict of rapidly varying intensity (Dyson, 2010: 34-47). Yet, until its revision in 2007, German Army doctrine (Truppenführung von Landstreitkräften) categorised fighting, peace-support and humanitarian aid into distinct conflict categories (Noetzel/Schreer, 2009: 16-22). Doctrine was updated in 2005 to include Guidelines for Operations against Irregular Forces; however it did not properly integrate the kinetic and non-kinetic dimensions of military operations (Noetzel/Schreer, 2009: 16-22). Hence the Bundeswehr lacks a compre-
hensive COIN doctrine suitable for the north of Afghanistan. In the words of a leading figure at the German Army Office, the absence of explicit COIN doctrine has ‘fostered a lack of COIN mindset within the Army’ (Interviews, Heeresamt, 2011).

Doctrinal adaptation has been hampered by the institutional structures of the BMVg, notably by the delay in the establishment of a formalised process of lesson evaluation and implementation following operations (‘lessons-learned’). The British and French adopted a digitised lessons-learned system in the late 1990s. Yet it was only in 2004 that Germany established an IT system to support lessons-learned (InfoSysEEBw) at the Operations Command (Interviews, Heeresamt, 2011). The Operations Command acts as a ‘service agnostic’ institution coordinating lesson identification and implementation, deciding which service should take the lead on the analysis of an issue and checking follow up through InfoSysEEBw (Interview, BMVg 2010). The Operational Staff and its section for Operational Assessment have also played an important role in enhancing the Bundeswehr’s capacity to adapt doctrine to the operational environment. It has allowed the military to more fully exploit InfoSysEEBw by more effectively identifying and disseminating lessons (Interview, BMVg, 2010). The work of the Operational Staff has been supplemented by the Bundeswehr’s Institute of Social Sciences that, on behalf of the Operational Staff, prepares questionnaires for commanders to be completed before, during and after deployment and organises workshops for commanders (Interview, BMVg, 2010). The 2004 establishment of the Bundeswehr Transformation Centre (BTC) as a ‘think-tank’ on issues of force structures, doctrine, military capabilities and concept development and experimentation (CD&E) also had a positive, albeit rather limited, impact on the Bundeswehr’s capacity to identify military ‘best-practice’.

While the creation of the Operations Staff has improved joint lessons learned, it has had negative implications for the lessons-learned processes within the individual services. In the UK, the services have the capacity to attend to issues which do not have implications for jointness and interoperability. However the Operations Command has the power to decide whether a single service issue enters into InfoSysEEBw. This control over lessons-learned is convenient for the core executive as it ensures that changes do not take place which may cause political difficulties (Dyson, 2012: 47-8) Yet it slows military adaptation and has led the Army Command to work outside the formal lessons-learned process to enact necessary changes to training, doctrine and procurement (Dyson, 2012: 41-2).

In addition, despite the establishment of the Working Group on Joint and Combined Operations (AGJACOP) at the Leadership Academy and the creation of the BTC, Germany has lacked a central body like the UK’s Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC) and France’s Centre for Concept Devel-
opment, Doctrine and Experimentation (CICDE) that can lead the development of joint doctrine. The implementation of doctrinal change involves a complex process of consultation that reduces the Bundeswehr’s ability to decisively respond to operational challenges and slows the speed with which changes are integrated into training (Dyson, 2012: 39-44). This problem has not only slowed the development of COIN doctrine, but has also reduced the capacity of the services to develop a consensus position on NetOpFu and EBAO.

Furthermore, the identification of lessons-learned in the Comprehensive Approach (known as ‘Networked Security’ in Germany) has been undermined by poor communication between the Foreign Ministry (AA) and BMVg. The lack of institutionalised dialogue between the two ministries has been particularly evident following cooperation in Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan (Interview, BMVg, 2010). The 2006 DWP contained two pages detailing the centrality of the Networked Security to German security policy (DWP, 2006: 22-24). However, the document was written by the BMVg and approved by the Cabinet without full AA ‘buy in’ (Interview, BTC, 2011). Networked Security is viewed by the AA as a concept that is ‘owned’ by the BMVg and a tool to allow it to accrue competencies from other ministries (Interview, SWP, 2012). Consequently, the AA is very reluctant to cede competencies to the BMVg in this area (Interview, SWP, 2012). In addition, the Interior Ministry and Police broadly continue to view overseas missions as outside their traditional areas of responsibility (Interview, BMVg, 2012).

Moreover, whilst in the UK and France the military is permitted significant autonomy in doctrinal development and implementation, German doctrine is subject to strong civilian control (Aust/Vashakmadze, 2008: 2223-36). The Bundestag enjoys constitutionally-mandated powers over operational issues, including rules of engagement, command and control and risk-assessment. In contrast, the oversight powers of the UK Parliament extend only to the approval of a mission’s mandate and the right to visit troops on deployment, while the French National Assembly enjoys the right to vote on troop deployments, but only four months after the initiation of an operation (Aust/Vashakmadze, 2008: 2225). The high-level of Bundestag control has been matched by preoccupation of the core executive and BMVg political leadership with doctrinal development and tactical and operational issues (Dyson, 2012: 48). Strong civilian control not only complicates the process of doctrinal development, but also allows party-political concerns to cloud doctrinal decision-making, fostering stagnation. This stagnation has been evident in the development of an explicit German COIN doctrine that has proved a particularly sensitive political issue (Dyson, 2012; Noetzle/Schreer, 2009; Noetzle, 2011). Finally, German doctrine remains classified and doctrinal development is surrounded by a culture of secrecy. Classification limits the military’s ability to call upon expertise from academia and civil socie-
Hence despite the steps taken by the BTC to foster a more open environment to doctrinal and conceptual development within the *Bundeswehr*, it was less successful in engaging with external actors (Interview, BTC, 2011).

The changes to command structures outlined earlier in this section have been welcomed by key figures within the *Bundeswehr* responsible for coordinating the ‘lessons-learned’ process as an important step in enhancing the implementation of lessons-learned. It is anticipated that these changes will lead to a reduction in the number of veto-points to enacting change and that they will enhance ability of the *Generalinspekteur* to ensure greater coherence in the process of military transformation (Interview, BMVg, 2010; Interview, BMVg, 2012). Zu Guttenberg had also given consideration to proposals to bring together the work of the Leadership Academy, Centre for Inner Leadership, *Bundeswehr* Universities, the Academy for Information and Communication, Institute for German Military History, BTC and *Bundeswehr* Institute for Social Sciences to create a single Defence Academy (Interview, BTC, 2011; Interview, BMVg, 2012; Interview, SWP, 2012). Had this restructuring been enacted, it would not only have led to a reduction in costs, but would also have helped to streamline the analysis and follow up of lessons-learned and the identification of doctrinal ‘best-practice’ from observation of the experiences of Alliance partners. However, following vociferous opposition from the Academy for Information and Communication, Institute for Social Sciences and Centre for Inner Leadership, these proposals were dropped (Interview, SWP, 2012).

Nevertheless, de Maizière’s proposals offer hope of improvement in the intellectual dynamism of the *Bundeswehr*, notably through the creation of the *Planungsamt*. The *Planungsamt* will incorporate staff from AGJACOP as well as the Transformation Centre and create an organisation with the power to take a lead role on doctrine and conceptual development. This development is likely to have a positive impact by allowing greater centralised control in conceptual and doctrinal development. It will, for example, allow a stronger level of coordination to be exerted in conceptual development on *NetOpFü*. A single actor will be aware of all the activities – technical, organisational and conceptual – which are taking place within the single services and various sections of the Ministry on *NetOpFü*. The Division for *NetOpFü* within the *Planungsamt* will have the power to intervene in these processes and enjoy similar powers to the UK’s NEC Programme Office that was established at the UK MoD in 2007 and has enjoyed relative success in overseeing and directing the concept development and implementation of NEC (Wiesner, 2011).

The reform proposals are, however, silent on the problem of excessive civilian interference in doctrine that has fostered doctrinal inertia. In addition, the reform fails to address the lack of openness to critical reflection that derives from the classification of doctrine. Finally, the reform process does little to attend to defi-
ciencies in cross-government cooperation under ‘Networked Security’. In particular, the reform missed an opportunity to establish an organisation akin to the UK’s Stabilisation Unit (jointly owned by the Foreign Office, Defence Ministry and Department for International Development) that could help to mediate cross-government collaboration more effectively.

In summary, the analysis presented in the above sub-sections highlight the negative impact of the institutional structures of the Bundeswehr and BMVg and poor civil-military relations in defence planning processes on the German defence reform process. However, the following section will demonstrate that these deficiencies in defence planning processes are a symptom of a wider set of problems which beset German defence politics at the macro-political level.

The German political system and impediments to the effective structuring of military input to defence planning

The majority of the literature on German defence policy posits that German strategic culture – rooted in the moral and military defeat of WW2 and characterised by anti-militarism and a reflexive commitment to multilateralism – is an important determinant, not only of the content of German defence policy, but also the nature of defence politics (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2006; Longhurst, 2004). The concept of strategic culture emphasises the role played by cognitive paradigms within societies and the key institutions of defence and security policy-making in ‘predisposing societies in general and political elites in particular to certain actions and policies over others’ (Duffield, 1998: 27). According to this scholarship, the retention of conscription for the first two decades of the post-Cold War era and concern about the need for a high-level of civilian control over rules of engagement and military doctrine are a consequence of the legacy of Germany’s past. Our attention should, however, not be focused so much on the impact of strategic culture, but on the federal political system. The institutional structure of the German state and particular linkages between defence, budgetary and social policy has narrowed the autonomy of the core executive to make far-reaching changes to the content of German defence policy and by extension, to the institutional structures of German defence politics.

Firstly, the federal system has created a preoccupation amongst successive defence ministers with the politics of base closures. Military bases can sustain thousands of jobs and directly affect the political interests of Länder politicians, engaging in particular the interest of Länder Chancelleries and Economies Ministries (Dyson, 2007). In the UK and France, the unitary state provides significant windows of opportunity to push through politically-unpalatable large-scale base closures. However, the regular regional elections of the German federal sys-
tem and power of the Länder through the Bundesrat has created a greater degree of sensitivity to regional concerns (Dyson, 2007). Hence the difficulty of managing the electoral fall-out of base closures affected the willingness of Defence Ministers to propose large-scale force reductions, including the conscription’s abolition. It also led to the political targeting of base closures, whereby bases were not closed on the basis of a sober assessment of military requirements, but national and Länder electoral cycles and the extent to which Länder contributed to the policy success of the governing coalition (Dyson, 2007: 64-65).

Secondly, the autonomy of the core executive in defence is also restricted by the impact of the German federal system on the capacity of political elites to mobilise the public on behalf of contemporary security challenges. German public opinion is sensitive to the development of a more assertive military doctrine and the use of the Bundeswehr for higher-intensity operations. However, to locate this sensitivity solely within the German security culture and the ‘culture of anti-militarism’ that took root during the post-war era neglects the malleability of culture that is a resource as well as constraint in the mobilisation of society on behalf of defence, foreign and security policy goals (Dyson, 2007: 165-73).

During the Cold War anti-militarism and multilateralism formed the central pillars of German defence and security policy. These principles formed a logical response to Germany’s security environment after the end of WW2. The restrictions on German sovereignty which were imposed following WW2 restricted the Bundeswehr to the defence of German territory. The principles of anti-militarism and embedding German defence and security policy within multilateral frameworks were vital mechanisms in managing German rehabilitation into the international community and in ensuring international support for reunification (Cole, 2001: 6-12). By the early 1990s these imperatives had taken on a significant level of ideological rigidity. However, the post-Cold War era presented new imperatives, notably the need to deploy high-intensity expeditionary military force as part of coalitions of the willing. As a result, the narratives which had been deployed to legitimate German adherence to the dictates of Cold War security exigencies needed radical reshaping.

The British and French unitary political systems provide substantial windows of opportunity to take unpopular decisions about expeditionary troop deployment and to make fundamental changes to long-standing tenets of their defence and security policies. For example, upon his election in 2007 without the constraints of cohabitation, French President Nicolas Sarkozy enjoyed the opportunity to refashion nationalism and ideology by using Gaullist principles were used in a controversial and ‘hollowed-out’ form to justify reintegration to NATO’s integrated command structures. Sarkozy claimed that reintegration was as a ‘break with the method, but not the principles’ of Gaullism and was a means with which to ensure French ‘independence’ (France 24: 2009). In contrast, regular elections
at the Länder level complicate the process of reshaping the discursive narratives underpinning German defence and security policy (Interview, AA, 2012). During the post-Cold War era German policy-makers have, therefore, been forced to undertake a ‘salami-slicing’ approach to redefining the role of military power in German defence policy that involved regular, but limited, changes to policy (Dyson, 2007: 69-71).

The linkages between defence, budgetary and social policy in Germany have also had an important impact upon the temporality of German defence reform and have had a particularly strong impact on German force structures. Germany’s well-established system of conscientious objection provided cheap labour for the German social system throughout the post-Cold War era. Each year between 80,000-130,000 young men worked in the social system at a third of the cost of professionals. Hence the Federal Finance Ministry was highly-reluctant to abolish conscription, for fear of the negative impact on the process of budget consolidation (Dyson, 2007). In contrast, the sudden abolition of conscription by President Jacques Chirac in 1996 was facilitated by a system of conscientious objection that did not permit extensive social work and the large window of opportunity afforded by a seven-year term in office. It was only in 2010, once the utility of conscripts in contemporary military operations had become unequivocally clear, that zu Guttenberg suspended conscription.

These three factors have played a significant role in creating the dysfunctional model of civil-military relations in defence planning outlined in the above section. The incentive provided by low executive autonomy in defence to manage the pace of defence reform has led Defence Ministers to block ‘bottom-up’ learning from operations. Hence Ministers have failed to enhance the Bundeswehr’s intellectual dynamism, not only on questions of force structures, but also in doctrine, where low executive autonomy has had a very detrimental impact. ‘Bottom-up’ learning processes about the implications of operations for doctrine had the potential to upset the ‘salami-tactic’. As a consequence, civilian policy-leaders have played an active role in hindering the ability of the Bundeswehr to tackle any lessons from theatre that sit uncomfortably with perceived electoral imperatives, not least the development of an explicit COIN doctrine (Dyson, 2012: 39-44). This situation contrasts markedly to the UK, where under conditions of high executive autonomy in defence, the military is allocated a great deal of freedom to facilitate adherence with doctrinal best practice (Dyson, 2012: 34-39). Civilian intervention in doctrinal development in the UK and France has not focused upon dictating the content of doctrine. Instead civilians have sought to create institutional structures, such as the DCDC and CICDE, which can promote objectivity in joint doctrinal development (Dyson, 2012: 34-39; Dyson, 2010: 153-57).
Furthermore, restrictions in executive autonomy have also hampered the responsiveness of the German procurement programme. The previous section has highlighted the impact of organisational politics between the single services and dysfunctional civil-military relations in defence procurement planning processes. However, these problems are, to a great extent, a consequence of the way the federal political system sensitises Defence Ministers to job losses in the German defence industry. As a source within the BMVg noted: ‘The presence of powerful regional politicians makes it very difficult to push through a radical reform to capability acquisition or force postures’ (Interviews, BTC, 2009). This lack of political will to reform the acquisition process fosters an inappropriately low level of civilian interference in defence planning processes. It reduces the capacity of the Bundestag to scrutinise the utility of the procurement programme in the context of changing security exigencies and also limits the ability of ‘service agnostic’ organisations to foster greater objectivity in conceptual development and procurement. The UK’s high levels of executive autonomy are not matched by an efficient system of defence capability procurement, due to poor civilian management of decision-making processes surrounding defence acquisition. However, in France, high executive autonomy, married with astute political leadership on the institutional structures of procurement has fostered a particularly adaptable and efficient system of acquisition.

Conclusions: overcoming low executive autonomy

Driven by the imperatives of contemporary security challenges, Germany is undergoing a slow process of ‘normalisation’ in the attitude of the general public and political elites to the use of military force. As a source in the CDU/CSU noted: ‘In the light of the reduced ambitions of the British and potential for cuts in the French armed forces, Germany is going to have to begin to fully translate its economic power into military power in order to pick up a greater share of the security burden in Europe’ (Interview, CDU, 2012). The recent reforms set in place by de Maizière have taken some important steps to achieving this goal by increasing the pace of German convergence with the defence reforms of her key European partners in the areas of force structures, military capabilities and doctrine.

Yet, as this chapter has highlighted, a number of deficiencies remain in the transmission belt linking changes in the international system with changes to force structures, military capabilities and doctrine. These deficiencies are a result of problems in the ‘internal’ politics of the BMVg, whose institutional structures fail to properly mitigate the negative impact of inter-service rivalry on defence policy and do not provide a sufficiently critical and dynamic intellectual envi-
ronment. However, it is the low autonomy of the core executive in defence policy that has incentivised politicians to develop ineffective oversight mechanisms in defence. As a consequence, Germany exhibits a rather dysfunctional model of civil-military relations in defence planning, whereby civilian intervention is excessive in doctrine and more laissez-faire in capability procurement. There are, however, signs that this disabling context of low executive autonomy can be overcome in certain areas of defence reform.

Changing public attitudes to the use of military force and the need to enhance military adaptability are likely, over time, to foster a more effective model of civil-military relations in doctrine development through the allocation of greater freedom to the military in tactical and lower-operational level doctrine. However, the constitutionally-enshrined division of competencies between Ministries acts as a fundamental impediment to the development of greater cross-government collaboration as part of Networked Security at the higher-operational level. Furthermore, despite the positive changes which will be delivered by the Integrated Planning Process, the presence of powerful regional politicians with an interest in sustaining jobs in the German defence industry is likely to continue to de-incentivise greater transparency and the development of effective civilian oversight mechanisms in procurement.

**Bibliography**


