

Germany: First New Post-Cold War World Military Power

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The reemergence of Germany as an active military power in Europe and increasingly worldwide occurred entirely under the auspices of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which West Germany joined in 1955 and the East was brought into with reunification in 1990. The citizens of the former German Democratic Republic were given no opportunity to discuss much less vote on the issue.

The first post-World War II deployment of German military forces outside its borders – and outside of NATO’s self-defined security zone – in active military roles rather than in multinational exercises and United Nations missions was fostered and initiated under the chancellorship of Christian Democrat Helmut Kohl in the first half of the last decade.

But it was the Social Democrat-Green Party coalition government of Gerhard Schroeder and Joschka Fischer, what the Western press regularly referred to (with no tincture of irony and less understanding of political history) as a Red-Green alliance, that involved Germany in its first wars since the fall of Berlin in 1945. In fact two wars in less than two and a half years.

Chancellor Schroeder and his foreign minister Joschka Fischer provided Tornado warplanes for the 78-day bombing campaign against Yugoslavia in the spring of 1999 and troops for the post-invasion occupation of Afghanistan after October, 2001. Both were NATO operations and the second was in response to the first-ever activation of the Alliance’s Article 5 mutual military assistance clause.

Humanitarian Intervention: 1939 And 1999

Writing in his memoirs years after the event, Schroeder justified his participating in the first unprovoked military assault against a European nation that had not threatened any other country since Hitler’s blitzkrieg campaigns of 1939-1941 by describing his motivations at the time, 1999:

“Now, on the cusp of the 21st century, the real challenge seemed to me not just to douse the most recent fire in the Balkans, but to bring peace to the region....The goal was exclusively humanitarian.”

Sixty years before the war upon which he reflected a predecessor of Schroeder as chancellor of Germany said:

“I ordered the German Air Force to conduct humanitarian warfare....In this campaign I gave an order to spare human beings.”

The latter is from Adolf Hitler's speech in Danzig/Gdansk on September 19, 1939.

It's also worth noting that one of the main justifications Hitler used for the invasion of Poland eighteen days before that speech was the alleged abuse and persecution of ethnic minorities. ("More than 1,000,000 people of German blood had in the years 1919-20 to leave their homeland. As always, I attempted to bring about, by the peaceful method of making proposals for revision.")}

In an interview with an American television station during the war against Yugoslavia German Foreign Minister Fischer said, "I think tradition and historical experiences, historical fears are very important. And for us now we have to find our role. And this is, on the military level, a very difficult one, but we are taking part in the air campaign. We have ships in the Adriatic."

The air campaign wreaked death and destruction from the skies for 78 days, not sparing factories, bridges, refugee columns, passenger trains, religious processions, apartment complexes, hospitals and the Chinese embassy.

Weakening United Nations, Strengthening NATO

The aggression Fischer endorsed and help to direct, malicious and cowardly as it was, was also conducted without UN authorization and in flagrant violation of the principles upon which the United Nations Organization was formed.

Article 33 of the United Nations Charter states:

"The parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice."

The mediation indicated is to be conducted as a last resort in the UN Security Council and not unilaterally at NATO Headquarters in Brussels.

The Nuremberg Tribunal convened after the defeat of the last European power that arrogated to itself the right to attack other nations on the continent and to redraw its borders and defined crimes against peace as the worst violation of international law.

Principle VI of the 1950 Principles of the Nuremberg Tribunal characterized crimes against peace as the "Planning, preparation, initiation or waging of a war of aggression or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances" and as the "Participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of any of the acts mentioned under."

From The Balkans To South Asia And Middle East: Air War Followed By Ground War, Naval Blockades

Although the tool employed to pry open the door barring the resumption of military aggression in Europe was so-called humanitarian intervention, that rationale would be discarded immediately after 50,000 NATO troops marched into the Serbian province of Kosovo. Few wars in modern times have not hid behind the pretext of defending the national security and safety of the citizens of the aggressor and of protecting innocents from harm and mistreatment.

The Schroeder-Fischer administration put Germany back into the business of waging war from the skies and on the ground and the country has continued to travel the same route ever since. Troops, armored vehicles and Tornados were transferred to South Asia and warships to the coasts of Lebanon and Somalia.

Humanitarian intervention was an ad hoc ruse employed to launch NATO as an active 'out of area' warfighting machine and a political body to circumvent and replace the United Nations. Once the first part of that objective had been achieved it was dropped as quickly as it had been concocted and wars could then be conducted for traditional reasons: Territorial designs, the acquisition of resources, control of vital transport routes including sea lanes, punishing recalcitrant adversaries, revenge.

In the process Germany became the first major post-Cold War international military power. So much so indeed that even Time Magazine couldn't ignore the transformation – the Transformation as will be seen later – and in January of this year ran a feature entitled "Will Germany's Army Ever Be Ready for Battle?"

In two sentences the Time report summed up how much territory has been traversed since what many in the world thought was the end of German militarism in 1945.

"The German army as it stands today is a relatively young creation, born after a period of demilitarization following the end of World War II. [T]he Bundeswehr has become increasingly engaged in international missions and is coming under pressure to step up its involvement in out-and-out warfare."

The turning point was, of course, 1990.

"Since the 1990s, after reunification, German forces have become more involved in military missions abroad....There are currently 247,000 soldiers enrolled in the Bundeswehr and German troops are now serving all over the world, in places such as Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia and Lebanon." [1]

Why Wars Are Really Launched

By 2006 "Germany [had] about 9,000 soldiers deployed in German missions around the world, a level [that] could increase to...14,000 troops in five theaters of operation." At the time Defense Minister Franz-Josef Jung identified a main purpose of such missions and humanitarian intervention was conspicuously not mentioned:

"Eighty percent of our trade occurs on the seas, which naturally includes the security of energy supplies and raw materials."

The exact words could have been used in 1914 and 1941.

In discussing the White Paper his ministry had just released, one which highlighted the transformation of the Bundeswehr into an international intervention force, Jung reiterated that NATO relations "remain the basis for Germany and Europe's shared security" and that Germany's alliance with the United States was of "paramount importance" to the nation. [2]

Jung added that "the government needs the ability to use the Bundeswehr inside of Germany...." [3]

Later that year Chancellor Angela Merkel initiated the next step in Germany's expanding militarization and demanded an end to caps on defense spending. "You cannot say that the planned defense budget for the next 20 years is sacrosanct. A German government cannot say, 'Please, don't take part in any new conflicts in the next decades, because we can't afford it.'" [4]

As she spoke German armed forces were deployed on eleven international military missions and would soon begin a twelfth by sending warships and troops to enforce the naval blockade of Lebanon's Mediterranean coast.

The Transformation

A German news report in the autumn of 2006 revealed that "An official plan to modernize the Bundeswehr – to turn it from an unwieldy behemoth created to defend its own borders into a lithe organization ready to take on asymmetric threats around the world – has been underway for several years.

"Known in policy circles simply as 'the transformation,' it is due to be completed by 2010." [5]

That conversion process included acquiring 600 Taurus air-launched cruise missiles. "Taurus is a 1,400-kilogram, all-weather guided missile with a range of more than 350 kilometers. The system will equip Tornado, Eurofighter and F-18 aircraft of the German and Spanish air forces." [6]

It also, in 2006, included plans to spend six billion euros on "new navy frigates, submarines, helicopters and armored personnel vehicles."

In relation to Defense Minister Jung's earlier comments, "Germany's military leadership has especially focused on modernizing the country's navy fleet." [7]

At roughly the same time it was announced that Germany would acquire 405 Puma tanks, "the most modern infantry tank on the market," comparable to the US Abrams tank used in Iraq. This month Berlin formally placed an order for the Pumas and a spokesman for its manufacturer said "NATO countries already equipped with the Krauss-Maffei Wegmann's Leopard tanks – such as Spain, Turkey, Greece and Australia – would be ideal customers." [8]

The Puma, which "sets new global standards for armored vehicles," was first unveiled at the Bundeswehr's fifty-year anniversary celebrations in Munster in 2006. "New types of missions...require a highly mobile weapons system that is ready for international deployment...." [9]

The preceding autumn Germany acquired two new submarines to add to eleven already in the Baltic Sea which then Defense Minister Peter Struck described as "a milestone" for his nation's navy. [10]

The Tornado multirole warplane first used against Yugoslavia in 1999 and since deployed to Afghanistan is reported to be capable of delivering nuclear warheads, including the twenty the US maintains at the German air base at Buechel.

Since 1989 German Tornado fighter-bombers have been based at the Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico in the Southwestern United States. The American base “is the only location where the German Air Force trains aircrews in Tornado aircraft operations and tactics.” [11] Last year the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency advocated the continuation of the arrangement, stating that it would “contribute to the foreign policy and national security objectives of the United States by improving the military capabilities of Germany and enhancing standardization and interoperability with U.S. forces.” [12]

Bundeswehr In South And Central Asia

In 2006 NATO first requested that the Luftwaffe send Tornado planes to Afghanistan where Berlin has stationed 3,700 troops, the third largest contingent in NATO’s International Security Assistance (ISAF) force, with the only the US and Britain providing larger numbers of troops. Germany has its own base in Uzbekistan near Termez and as such has the only foreign forces left in that nation since the US and other NATO forces were expelled in 2005. As of three years ago Germany had transported over 125,000 troops through the base. [13] Last year the German military announced plans to build a 67-kilometer railway line from Uzbekistan to Northern Afghanistan, complementing the air bridge it already operates.

In 2007 Germany delivered the first six Tornados to the war front in Afghanistan even though “More than three-quarters of Germans – 77 percent – said the country shouldn’t comply with NATO’s request to send Tornado jets to Afghanistan....” [14]

Plans for the warplanes were that they “would operate across the entire country, taking aerial pictures of Taliban positions and passing the information on to other NATO partners who would carry out strikes.” [15]

A German defense official at the time finally acknowledged that “What happens in Afghanistan is combat. Our troops have already been engaged in that, also in the north.” [16]

Though a year earlier a Defense Ministry spokesman, with no reference to alleged peacekeeping and certainly not to humanitarianism, admitted that “German military aircraft are seeing action in the volatile southern region of Afghanistan” and that “German military aircraft are supporting NATO operations in volatile southern Afghanistan.” [17]

No More ‘Humanitarian’ Bombs

In a Der Spiegel feature called “Slouching Towards Combat,” a warning was issued that “He who spies targets, contributes to later bombing attacks with all the consequences that go along with them, including the ominous collateral damages previously known from the war in Kosovo.” [18] The admonition fell on deaf ears in Berlin.

The same source had earlier sounded another alarm, one worth quoting in length.

“Now it’s Tornado surveillance jets, equipped with cameras – and cannons. The Germans are allowing themselves to get deeper and deeper involved in the Afghanistan conflict, and there is no end in sight.

“Between Christmas and New Year [2006], US C-17 transport planes will unload heavy German Marder tanks at the German military’s central headquarters in Mazar-e-Sharif.

“German Tornado jets were already deployed in combat situations about eight years ago – in order to ‘avert a humanitarian catastrophe’ in the Kosovo conflict, as the Bundestag resolution...stated then. It was the first time that German troops were deployed in combat since World War II. This time the Tornados are meant to fly as reconnaissance planes – but that can of course be changed at any time. They fire armor-shattering uranium munitions from their cannons and drop laser-guided precision bombs on the farms where the Taliban take refuge.

“But they also drop so-called ‘general purpose bombs’ – regular explosives of the kind commonly used for carpet bombing during World War II and in Vietnam.” [19]

In 2007 Germany additionally sent several Kleinfluggeraet Zielortung drones to the war theater, a type “much better suited to relay target information for artillery used by the Dutch troops in their fight against the Taliban....” [20]

At the same time former German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, who had first sent German combat troops to Afghanistan and for the first time ever to Asia, urged the current government to “widen its military operation into the southern part of the war-afflicted country.” [21]

Early in 2007 Germany signaled its intent to send its most sophisticated battle tank, the Leopard 2A6, to Southern Afghanistan, although German troops are stationed in the until recently comparatively peaceful North.

Last year Germany assumed command of NATO’s Rapid Reaction Force in Afghanistan. A news report on that development added that “When the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) deployed in Afghanistan in early 2002, some 850 German troops were in its ranks.

“That number has increased more than fourfold.

War Of West, NATO, Civilization: From Afghan Capital To North To Southern War Zone

“Confined at first to Kabul, the Germans’ mission was widened to the northern part of the country, where they took command in 2006....A few days ago the German Defence Ministry announced it was raising the ceiling on its troop deployments in Afghanistan from 3,500 to 4,500. And the next escalation is due on Monday as Germany takes over the [Rapid] Reaction Force in the north.” [22]

Earlier in the year an American presswire report titled “Germany enters Afghan war” said that “Germany...will now send battle forces to Afghanistan.

“NATO has for the second time requested that the German government deploy a unit of 250 battle soldiers to Afghanistan as part of a rapid-response force.....The unit would have to enter bloody combat if needed....” [23]

Der Spiegel reported last October that Germany, which has disguised its role in the war in Afghanistan behind the mask of so-called provincial reconstruction and other civilian projects, had spent over 3 billion euros on the Afghan War and that “Germany’s military expenditures in Afghanistan are nearly four times as high as its civilian aid.” [24]

This year, as part of Washington’s and NATO’s massive escalation of the war in Afghanistan,

German troop strength is to be boosted from 3,700 to 4,400 no later than next month and Berlin has agreed to send four AWACS for the war effort in South Asia.

As German combat deaths increased to 35 late last month, Defense Minister Franz Josef Jung demonstrated no reservations about sacrificing more soldiers and to any who had misgivings about a war that will soon be eight years old and that is only intensifying he blustered: "My answer is clear: we are in Afghanistan because we have to protect there the security of citizens in Germany." [25] A decade before some reference to the well-being of the local population would have been invoked, however disingenuously.

A week before, Jung, casting aside all use of peacekeeping, reconstruction and other euphemisms, told a German public television station: "If we are attacked we will fight back. The army has the necessary answers. In recent battles we have done well and we will continue to do so in the future." [26]

Former defense minister Volker Ruhe, in referring to the fact that the Bundeswehr is conducting the largest and longest military operation in its history, said: "It is delusive if the Government pretends that the Afghanistan operation is a sort of armed development assistance. It is a war of NATO, of the West, of civilisation...." [27]

Afghanistan and Central Asia are not the only places where the German military is waging a "war of NATO, of the West, of civilisation."

Battle Duty: Germany Returns To Middle East

After Israel's war in Lebanon in the summer of 2006 NATO nations began a naval blockade of the country's coast. It was announced shortly thereafter that "Germany is to take the lead in patrolling the Lebanese coast and the German parliament is expected to vote next week on the historic deployment of the German army in the Middle East.

"Up to 3,000 troops and some 13 vessels are then planned to be sent to the troubled region. They are to prevent sea-based arms smuggling mainly from Syria to Hezbollah militants." [28]

That is, the German military returned to the Middle East for the first time since World War II.

Describing the mission as it was being planned, Defense Minister Jung stated, "German soldiers have to be prepared against the will of ships' captains to board ships suspected of smuggling weapons. In this regard, one can speak of battle duty." [29]

In late 2008 there were 1,000 German troops stationed on eight ships off the Lebanese coast.

By February of last year "Germany contributed 2,400 personnel, including 625 soldiers, to the naval mission and led the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for 17 months, with a maritime force consisting of among others two frigates and two supply ships. The multinational force also includes ships from France, Spain and Portugal." [30]

Two years later a Lebanese news report, "German Tanks to Lebanon to Control Border with Syria," said that "Germany has decided to provide Lebanon with 50 Leopard tanks in addition to other military equipment to upgrade its border control with Syria" and that "a

German military delegation is expected to arrive in Lebanon early in 2009 for discussions with Lebanese military officials regarding providing the Lebanese army with more military supplies.” [31]

Since the early 1990s Germany has not so much sold but given Israel six Dolphin submarines capable of launching nuclear-tipped missiles. One of those submarines recently crossed the Suez Canal into the Mediterranean in what Reuters characterized as a “signal to Iran.”

Germany has military personnel assigned to NATO in Kuwait, Jordan and Iraq, where in the latter instance they are part of the NATO Training Mission – Iraq in Baghdad.

Beginning in 2006 major German news sources revealed that the foreign intelligence agency BND (Bundesnachrichtendienst) during the Schroeder-Fischer years had provided the US information on bombing targets in Iraq leading up to and during the attack against the nation in 2003.

If so, it would represent nothing new. More than two years before, in February of 2001, the BND released a report which stated it possessed “evidence” that “Iraq has resumed its nuclear programme and may be capable of producing an atomic bomb in three years” and was working on chemical and biological weapons. [32]

Berlin also trains Iraqi and Afghan officers and troops on its own soil.

Germany Military Returns To Africa And Targets Gaza

Germany has provided troops for the NATO mission in the Darfur region of Sudan and the European Union deployment in Congo as well as a nominal force for the EU’s military role in Chad and the Central African Republic in the conflict-ridden triangle of those two nations and Sudan.

In 2005 the government of Togo, a former German colony, accused Berlin of complicity in plotting its overthrow. Three years earlier Germany sent troops to join French, British and American allies in Ivory Coast after an invasion of and coup attempt in that nation.

Late last year Germany joined the European naval deployment in the Horn of Africa to complement its involvement with the NATO mission there. The Cabinet authorized “as many as 1,400 German Navy soldiers and one warship go to the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Somalia as part of a joint EU effort” which “together with German soldiers involved in Enduring Freedom and NATO’s Allied Provider missions, could be moved back and forth at will....” [33]

Before the deployment was authorized defense chief Jung said “German warships should be used against pirates wherever German interests are threatened.” [34]

During and immediately after the Israeli offensive in Gaza from December 27, 2008-January 18 2009 it was announced that “Germany plans to send experts to detect Gaza tunnels” [35] and that “Technical experts from Germany are to travel to Egypt in the coming days to help secure its border with the Gaza Strip.” [36]

In the middle of the war Chancellor Angela Merkel “suggested German peacekeepers be sent to Gaza” and Eckart von Klaeden, a foreign policy spokesman for

Merkel's Christian Democratic Union, said "the use of German troops was feasible but they must have 'robust' powers." [37]

In January a meeting was held in London of the Gaza Counter-Arms Smuggling Initiative (GCASI) and was followed up last month in Ottawa, Canada.

It was reported in a story called "Canada hosts a summit of NATO countries participating in the Israeli siege of Gaza Strip" that the second meeting of the Gaza Counter-Arms Smuggling Initiative was held with the "declared goal of tightening the Israeli siege and blockade of the Gaza Strip." [38]

The GCASI members are Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States.

While the assault on Gaza was still underway a feature called "Israeli unilateral ceasefire to pave the way for deployment of NATO forces" offered this analysis of the role that the Gaza Counter-Arms Smuggling Initiative was intended to play:

"Germany, Great Britain and France already offered to send their naval forces to guard the Gaza Strip coastal waters. With the naval forces of leading European NATO powers already deployed off the coast of Lebanon and – allegedly to thwart pirates – off the Somali coast, the extension of NATO presence to the coastal waters of the Gaza Strip is designed to create a permanent hold on the entire area from the Horn of Africa and beyond, through the Suez Canal and up the eastern Mediterranean coast." [39]

Training Armed Forces For New Caucasus Wars

A German Defense Ministry envoy visited the Georgia capital of Tbilisi this January and met with Deputy Defense Minister Giorgi Muchaidze, who said that "Georgia approaches closer to NATO standards" in large part because "Germany has been helping Georgia's Defence Ministry for a long time" and "Up to 2,000 officers were trained in Germany." [40]

Germany conducts comparable military training for the armed forces of Azerbaijan, like Georgia which fought a war with Russia last August a nation that may resume armed hostilities any day over so-called frozen conflicts in the South Caucasus.

In late May of this year Georgian Deputy Defense Minister Giorgi Muchaidze paid a three-day visit to Berlin where "The sides held military and political negotiations in the framework of the cooperation of Defense Ministries of Georgia and Germany in 2009. The parties also discussed the situation in Georgia after the August war...." [41]

Article 5 War Clause: Defending NATO Members, Allies From Baltic To Black Sea

In June Defense Minister Jung was in Lithuania preparatory to Germany resuming its command of the NATO Baltic air patrol and he and his Lithuanian counterpart "agreed on the need to implement the commitment on Ukraine and Georgia's future membership of the alliance."

As to what support for Ukraine's and Georgia's "NATO aspirations" entailed, Jung said "this process must involve all new members of the alliance, whereas NATO itself must ensure collective defence and strengthen its military response forces so that it can give an immediate response when the need arises." [42]

Defending Berlin With Warships Off Cape Town

In 2006 Germany led 19-day joint military maneuvers in South Africa where Berlin has long-standing ties to the defense establishment going back to the longstanding cooperation between West Germany and the former apartheid regime there. The exercises off Cape Town included an estimated 1,300 soldiers and sailors, warplanes and warships.

A description of the war games said "Two of the world's most advanced warships, South Africa's SAS Amatola and Germany's FGS Hamburg, together with fighter aircraft were protecting a virtual Berlin from attack.

"Berlin was successfully defended." [43]

A year later NATO held naval exercises in South Africa in which warships from the navies of Canada, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United States participated.

The drills marked the "the first time that South Africa engage[d] its newly acquired frigates as well as its submarines in a training exercise with foreign forces in local waters.

"South Africa's new warships were acquired from a German company." [44]

....

The road from Bosnia and Kosovo has been a long one for the Bundeswehr. It has crossed four continents and no less than fourteen war and conflict zones. It has permitted a military buildup unimaginable a generation ago and has led to German military forces being dispersed to many nations and regions they had never been to before.

It has also permitted Germany to become the third largest arms exporter in the world and the supplier of advanced weapons – tanks, warplanes, submarines – to scores of nations.

Part I

New NATO: Germany Returns To World Military Stage

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stopnato/message/40658>

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=14332>

<http://dandelionsalad.wordpress.com/2009/07/12/new-nato-germany-returns-to-world-military-stage-part-1-by-rick-rozoff/>

Part II

From WW II To WW III: Global NATO And Remilitarized Germany

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stopnato/message/40691>

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=14377>

<http://dandelionsalad.wordpress.com/2009/07/14/from-ww-ii-to-ww-iii-global-nato-and-remilitarized-germany-part-ii-by-rick-rozoff/>

Notes

- 1) Time Magazine, June 27, 2009
- 2) Deutsche Welle, October 25, 2006
- 3) Ibid
- 4) Deutsche Welle, September 7, 2006

- 5) Ibid
- 6) Defense News (US), November 10, 2005
- 7) Die Welt, August 25, 2006
- 8) United Press International, July 8, 2009
- 9) Agence France-Presse, May 8, 2006
- 10) Xinhua News Agency, October 19, 2005
- 11) Defense Security Cooperation Agency, July 18, 2008
- 12) Ibid
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- 17) Pakistan Tribune, October 5, 2006
- 18) Der Spiegel, December 22, 2006
- 19) Der Spiegel, December 21, 2006
- 20) United Press International, March 12, 2007
- 21) Islamic Republic News Agency, August 19, 2007
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- 32) BBC News, February 25, 2001
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- 38) Al-Jazeera, June 11, 2009
- 39) Arab Monitor, January 17, 2009
- 40) Trend News Agency, January 14, 2009
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- 43) Xinhua News Agency, March 14, 2006
- 44) BuaNews (South Africa), August 28, 2007

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