

New NATO: Germany Returns To World Military Stage

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Global Research, July 12, 2009

[Stop NATO](#) 12 July 2009

Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

When the post-World War II German states the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, West and East Germany, respectively, were united in 1990, it was for many in Europe and the world as a whole a heady time, fraught with hopes of a continent at peace and perhaps disarmed.

Despite US pledges to the last president of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) would not move “one inch” eastward, what German reunification achieved was that the former German Democratic Republic joined not only the Federal Republic but NATO and the military bloc moved hundreds of kilometers nearer the Russian border, over the intervening years to be joined by twelve Eastern European nations. Five of those twelve new NATO members were republics of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union itself, neither of which any longer exists.

Far from issuing in an era of disarmament and a Europe free of military blocs – or even of war – the merging of the two German states and the simultaneous fragmentation of the Eastern Bloc and, a year later, the USSR was instead followed by a Europe almost entirely dominated by a US-controlled global military alliance.

Within mere months of reunification Germany, then governed by the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union-led government of Chancellor Helmut Kohl, set to work to insure the fragmentation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia would parallel that of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, with each broken down into all of its constituent republics.

The Kohl government and its Free Democrat Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher immediately pushed for recognition of the Yugoslav republics of Croatia and Slovenia. Croatia was the site of the Nazi-administered Independent State of Croatia during World War II and Slovenia had been parceled out among Germany and its Italian and Hungarian fascist allies.

What the rulers of newly unified Germany accomplished is best expressed in a line from Victor Hugo’s poetic drama *Cromwell*: Strike while the iron is hot and in striking make it hot.

By the end of 1991 Germany had browbeaten the other members of the European Community, now the European Union, into recognizing the secession of both republics.

As the above pressure was being applied by Berlin the Deputy Foreign Minister of Serbia Dobrosav Vezovic warned “This is a direct attack on Yugoslavia,” one which “erases Yugoslavia from the map of the world.” [1]

Germany was now back on the road to redrawing the map of Europe and would shortly embark on the use of military force outside its borders for the first time since the Third Reich.

Berlin later deployed 4,000 troops to Bosnia in 1995, its largest mission abroad since World War II, but its return to direct military aggression after an almost 55-year hiatus would occur with NATO's war against Yugoslavia in 1999.

The standard Western rationale for that war, Operation Allied Force, is that it was an intervention to prevent alleged genocide in the Serbian province of Kosovo, a crisis that had flared up almost instantaneously, and the 78-day bombing war was then justified by what the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard once termed the teleological suspension of ethics.

It was no such thing. The separation of Kosovo from Serbia and the further dissolution of the former Yugoslavia to the sub-federal republic level was the final act of a decade-long drama, but one envisioned before the lifting of the curtain on the first one.

In January of 1991 former US Congressman Joseph DioGuardi in his capacity of the President of the Albanian American Civic League wrote to German Chancellor Kohl demanding the following:

"The European Community, hopefully led by the Federal Republic of Germany, recognizes the Republic of Kosova as a sovereign and independent state as the only logical and effective solution to protect the Albanian people in Kosova from their Serbian communist oppressors." [2]

Five months earlier, in August of 1990, DioGuardi had escorted six US Senators, including Robert Dole, on a tour to Kosovo.

A year before the war began German newspapers ran headlines on the order of "Mr. Kinkel threatens a NATO intervention in Kosovo," referring to then German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, who is also quoted in 1998 as saying "Of course you have to consider whether you are permitted from a moral and ethical point of view to prevent the Kosovo-Albanians from buying weapons for their self-defense." [3]

Canadian professor and political analyst Michel Chossudovsky has written extensively and trenchantly on the role of the German BND (Bundesnachrichtendienst/Federal Intelligence Service) in arming and training the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army before and in preparation for the NATO onslaught against Yugoslavia on his Web site Global Research at <http://www.globalresearch.ca>

It was in Kosovo that Germany, which had deployed troops to Bosnia and run a military hospital in Croatia earlier in the 1990s, crossed the post-World War II red line when the Luftwaffe (with its Tornado multirole combat fighters) engaged in combat operations for the first time since 1945.

The precedent was exacerbated when Germany followed up the bombing by military occupation as over a thousand of its troops accompanied their NATO allies into Kosovo in June of 1999. A German general assumed command of the 50,000-troop NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR).

Quoting from memory an account by an American reporter of the words of an older ethnic Albanian witnessing the arrival of the first German troops in Kosovo: "Where have you been? We missed you. The last time you were here you drew the borders the right way."

The Rubicon had been crossed, Germany had been declared by its Western allies cleansed of its Nazi past and was free to dispatch troops and wage war again, this time on the world stage.

As a *Der Spiegel* feature put it this past February, "The phase of German military intervention that began 10 years ago during the Kosovo war is in no way coming to an end, despite the fact the majority of Germans wish it would. On the contrary: The era of foreign deployments for Germans and their military forces has just begun." [4]

The lid of Pandora's chest had been thrown open and by 2007 "According to Germany's Defense Ministry, roughly 8,200 soldiers are serving in missions in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Bosnia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Georgia, Kosovo and Sudan, making Germany one of the top contributors to international missions." [5]

How post-Cold War unified Germany and the German public were being prepared for the new international military role was insightfully analyzed a year before the Kosovo War by Diana Johnstone. The following is an excerpt from her article "Seeing Yugoslavia through a dark glass" which is far more penetrating than it may be comparatively lengthy:

"In the Bundestag, German Green leader Joschka Fisher [to become foreign minister later in the same year, 1998] pressed for disavowal of 'pacifism' in order to 'combat Auschwitz,' thereby equating Serbs with Nazis. In a heady mood of self-righteous indignation, German politicians across the board joined in using Germany's past guilt as a reason, not for restraint, as had been the logic up until reunification, but on the contrary, for 'bearing their share of the military burden'.

"In the name of human rights, the Federal Republic of Germany abolished its ban on military operations outside the NATO defensive area. Germany could once again be a 'normal' military power—thanks to the 'Serb threat.'

"On the contrary, what occurred in Germany was a strange sort of mass transfer of Nazi identity, and guilt, to the Serbs. In the case of the Germans, this can be seen as a comforting psychological projection which served to give Germans a fresh and welcome sense of innocence in the face of the new 'criminal' people, the Serbs. But the hate campaign against Serbs, started in Germany, did not stop there.

"If somebody had announced in 1989 that, well, the Berlin Wall has come down, now Germany can unite and send military forces back into Yugoslavia — and what is more in order to enforce a partition of the country along similar lines to those it imposed when it occupied the country in 1941 — well, quite a number of people might have raised objections. However, that is what has happened, and many of the very people might who have been expected to object most strongly to what amounts to the most significant act of historical revisionism since World War II have provided the ideological cover and excuse." [6]

The campaign was not without effect in Germany as subsequent events have proved and has been accompanied by the rehabilitation, honoring and even granting of veteran benefits

to Nazi collaborators, including former Waffen SS members, in Croatia, Estonia, Latvia and Ukraine in recent years.

Following its military interventions in Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia, Germany sent troops to Macedonia in 2001 after armed contingents of the Kosovo-based National Liberation Army (NLA), an offshoot of the Kosovo Liberation Army led by Ali Ahmeti, also a founder of the KLA, invaded the country in the summer of 2001. In connivance with the 50,000 NATO troops in Kosovo, Ahmeti's brigands brought fighters, arms and even artillery past American checkpoints on the Kosovo-Macedonia border to launch deadly raids against government and civilian targets.

In one incident 600 Bundeswehr soldiers were caught in the crossfire between the NLA marauders and government security forces (7)

Years later Benjamin Schreer, military expert at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs in Berlin, reflected on the consequences of what Johnstone had described: "The decision of the SPD [Social Democratic Party] and Greens to send German troops into Kosovo in 1999 has transformed the Bundeswehr....The Bundeswehr is now operating on a global scale." [8]

The press wire report from which the quote was taken provides these details:

"The mission in Afghanistan had German troops, roughly 100 special forces who, for the first time since World War II, took part in ground combat.

"The Kommando Spezialkräfte, known by its acronym KSK, is a highly trained and well-equipped special unit that has successfully been assigned to Kosovo and Afghanistan. Most of their operations, however, are classified." [9]

After September 11, 2001 German military missions and deployments were expanded exponentially and in addition to Germany deploying AWACS to the US in Operation Eagle Assist it also "took part in [Operation Active Endeavor] which has German units monitor the Mediterranean waters....In Afghanistan and East Africa, German troops battle...with sea units, ground troops and special forces.

"The Bundeswehr, once restricted by the German constitution to exclusively domestic protection, can now send armed troops to foreign countries." [10]

Having exploited as well as in an integral way engineered the breakup of Yugoslavia, with Kosovo as the altar and Serbia as the paschal lamb whose slaying wiped clean decades of German guilt, Berlin was now free to play the role assigned to it by NATO: That of an international military power operating on four continents, a far wider range of deployment and engagement than had been achieved by either Bismarck or Hitler.

In a feature called "Preparing Germany's Military for War," it was reported in 2005 that then German Defense Minister Peter Struck was "proposing that...his department considers missions other than peace-keeping and stabilization for the Bundeswehr" and that "the Bundeswehr could be asked to play a stronger role in Africa in the future." [11]

While visiting German troops in Uzbekistan on his way to Afghanistan, Struck was quoted as saying "For those of us who were born after the war this is an unfavorable idea but we must be realistic. It is possible that we will consider going to other countries and separate warring

parties by military means” and that the Bundeswehr must be prepared to “carry out peace enforcement missions anywhere in the world.” [12]

In late 2006 Struck’s successor, Defense Minister Franz Josef Jung, released a 133-page White Paper which stated “The Bundeswehr is to be thoroughly restructured into an intervention force.” [13]

In an article entitled “Germany plans to remake its Army into a rapid-reaction, humanitarian-intervention force,” Newsweek commented: “The pace of change has indeed been unsettling. It took a constitutional-court ruling in 1994 to permit German soldiers to be deployed abroad at all. Today, close to 10,000 Bundeswehr troops find themselves stationed in places as far-flung as Bosnia, Djibouti and southern Sudan....” [14]

Germany has become so comfortable with its current global military status that last week Chancellor Angela Merkel conferred the first combat medals on German soldiers since World War II.

“The new Cross of Honour for Bravery, is the military’s first such medal since the end of World War II when it stopped awarding the Iron Cross tarnished by its use in Nazi Germany. Some see this as another sign of Germany emerging from its post-World War II diplomatic and military shell since the country’s reunification in 1990.” [15]

A column in the Times of London embraced this further reemergence of a militarized Germany, and one moreover of an expeditionary and aggressive nature – the soldiers awarded by Merkel were veterans of the Afghan war – with this panegyric:

“When Germany once again has the confidence proudly to parade its military heroes, its journey from the darkness of diplomatic and military purdah – via reunification in 1990 – is surely complete.

“Germany’s new medal, the Honour Cross, stands as a bold response to the growing role played in the world by German military.

“The presentation by Chancellor Angela Merkel marks a potent moment in Germany’s return to the heart of the community of nations.” [16]

Last November German Defense Minister Jung laid the foundation stone for “the first national memorial to soldiers killed serving in the country’s post-World War II military.”

Combat deaths and their commemoration, for decades considered matters of a dark and distant past, are now commonplace as “Germany...has emerged gradually from its postwar diplomatic and military shell, increasingly puts soldiers in the line of fire in places such as Afghanistan.” [17]

The process of German reunification, the first effect of which was to place the entire territory of the nation in NATO, had been consummated with the rebirth of a major military power thought by many to have reached its final quietus in 1945.

The mainstream weekly Der Spiegel wrote in 2005 in a feature aptly named “Germany’s Bundeswehr Steps out on the Global Stage” that “With reunification, the nation had not just regained full sovereignty: it also became subject to rules that had effectively been put on ice during the Cold War. On the new international stage, political influence was reserved for

those who were willing and able to assert their interests in concert with their partners. If need be, by force. If need be, by military means.”

The celebratory piece went on to say:

“Today the Bundeswehr has become one of the most powerful tools available to German foreign-policy makers.

“[T]he German government is in the process of fostering a totally different breed of soldier. The elite members of the Kommando Spezialkräfte (Special Forces Command), or KSK...are highly trained professionals who can hold their own with their colleagues from the British SAS or American Delta Force....

“Germany has ‘finally reached a state of normality,’ and its democracy will now be ‘defended directly’ wherever threats arise. That could be anywhere, soon even in Africa.” [18]

In the culmination of almost twenty years of German and allied efforts to subvert and tear apart the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, its truncated successor the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and finally Serbia, almost on the first anniversary of the Western-supported secession of Kosovo in February of 2008 Berlin announced that it was donating 200 vehicles to the newly formed Kosovo Security Force, a revamped Kosovo Liberation Army headed up by a KLA commander who has already proclaimed his intention to join NATO.

The German offering is “a substantial contribution to the build up” of the fledgling army of an illegal entity not recognized by over two-thirds of the world including Russia, China and India. [19]

In an interview with Radio Kosova this February Colonel Dieter Jensch, senior official of the German Defense Ministry, boasted that “The Bundeswehr is helping the Kosovo Security Force through material assistance, which includes the donation of 204 vehicles and other technical equipment, and we have assigned a team of 15 professional military officers to help in building the KSF structures.”

The account from which the above emanates added “The assistance is valued at 2.6 million Euros. Germany will also send 15 military personnel to help build KSF structures and to train the members of this force.

“The building of the Kosovo Security Force and its professional training is expected to cost 43 million Euros. Germany is among the first countries to help in building this force. It has already sent 15 military officers to help in building the structures of this force and to train its members.” [20]

Yesterday the Balkans and today the world.

- 1) New York Times, December 18, 1991
- 2) Albanian American Civic League, January 6, 1991
- 3) Suddeutsche Zeitung, July 30, 1998
- 4) Der Spiegel, February 9, 2009
- 5) United Press International, March 20, 2007
- 6) CovertAction Quarterly, Fall 1998

- 7) Michel Chossudovsky, Washington Behind Terrorist Assaults In Macedonia
Global Research, September 10, 2001
Michel Chossudovsky, America at War in Macedonia
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Rick Rozoff, Human Rights Watch: Dear Mr. Ahmeti
August 1, 1009
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/yugoslaviainfo/message/3364>
- 8) United Press International, August 30, 2005
- 9) Ibid
- 10) Ibid
- 11) Deutsche Welle, June 6, 2005
- 12) Ibid
- 13) Newsweek, November 13, 2006
- 14) Ibid
- 15) Deutsche Welle, July 6, 2009
- 16) The Times, July 7, 2009
- 17) Associated Press, November 28, 2008
- 18) Der Spiegel, June 17, 2005
- 19) Associated Press, February 13, 2009
- 20) Kosova Information Center, February 9, 2009

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