

Colonel Ralph Thiele
Commander Bundeswehr Center for Analyses and Studies

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Bundeswehr Transformation – Towards a 21st Century Transatlantic Partnership

1. The Need for Transformation

“The new tasks call for a new heading ... NATO Response Force and ESDP need other structures and capabilities ... Now we have to go into action...” These phrases were formulated by the German Minister of Defense Dr. Peter Struck during his press conference on October 2, 2003, one day after he presented his plans on the transformation of the Bundeswehr to the cabinet. Both Minister Dr. Struck and the Bundeswehr’s Chief of Defense Staff, General Wolfgang Schneiderhan, set a new standard for the Bundeswehr. In his “Directive on the Bundeswehr Transformation” the Minister of Defense points out the connection between interoperability and networked conduct of operations. On the same day General Schneiderhan underlined in a letter to the Armed Forces the course of innovation and informed about the realization schedule. Perhaps in imitation of Lord Robertson’s famous demand “Capabilities, Capabilities, Capabilities”, the last part of this letter contains the demand “Transformation ... Transformation ... Transformation...” three times. Obviously the time has come for positioning the Bundeswehr as armed forces which are willing and able to innovate and able to adjust to the future.

In the security policy environment there are many **novel**, mostly **asymmetrical risks** which develop preferably at the interfaces of “internal” and “external” security. The **strategic dimension** of the new hazards consists in particular in the hitherto uncontrollable participation of transnational actors in the network which pervades all spheres of life. Thus terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have come to the fore in preventive security. The appropriate answer to global asymmetrical risks is a multinational network of centric capabilities.

The **Bundeswehr** as the military element of the German preventive security measures is intricately integrated into the collective understanding of “security” both on the European and transatlantic level and within the scope of the United Nations. Therefore it is important

- to **advance** the Bundeswehr in **keeping up with the challenges**;
- to **organize the European change in concurrence** with our transatlantic and other interests.

The Defense Policy Guidelines of May 21, 2003 define a multinational integration of the Bundeswehr - with possibly the exception of rescue and evacuation missions – in coalitions with a clear mandate and within the framework of UN, NATO or EU as central criterion for German defense policy and the Bundeswehr.

This requires the ability to cooperate as effectively as possible with multinational partners in nearly all the fields of action and on all the levels of command and control. To ensure this ability under future conditions of networked conduct of operations is the central element of the Bundeswehr transformation, which thus continues the Bundeswehr reform. There is no way of getting around the transformation towards network centric capabilities. German industry, by the way, is very interested and keeps track of this development as **Germany’s economic base needs innovative incentives**.

Transformation shall meet future security policy challenges successfully by extending the ability to honor obligations within alliances and by re-linking concepts, capabilities and knowledge, people and organizations. Thus the Bundeswehr transformation, while advancing with an orientation towards the capabilities, is aimed at the build-up of optimized structures. An active German transformation role

- guarantees firstly more capabilities and most of all more interoperability without additional costs,
- can secondly make use of synergy effects thanks to integrative efforts,
- promotes thirdly a new stance of “quality” as an independent German innovation contribution, establishes fourthly the Bundeswehr and its leading representatives as “renovators” and sought-after partners of discussion in the German security and economy policy environment, but especially in the European and transatlantic framework, and
- permits fifthly and mainly the Bundeswehr’s ability to adjust to the future as a part of the German, European and transatlantic preventive security and architecture.

2. New Missions – New Heading

The German Minister of Defense’s new directive on the reorganization of the Bundeswehr underlines the change from defining the defense of Central Europe as the former main mission of the Bundeswehr towards an expeditionary focus for future missions. It addresses the new developments of a worldwide threat caused by terrorist activities, Germany’s obligations within the framework of NATO, EU, and the UN, and in particular the military challenges of contributing to the NRF, further developing a European Defense Policy, as well as the demands related to the deployment of German forces outside their own country.

The necessary adjustments for the future Bundeswehr are based on the following decisions already taken:

- The size of the Bundeswehr will comprise 250,000 military and 75,000 civilian personnel by 2010
- The 9-months draft system will remain a national duty for all men aged 18 – 25
- The defense budget will remain at a constant level of 24.25 billion Euros until 2006 and will increase from 2007 on to a level of 25.2 billion Euros
- All national and multinational obligations of the Bundeswehr will rely on a “single set of forces”.

The focus of the reorientation is a mid-term plan which will cause measurable effects from 2007/2008 on. All basic decisions to be made by the Minister of Defense have therefore to be prepared by the end of this year, showing first results in the 2005 budget. This decision-making process is centered on the proposals of the German Chief of the Defense (CHOD), General Schneiderhan.

In detail he has been tasked to:

- Review and optimize all international obligations (by end of December 2003)
- Draft the new “conception of the Bundeswehr” by detailing the defined capability categories and by consequently stressing jointness and network-based operations (by end of November 2003)
- Provide a first draft of a “structural and organizational plan” by focusing on the future size of forces and a new design for the 9-months-conscription system (by end of November 2003)
- Provide a first draft of a “new model for the forces’ organization” by finding the right balance between reaction forces, stabilizing forces and the military central organization (by end of December 2003)

- Draft a new “materiel and procurement plan” in order to shift from existing, but obsolete programs to investing in promising future technologies (by end of December 2003)
- Draft a preliminary “military bases concept” by selecting those installations which fulfill the criteria of military necessity and minimizing operating costs for their use (by end of January 2004).

In line with that there will be developed

- A review of all procurement programs (by end of December 2003), followed by a proposal for priorities of promising technologies in accordance with maintaining a national base for the defense industry and research branches
- A plan for speeding up the achievement of coherent IT standards throughout all administrative (SASPF) as well as all the operational (HERKULES) systems (by end of December 03)
- A model on decentralized budgeting within the MoD (by end of March 04)
- A plan for the optimization of the civilian-administrative organization and structures (by end of November 03).

First practical measures in the context of the thus initiated transformation process can be expected from 2004 on. The completion of the whole process is scheduled for the year 2010.

3. Meeting 21st Century Challenges

Since the end of the East-West confrontation the U.S. is the only military world power with global interests and global range. Despite its political weight and comprehensive capabilities in military technology it is aware of the fact that it can meet the asymmetrical dangers of the future only in coalitions with efficient international partners. A long-term success in the global engagement against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction is only possible by cooperation. Therefore the transformation process of the U.S. armed forces is designed to integrate efficient and interoperable coalition partners in future common tasks.

As early as 1998, NATO also started to develop a common approach to interoperability in order to keep up with the U.S. The responsibility was assigned to the Strategic Command Atlantic in September 2000. With the changing of the former ACLANT to “Allied Command Transformation”, the Alliance is moving forward towards a future capability in accordance and in close partnership with the promoter of the U.S. transformation, the U.S. Joint Forces Command. Within the new NATO command structure, its commanding general, parallel to his national tasks, is also assigned the same functional responsibility for the newly set up Allied Command Transformation (ACT).

Even a critical observer would agree that NATO is changing faster than anybody thought possible. It has radically streamlined its command structure. The NATO Response Force has moved from being a concept at the Prague Summit to reality in less than a year. Last but not least, all the recent operational successes prove NATO’s relevance in the new mission spectrum. The NATO of today is transforming – from a static, defensive, reactive organization to a responsive one with a responsibility for the global missions of the 21st century.

A respective coordination and harmonization of the European NATO partners has not yet taken place, although this would be desirable in order to enhance the European Security and Defense Policy as well as to reinforce a credible transatlantic partnership. There is still growth potential when it comes to ensuring the credibility of a future European joint responsibility and participation in global security prevention.

The security policy challenges in and for Europe all point in the same direction: the European states must coordinate their efforts. Moreover, within the framework of NATO, they need transatlantic cooperation, in particular with American capabilities. This requires cooperation capability and interoperability. Already Gerhard von Scharnhorst knew that the partner who is able to provide substantial support to a coalition is ultimately the only one who is esteemed.

On October 1-2, the Minister of Defense and the Bundeswehr Chief of Defense Staff gave the go-ahead for Bundeswehr transformation. When it is implemented transformation must overcome the existing system. To this end we need achieve:

Firstly: In the key positions for the Bundeswehr Transformation there must be convinced and convincing transformers.

Those we have.

Secondly: Policy and field units must see the comparative advantage of transformation for their specific mandates.

We have to take care of that.

Thirdly: There needs to be developed a **migration strategy** (that is, how do we come from A to B) which is evolutionary, shows good judgement and which strongly meets the requirements of the Bundeswehr's networked conduct of operations. For this to happen, personnel and financial means have to be provided for with the right focus. Defense industry core capabilities have to support this approach.

This is the biggest challenge of all.

Today the U.S.'s lead in armaments technology is often considered to amount to approximately ten years. In view of the high speed of technological development, the transatlantic partnership remains only within the range of visibility if European resources are concentrated and commonalities in national armaments efforts are reinforced. But looking at the actual capability gaps which have to be closed must not obstruct the view of the new capability gaps that are developing with high dynamics within the scope of the American transformation process. Therefore it makes sense to consider how and where a technological generation might be skipped, either on the basis of a common European situation analysis or on clearly defined interests regarding how a high performance profile, by means of an engaged transformation process, might be obtained, so that a narrowing of the gap with American capabilities can be realized.

In this context the possibilities and limitations of network centric capabilities have to be carefully analyzed. A large number of new vulnerabilities in information warfare, new harmonization requirements between man and modern technology, and the interaction of reality and virtual realities still have to be tested and proved. An essential touchstone for the successful transformation of the Bundeswehr will be the visible concrete benefit which arrives in the field. The innovation benefit gained and proved in operations is ultimately internally and externally a decisive indicator for the relevance of German armed forces in handling future security policy tasks side by side with our European and Atlantic partners. Thus we can effectively serve our security and at the same time meet our European, our transatlantic and our global responsibilities. This is the real benefit of transformation for the German armed forces and will build the foundation for a 21st century transatlantic partnership.