Institute of European Right

ANALYSIS

German Military Reforms and NATO's Eastern Flank: Are We Moving Fast Enough?

AUTHOR
Edvardas Lukošius

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1. Introduction

Germany, amidst the rapidly changing geopolitical dynamics,
has been at the forefront of defense and strategic deliberations. The events of February 23rd, 2022, serve as a reference point, marking a time when Germany was still discussing Nord Stream 2 as an economic project and was deliberating its stance on weapon deliveries to Ukraine. These decisions and discussions are not isolated but are deeply intertwined with the broader European security landscape.

2. Germany's Defense Evolution

Historically, Germany's defense approach was heavily out-of-area operations-centric. This was evident in their strategic deployments and military exercises. However, a discernible shift has been observed recently. The focus is now gravitating towards the defense of NATO territories. This transition is not merely a change in strategy but calls for a profound restructuring of the armed forces. It's akin to a rebirth of the German forces, transitioning from their previous operational roles to a more defense-oriented posture.

This restructuring is not without its challenges. The complexity of the task at hand is evident when one considers the historical context. The foundation of the armed forces in West Germany took approximately 15 years, starting in 1955 and reaching a structural completion around 1970. The current transformation, therefore, is monumental and requires meticulous planning and execution.

Furthermore, as Germany embarks on this journey of military transformation, there are pertinent questions about its actual military capability. Is the nation ready to defend its territories effectively?

Can it uphold its commitments to NATO, especially when the stakes are high? The answers to these questions are crucial, not just for Germany but for the entire European continent. The decisions Germany makes, the strategies it adopts, and the military capabilities it develops will have far-reaching implications for European security.

As the geopolitical landscape continues to evolve, Germany's defense trajectory becomes increasingly significant. The nation's strategic decisions, its commitment to NATO, and its defense capabilities will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of European security.

3. Geostrategic Mindset Development

Recent trends indicate a notable shift in public opinion within Germany, with the media reflecting a change in mindset towards defense and geostrategic issues. This evolution is deeply rooted in Germany's cultural and historical context, suggesting a broader societal transformation.

In a discussion about the geostrategic mindset in Germany, one speaker highlighted the significant progress in public opinion. German newspapers now present clear wording on defense and geostrategic issues. While energy problems might currently be at the forefront, there has been a

discernible mindset change within journalists and the published opinion. However, the depth of this cultural change remains a subject of debate.

Language and terminology play a pivotal role in shaping defense perspectives. There's an observable trend where means of defense and certain terminologies are avoided in public discourse. This could be a deliberate strategic decision by political elites and generals. The avoidance of specific terms like "war" or "combat" might be due to concerns about the potential repercussions of speaking openly about certain defense strategies.

Furthermore, the cultural shift towards a defense mindset is deeply embedded, with a strong emphasis on peace solutions. There's a prevailing sentiment among politicians that conflicts should not be resolved by military means. This perspective, rooted in a culture of peace, presents challenges when discussing defense strategies and military solutions. In academic settings, such as universities, there's a deeply embedded culture for peace and peace solutions. This culture influences the discourse on defense and military strategies, making it challenging to discuss these topics openly and critically.

Understanding these nuances is crucial for comprehending Germany's evolving stance on global defense and strategic matters. The country has made strides in its defense discourse, but the depth of cultural change and its impact on political culture remain areas of ongoing exploration.

4. Germany's Role in the Current Geopolitical Landscape

Germany has recently entered into a bilateral agreement concerning troop deployment in Lithuania, underscoring its role in NATOs defense initiatives. This agreement, set to be signed by the end of the year, is a testament to Germany's commitment to strengthening its defense posture and playing a pivotal role in regional stability. Ministers and staff are diligently working on the agreement, with certain modalities and favored locations already identified.

However, it's worth noting that Germany's defense decisions are influenced by various factors, including public opinion. The country is currently experiencing a split in perspectives, with divisions between east and west and between political extremes. While some segments of the population support defense initiatives, others are influenced by conspiracy theories or prefer, as they call it, peaceful negotiations. This division underscores the complexity of rallying public and political support for defense initiatives in Germany.

5. Challenges and Concerns in Germany's Defense Strategy

Budgetary Concerns and Allocations

Germany's commitment to bolstering its defense infrastructure is evident from the significant allocation of 100 billion euros. However, there are prevailing concerns regarding the sustainability and adequacy of future funding. The current coalition has faced criticism for not investing sufficiently in the armed forces over the past 18 years, a sentiment stemming from a general consensus that Europe was moving towards a peace order. While the defense budget's steady rise is crucial to achieve the two percent target, recent allocations have been viewed as inadequate. The defense

minister‘s request for an additional 10 billion euros to facilitate this growth was not granted, with the only increase being for soldiers‘ salaries and to account for inflation. As highlighted, the challenge extends beyond the allocated amount to ensuring efficient spending, especially given concerns about a system some experts deem dysfunctional.

Public Perception and Defense Priorities

Furthermore, there‘s a recognition that while Germany has taken steps post-February 24th, the country‘s focus remains divided. Many Germans are more concerned about issues like inflation and climate change than Russia‘s war against Ukraine. This division in attention underscores the challenge of rallying public and political support for defense initiatives. Members of parliament have noted that their constituents rarely discuss the war, highlighting the gap between professional discourse and public sentiment.

Societal Influence on Defense Policies

Moreover, the broader societal perspective plays a significant role
in shaping defense policies. Discussions about national security and defense need the involvement and support of society. While technical documents and strategies are essential, they must resonate with a society that has historically leaned towards peaceful resolutions. The narrative needs to evolve to emphasize the importance of defense in the current geopolitical landscape.

Structural Reforms in Defense

The allocation, while substantial, is just one part of the equation. There‘s a consensus among experts on the necessity for structural reforms. The current defense structure is seen by some as inefficient, with significant efforts required even for tasks like deploying

a brigade. The need for reforms is not just about streamlining operations but also about ensuring that the armed forces are prepared and equipped to respond to contemporary threats. As the transcript mentions, there‘s a call for more efficiency and speed in implementing these reforms.

Historical Defense Capabilities

Germany‘s defense posture during the Cold War era serves as a benchmark for its current capabilities. The nation maintained a robust military presence, playing a pivotal role in the balance of power during that period. The transcript references the formidable military capabilities Germany had during the Cold War, with a strong military presence and a reserve force. This historical context is essential as it emphasizes the need for Germany to at least maintain, if not surpass, its past defense capabilities in the face of current global challenges.

Conclusion

Germany‘s defense reforms, rooted in its historical context and societal perspectives, are pivotal for NATO and European security. As the nation navigates multifaceted threats, a holistic strategy combining military, economic, and political facets is essential. With commitments like the bilateral

troop deployment agreement and a focus on societal consensus, Germany is poised to strike a balance between its past lessons and future challenges, ensuring a robust defense posture in a dynamic geopolitical landscape.

Institute of European Right

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