

GUEST LECTURE

European Security in the 21st Century – New Tasks for the Bundeswehr¹

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I greatly appreciate this opportunity to be here today as your guest and to speak to you on European security and the Bundeswehr. The political environment has undergone a tremendous transformation in recent years. Although the radical changes the armed forces of our countries have had to contend with have been different, the challenges we are facing at present and had to face in the past have a wide range of features in common.

One of the things we have in common is the realization that history does not unfold slowly and always predictably. But we were prepared neither for the speed at which it has confronted us nor for the unforeseeable turn it has taken. There are days when you feel that the world has changed. 10 May 1994, the day of the inauguration of your president, Nelson Mandela, was such a day. I can still recall the sense of joy and hope that this fact evoked within the international community at the time. It was a profoundly stirring moment for all.

Another was 9 November 1989, the day on which the wall came down in Berlin. We in Europe have been living in a new age since the peaceful revolution of 1989/90. What is true of these historical processes is the fact that of all the bodies that could have done so, it was our armed forces that played a leading role in shaping the weighty process of restructuring society – indeed, I might say, pioneered it. One of the things I shall be taking back with me from my visit is a lasting impression of how consistently and successfully the South African National Defence

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Forces have overcome the past and racial barriers to master the process of integrating eight different army elements.

In Europe, we can look back on the most successful years of European policy and history. A network of cooperation, which is becoming closer and closer all the time, now spans our continent. Former adversaries are now working together for peace and stability in and for Europe. For the first time in our history, we Germans enjoy unity in peace and freedom and in harmony with all our neighbours.

In Europe, the one-dimensional threat that existed between the Warsaw Pact and NATO has given way to a rather diffuse security situation. The threat we find ourselves confronted with today is instability.

The conflicts in Bosnia and the Caucasus region, the tensions in Cyprus, the fragile peace process in the Middle East also have implications for our security. And all this is happening right on Europe's doorstep. And in Russian, Ukraine and other eastern European countries, democracy and market economies are still by no means so firmly established as to be irreversible. There remains a large number of unsolved and deeply rooted tensions and conflicts. The willingness to use force and military power as political tools is on the rise in many places. It is sad evidence that the radical transformation in the security setting has not only led to more stability and security in Europe.

Europe is not an island of peace. We Europeans must stand together if we are to prevent crises and conflicts effectively. The belief that alliances such as NATO and the Western European Union (WEU) were outdated has long since been refuted. Alliances are more important than ever!

The North Atlantic Alliance, for decades the guarantor of our security, has again proved its importance for our security and stability. It remains the core element of an interlocking security structure in and for Europe. The North Atlantic Alliance is at present the only defence organization capable of acting in both a political and a military sense. This is what also makes it so attractive for our neighbours in the east.

The historical decisions taken at the Madrid, Amsterdam and Paris summits last year established the basis required for moulding the face of Europe in the 21st century. Course has been set for a comprehensive

European security architecture. The New NATO is under construction. Three challenges characterize this process.

FIRSTLY: The enlargement of NATO by new members. This is spotlighted by the first batch of invitations that have been sent out to countries wishing to accede to the Alliance. In this case, the young democracies of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

SECONDLY: The preparation of NATO for new tasks, in the form of crisis management, and cooperation with states that are not members of the North Atlantic Alliance.

THIRDLY: The establishment of a new European security partnership with Russia and Ukraine.

The quality the European security partnership has attained is highlighted by the commitment being shown by 16 NATO states for peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina together with 20 non-NATO member states. Here, our neighbours in the east are gaining first-hand experience of just what the New NATO is about and what partnership with Russia means in practical terms. What was unthinkable only a few years ago is nowadays normal routine: Russian and American soldiers are going on patrol together; a Russian brigade is under the command of a NATO division; and a Russian general is working side by side with NATO generals to develop plans for peace and reconciliation missions in Europe.

The security challenges of today and tomorrow, the reform of NATO and the evolution of a European capacity to act naturally form the framework for developments in the Bundeswehr. The Bundeswehr will also remain an alliance army in the future. Germany must help to preserve security and stability in and for Europe. And we have to make a fair contribution towards the capabilities of the New NATO and security in Europe.

The German armed forces' chief task remains the same: Providing the capability for national and Alliance defence in operations led by the North Atlantic Alliance. This corresponds with the political idea of the role of the armed forces in Germany and the basic idea of our alliance. Round 90 % of the people in Germany share these ideas.

The state of defence has little likelihood of occurring in the security situation in Europe at present, but the highest potential conflict intensity. Our armed forces must remain prepared for defence as part of the

Alliance. Having said that, however, they must no longer be able to deploy altogether within 48 hours. They don't have to establish full defence readiness within just a few days, as they had during the Cold War era. This is why we can grade them in terms of standing strengths, operational readiness and levels of training.

As a result of universal conscription, the Bundeswehr has the capability for building up to a strength of 680,000 soldiers. A build-up that is only possible with a corresponding pool of well-trained reservists. Hence, the Bundeswehr is and will remain a cornerstone of collective defence in central Europe.

Our new structure provides for a reaction force component made up of over 50,000 soldiers. A figure that is limited intentionally in order to make clear that we have no aspirations to establish an intervention capability of our own. On the other hand, this figure is large enough for us to make an effective contribution towards international crisis management.

The mission in Bosnia more than any other is evidence that when it comes to providing troops and equipment, we are in a good position at the international table. The reaction forces can only master the challenges posed by operations abroad if the main defence forces assist them in preparing and training for them and in the provisions of logistic support.

The Bundeswehr began to adapt to its new and widened tasks early. It topped the 580,000 mark in 1990 when it took charge of the National People's Army of the former German Democratic Republic. Since this time it has reduced its strength to 340,000 troops. Parallel 330 units have been disbanded. This reform of the Bundeswehr has not yet been completed. Allow me to cite just one or two examples of the huge challenges we have faced.

The restructuring of the Bundeswehr has been accomplished in two phases. On the day of German reunification, the Bundeswehr took over about 1,500 units and agencies of the former National People's Army spread over some 2,300 military facilities and 35 garrisons and about 90,000 former East German Army personnel in eastern Germany.

Our aim was to put into practice the principle of "one nation, one army". Especially in this early phase of building up new units, we were dependent on the cooperation of former officers and NCO's of the

National People's Army. Without their constructive cooperation, we could not have achieved our ambition of establishing the "Army of Unity" within such a short time. And for them this was a time of immense personal insecurity. In the end, more than 10,000 former East German Army personnel were accepted into the Bundeswehr, after being very carefully selected, trained and vetted. This achievement is unparalleled in history.

On 3 October 1990, the Bundeswehr also took over more than 10,500 main battle tanks, artillery pieces, aircraft and ships; more than 80,000 tracked vehicles; and over 1,3 million small arms. Its stocks were swelled by nearly 300,000 tons of ammunition. This huge inheritance all had to be registered, stored, secured, and finally disposed of and destroyed.

Around 10,000 of the major weapon systems we took over from East Germany were destroyed in compliance with the obligations we assumed under the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty. The ammunition was disposed of by industry under environmentally safe conditions.

We also inherited large amounts of hazardous goods (explosive rocket fuels, paints, solvents, and other chemicals), some of which were in a terrible condition. The disposal of these materials (about 48,000 tons in all) has since been completed, at a cost of around 185 million DM (round 500 million Rand).

In addition to the process of restructuring, the Bundeswehr had a first batch of missions to master even before it had established the right structures. The examples I would like to cite in this regard are:

- the humanitarian aid it provided by running a hospital in Cambodia;
- the logistic support it furnished for the UN mission in Somalia;
- the first evacuation operation in the history of the Bundeswehr, we succeeded last summer in evacuating 104 people from 22 nations from Tirana, the capital of Albania.
- and of course our engagement in the "Implementation Force" and "Stabilisation Force" in former Yugoslavia.

The Bundeswehr currently has 3,000 troops serving with the international peacekeeping force in former Yugoslavia. Altogether, over 33,000 German military personnel, male and female, have also completed tours of duty for peace and reconciliation over there. Not only temporary-career personnel and regulars, but also conscripts and reservists. No less than the seventh contingent is meanwhile in place. The war in former Yugoslavia is a particularly bitter example of the fact that the use of armed forces by the international community is often the only means of preventing or stopping aggression.

There has been a shaky peace in Bosnia for two years now. NATO's military intervention and the diplomatic success of Dayton brought the turnaround from war to peace. But it is still not enough to ensure lasting stability. I believe that what is missing is the unyielding will to achieve reconciliation that I have already experienced here in South Africa. Your minister of defence today commands an army that has integrated the former freedom fighters into its ranks. Today, they are working together to build a new state. The people in Bosnia must also develop this practical will to reconcile. A lasting peace is otherwise inconceivable.

It will therefore not be possible in the near future to leave Bosnia to its own devices. Germany will continue its commitment for peace in Europe; to the degree consistent with its geographical position in the center of Europe; its economic strength and its influence in all the key international organizations and institutions that are working for peace and stability in Europe.

You all can judge by your own experience with the restructuring of the South African National Defence Forces just how immense the turnaround was. Having been geared mentally and psychologically to defence in central Europe along the inner-German border, the Bundeswehr had to come to terms with an entirely new dimension of military action in operations abroad.

We are playing an active part in the opening of NATO. We support the admission of new members. These are the countries which provided the initiative for the change in Europe and for German reunification. Now, it is our turn to also provide for stability in eastern Europe.

The Bundeswehr is doing more than any other army in Europe to prepare our eastern neighbours for accession to NATO. Training assistance and practical cooperation between the armed forces are the most prominent activities. Our defence and military culture renders the Bundeswehr a coveted partner for the young democracies in central eastern Europe. Our eastern neighbours are above all relying on us to help them reform and adapt their armed forces. Our bilateral ties have hence expanded accordingly. In this regard, we, as a conscript army in a democracy, have a greater draw for our partners than the armies of other nations. Some 750 joint activities of all scales are planned for this year with more than 20 countries. All these tasks are stretching some of our units and staffs to their limits.

The Partnership for Peace considers us one of the most active cooperation partners and a pacemaker in practical cooperation. We took part in almost every second exercise in Europe in 1996/1997.

The principle of multinationality as an integration factor is being updated at every opportunity. The process is not yet complete. Multinationality remains a challenge for the future. The Bundeswehr is a pacemaker in this regard in Europe. In the EUROCORPS, for example, Belgian, French, Luxembourg, Spanish and German troops serve side by side. In the German-Netherlands Corps, the Netherlands command virtually their entire army from Germany. And we have reached agreement with Denmark and Poland on the establishment of a combined corps made up of a Danish, a Polish and a German division.

It is above all the balance between regular and temporary-career service personnel (195,000), conscripts in basic military service (135,000) and reservists that best serves this differentiated mission. We assure our build-up capability solely by means of conscription. It guarantees we have the number of well-trained reservists we need. A comparably small force optimized for nothing other than crisis reaction operations cannot achieve this. Conscription ensures too that Bundeswehr units are stationed throughout Germany and hence that the armed forces have firm roots in the various regions of our republic. The Bundeswehr has proved its worth as a conscript army. It worked together with the forces of our allies to successfully assure peace in freedom for more than forty years.

More than seven million conscripts have served in the Bundeswehr since 1957 for this purpose.

From our point of view conscription will also bear fruit in the future. It determines the spirit of the "Army of Unity". It links society and the armed forces better than any other form of military organization. It establishes a high degree of transparency and attentiveness for issues regarding security and defence. It is above all, however, a clear expression of the fact that peace and security are a concern for everyone. We want the critical dialogue with society, even if it is often irritating.

What the Bundeswehr has accomplished in Bosnia makes us quite confident for the future. It also confirms our view that professionalism and conscription are no contradiction. We believe that in view of the quality and numbers of young soldiers we have, conscription has many advantages.

Universal conscription as a form of military organization has the support of a large majority of Germans, incidentally also young people. The missions in which the Bundeswehr has participated in recent years have had a positive influence on the domestic situation. The accomplishments of our soldiers are earning recognition from the public, the media and parliament. The number of young people volunteering for service in the Bundeswehr has risen sharply. We can select personnel at a high level. I am therefore confident for the future.

Before I conclude, may I thank you once again most sincerely for inviting me here to deliver this presentation. The good relations that exist between our armed forces is underlined by the fact that a German officer (Colonel Kröger) is attending this course for the first time. I therefore appreciate being here in your beautiful country and having the chance to exchange views and experiences in an atmosphere of openness and friendship. I admire the energy and initiative the South African National Defence Forces are showing in coming to terms with the past. I think you have done an excellent job in mastering the process of integration the way you have. I am convinced: This will give your country the stamina it needs to meet the challenges of the future.

I now look forward to having a stimulating and frank discussion with you and to answering your questions.