The Politics of German Defence and Security

THE POLITICS OF GERMAN DEFENCE AND SECURITY

Policy Leadership and Military Reform in the Post-Cold War Era

Tom Dyson

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDU	German Christian Democratic Union
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CSU	Christian Social Union of Bavaria
DCI	Defence Capabilities Initiative
DGAP	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, (German Council on Foreign Relations)
DM	Deutsche Mark
EEC	European Economic Community
EMU	European Monetary Union
EPC	European Political Cooperation
ESDI	European Security and Defence Identity
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
EU	European Union
FDP	German Liberal Party
FCC	Federal Constitutional Court
GEBB	Gesellschaft für Entwicklung, Beschaffung, und Betrieb, (Association for Development, Procurement, and Operations)
GDP	German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
HHG	Helsinki Headline Goals
IGC	Intergovernmental Conference
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NVA	Nationale Volksarmee, East German Armed Forces

OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PDS	Party of Democratic Socialism
PSC	Political and Security Committee
SPD	German Social Democratic Party
UN	United Nations
UNSCOM	United Nations Special Commission
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
VPR	Defence Policy Guidelines
WEU	Western European Union

For ANN

With love and gratitude

Chapter 1

EXPLAINING THE PARADOX OF GERMAN DEFENCE POLICY: 1990–2005

The story of *Bundeswehr* (German Armed Forces) reform since reunification in 1990 is one of striking paradox. The post–Cold War era has witnessed a dramatic shift in the domestic political consensus about the legitimacy of the use of force. Germany participated in UN, EU, and NATO-led peacekeeping and peace—enforcement operations from Somalia and Bosnia to Kosovo, Macedonia, and Afghanistan. However, while Germany's European partners, notably France and Great Britain, have responded with far-reaching armed forces reforms, allowing more effective participation in crisis-management operations, the Bundeswehr has undergone conservative adaptation.[1] Reforms passed by Defence Ministers Volker Rühe (1992–98) and Rudolf Scharping (1998–2002) did the minimum to respond to Germany's new security environment.

On the one hand, German policy makers have consistently promoted an increasingly active role for the German military in foreign policy. Hans Maull's 'civilian power thesis', which stressed the use of non military instruments in the pursuit of German interests and the authority of international organisations, particularly the UN, has been challenged as an inaccurate reflection of contemporary German foreign and security policy, notably after the Kosovo conflict of 1999, in which Germany participated in offensive military operations without a UN mandate.[2] Policy leaders such as Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Volker Rühe, Rudolf Scharping, Peter Struck, and Joschka Fischer have acted to widen the scope and frequency of German participation in crisis-management and peacekeeping operations and attempted to create an EU and a NATO capable of responding to the challenges of the post–Cold War security environment.

Yet, on other the hand, while the international security environment and changing domestic political consensus seemingly offered strong incentives for a redefinition of military doctrine and the development of a professional armed force, German Chancellors and Defence Ministers have until recently blocked drawing the consequences of policy entrepreneurship in the use of force for the Bundeswehr's doctrine and structure. Until Peter Struck's tenure as Defence Minister (2002–05), the Bundeswehr's doctrine remained 'territorial defence' rather than 'crisis prevention'. Crucially, Germany retains conscription, better suited to territorial defence, deterrence and the exigencies of the Cold War than to flexible global deployment in the support of peace enforcement and post—conflict reconstruction missions.

Germany in Context: Military Reform in Britain and France

The slow pace of German military reform, both doctrinal and structural, is thrown into sharp relief when compared with the changes that have taken place to the armed forces of her closest European partners over the post–Cold War era, the French and the British. Under President Jacques Chirac, the French military was subject to 'paradigmatic reform' in 1995–6, involving the abolition of conscription and complete professionalisation. This was accompanied by a persuasive 'communicative' public discourse of 'multinational action', stressing the need for the 'Europeanisation' of the armed forces as part of France's attempt to remain at the forefront of European integration in the field of defence and security, and replacing the traditional policy narrative of 'national sanctuary' that emphasised national independence and strategic autonomy.[3]

In stark contrast to Germany, where the federal system and frequent regional elections amplify the concerns of *Länder* (State) politicians about the social and economic implications of base closures, the unitary model of the French state allowed the executive greater room for maneuver. As Irondelle and McKenna highlight, the institutional configuration of the French state, a statist policy style, and the ideological coherence fostered by the *Grand Corps* allowed President Jacques Chirac to act as a 'decisive policy entrepreneur' on the structure and doctrine of the armed forces, largely free from the dictates of the Assembly, pressure groups and societal pressure.[4]

Elected for seven years (until 2002), President Chirac enjoyed a more prolonged window of opportunity between elections to act entrepreneurially on structural reform of the military than German chancellors/defence ministers, and consequently pushed through unpopular cuts to military personnel adversely affecting France's 'rust belt' in the North and East. In short, the politics of base closures were less politically damaging in France.

Entrepreneurial political leadership was also facilitated by the relative insulation of those involved in the formulation of defence and security policy from the social policy subsystem. While the downsizing of the armed forces from 577,000 to 434,000 between 1997 and 2002 was associated with significant job losses, adding to France's growing number of unemployed, the linkages between the budgetary, social, and defence policy subsystems were weaker than in Germany. Critically, the French system of social service was not dependent upon a large pool of conscientious objectors, as was the case in Germany.[5] This gave Chirac the ability to point toward the long-term savings (a 20 percent cut in the military budget) associated with a stream-lined, professional military, and to bind reform within a persuasive policy narrative that stressed the need to relaunch economic growth within the fiscal constraints of the Maastricht Convergence Criteria.

The abolition of conscription (closely intertwined with French national identity and the notion of the 'citizen in arms') was framed as a critical step to ensuring that France would be in a position to defend its long-term interests in the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). This was consistent with the long-term policy narrative associated with European integration and the Maastricht Treaty in the post–Cold War era: the '*mission civilisatrice*' and the 'Europeanisation of French exceptionalism'.[6] Irondelle concludes: 'the reform of the armed forces in 1995-6 directly originated in budget cuts; they (the Ministry of Defence and Treasury) were confronted with what the senior official of the Budget Division called the *'principe de réalité'* of the convergence criteria.[7]

In Britain, the Labour Government's 1998 Strategic Defence Review (SDR), followed by the 2002 'New Chapter' and 2004 White Paper 'Delivering Security in a Changing World', outlined a fundamental and 'radical' reform of the British military, with the goal of creating mobile, rapid-reaction expeditionary forces; a move away from the defence of NATO territory to power projection and strategic mobility, prioritising new security risks from non-state actors.[8] Despite this 'radicalism', key facets of British strategic culture prevailed, most notably the commitment to NATO as the core institution within which British defence and security policy should be embedded.

The 'salami slicing' of personnel numbers that had already taken place under the Conservative government between 1990 and 1996, streamlining the armed forces from 306,000 to 226,000 troops, meant that the SDR involved only limited cuts in personnel. Indeed, the SDR included an increase in the army's overall size by 3,300, with the greatest reductions taking place in the numbers of reservists in the Territorial Army. The 2004 White Paper reinforced these changes, proposing a reduction of the army and navy each by 1,500 and air force by 7,500, accompanied by a reduction of 10,000 civilian jobs in the Ministry of Defence. [9]

Figures within the core executive in Britain encountered a favorable strategic context for policy leadership on military reform. Conscription had been abolished in 1962, easing the adaptation of the British armed forces to the demands of the post–Cold War security environment. In addition, the relatively healthy state of the British economy ameliorated the implications of job losses in the armed services for the Labour government. Additionally, as in France, the unitary nature of the state, weak powers of local authorities, and low salience of local elections reduced the problems associated with base closures encountered by German defence ministers; these factors strengthened the hand of Prime Minister Tony Blair (1997-2007) and Defence Minister George Robertson (1997–99) to engage in bold reform in 1997-8.

The examples of France and Britain provide a marked contrast with the gradual, piecemeal, and adaptational change that characterised both structural and doctrinal reform to the Bundeswehr over the post–Cold War era, and they point to the importance of domestic political factors and policy leadership in determining appropriate responses to the changing security environment. The remainder of this chapter will outline a conceptual framework within which this German 'exceptionalism' in military reform can be explained.

Explaining the Paradox: Leadership and Culture as a Political Resource

Existing work on German security policy and armed forces reform is dominated by accounts sharing a core belief: that policy is driven by ideas rather than material factors, representing a 'culturally-bounded', institutionally-embedded pattern persisting over time, and a conception of a national security culture that 'predispose(s) societies in general and political elites toward certain actions and policies'.[10] Berger stresses Germany's 'culture of antimilitarism', rooted in its 'struggle to draw lessons from its troubled past'; Longhurst identifies a German 'strategic culture', analyzing it into foundational elements, highly resistant to change and citing the importance of 'path dependency' in the persistence of conscription and territorial defence.[11]

Whilst such accounts provide an excellent and indispensable analysis of important aspects of the ideational bases of German defence and security policy, this book argues that, in order to reach the heart of the paradox underlying Bundeswehr reform, a deeper examination of the role played by material factors emanating from the domestic political context is critical, and that strategic culture is not a sufficient explanation of policy change in and of itself. It will examine, in particular, the crucial influence of electoral-strategic interests, the politics of base closures, the ramifications for social policy and budgetary constraints in determining the nature of Bundeswehr reform between 1998 and 2004. In doing so, it builds upon the incisive work of Mary Sarotte by emphasising the centrality of these domestic factors in informing policy leaders' choice of leadership role.[12] Crucially it demonstrates that, rather than acting just as a constraint, strategic culture was often used selectively by policy leaders to block or stimulate policy learning and change as part of the political management of reform.

Additionally, the study contributes to the debate on the role of international structure versus domestic politics in post–Cold War German foreign and security policy.[13] As Alison McCartney perceptively notes, the literature on post–Cold War foreign, defence, and security policy is broadly divided into accounts that stress either the importance of German perceptions of her power or position within a changing international order, or the centrality of history, norms, and domestic politics in policy development.[14] On the issue of the Bundeswehr's tasks and doctrine, domestic politics combined with assessments of Germany's changing power and position within the international order and security environment. However, the role of domestic political factors was more highly pronounced in structural reform of the Bundeswehr.

The book builds upon previous accounts by illustrating how policy leaders—especially Defence Ministers Volker Rühe (1992–98), Rudolf Scharping (1998–2002), and Peter Struck (2002–05)—controlled the scope, shape, timing, and pace of policy change in structural reforms, maneuvering within the domestic political context. Whilst this context informed the leadership roles pursued by policy leaders, creating a bias against entrepreneurship on structural reforms, the successful execution of these roles necessitated well-developed leadership skills and traits. These were used to control pressure for change to the structure of the Bundeswehr, emanating from the international level and also from policy learning within the Defence Ministry, especially from operational experience and the macropolitical system.[15]

In the process the study shifts the focus of leadership studies in Germany from the chancellor to ministerial level, emphasising the importance of the *Ressortprinzip*, 'departmental' principle'.[16] Chancellors' assessments of international opportunity and domestic political constraint helped set the strategic direction of policy change in Bundeswehr reform, and their support was important for successful entrepreneurship, brokerage, or stalemate; however, ministerial leadership was critical in determining the scope and shape of policy change. Defence Ministers Rühe, Scharping, and Struck emerge as pivotal in the retention of control over the policy process by manipulating processes of policy learning, both by strategically using information and ideas to reframe issues and by selecting professional policy forums and new institutional venues to prevent policy debates. Without their leadership, forces militating for radical change to the tasks and structure of the Bundeswehr—from the international level (NATO, the EU, and Germany's international partners), from the macropolitical level (including the Weizsäcker Commission), and from within the policy subsystem—would have initiated policy learning, setting off potentially destabilising domestic political conflicts and threatening the SPD and CDU/CSU's control over the policy process.

In its focus on the role played by NATO and the EU in Bundeswehr reform, the book also builds upon work on the Europeanisation of German defence and security policy; it is argued that greater attention must be paid to the role of agency in the process of Europeanisation than previous accounts posit.[17] Again, whilst Germany played an important role in seeking to develop the ability of NATO and the EU to respond effectively to international crises, Rühe, Scharping, and Struck played central roles in controlling the level of adaptational pressure that these institutions exerted upon the German military to alter both its doctrine and its structure. These roles have important ramifications for European security and NATO, as Bundeswehr reform has impacts upon the ability of Germany to meet the requirements of the post–Cold War and September 11th security environment and contribute to a functioning and credible Common European Defence and Security Policy (ESDP). As part of the traditional Franco-German 'motor' of EU integration, Germany's commitment to the Helsinki Headline Goals and Capabilities Goals, set out at the Helsinki European Council of December 1999, is vital to the eventual success of ESDP. A focus on the role played by strategic culture does not sufficiently account for the motivations of German defence ministers in blocking this 'top down' adaptational pressure. A full explanation demands instead a focus upon policy leaders' assessment of domestic political constraints.

In short, the book will show that Bundeswehr reform was subject to domestic political management. Despite the opportunity presented by events at the international level (a range of EU and NATO initiatives and German deployments to Kosovo, Macedonia, and Afghanistan), and defence ministers' use of these events to redefine German attitudes towards the legitimacy of the use of force, the lack of corresponding entrepreneurship on the tasks and structure of the Bundeswehr reflected the extent to which reform was driven by policy leaders' assessments of, and ability to maneuver within, domestic political constraints. The book not only offers important new empirical material on post–Cold German Defence and Security Policy but also makes a contribution to German leadership studies, Europeanisation studies, and explanatory frameworks for conceptualising German Defence and Security Policy.

The Concept of Policy Leadership

In drawing out the centrality of policy leaders to Bundeswehr reform, the study identifies three distinct policy leadership roles: entrepreneurship, brokerage, and veto-playing. Policy entrepreneurship involves adopting and pushing a particular new policy solution, leading to radical policy change to basic organising principles of policy. Policy brokerage is about seeking consensus among contending ideas, whilst veto-playing seeks to actively block ideas of policy change. These policy leadership roles are linked in turn to different policy leadership styles and strategies. In the case of policy entrepreneurship, leadership takes on a heroic style of policy initiative where the leader acts as *animateur* of change.[18] The characteristic leadership strategy involves creating and sustaining a crisis consciousness, reframing policy issues in a manner that provides an historical legitimisation for bold change. The policy leader develops a new policy narrative, attributing to new proposals political coherence, historical meaning, and significance. The appropriate skills involve the arts of discourse and persuasion, aimed at getting agreement on a particular policy model.

In contrast, policy brokerage is associated with a 'humdrum' leadership style, pursuing incremental change. Its characteristic leadership policy strategy involves facilitating policy learning and managing it by 'binding-in' the potential opposition. Policy veto-playing is associated with an *immobiliste* leadership style, preventing forces for change from shaping policy. This is reflected in a policy strategy of sidelining change agents and blocking new policy ideas.

Broadly, as indicated below, the macropolitical arrangements of Germany create a disposition to opt for policy brokerage or for policy veto-playing roles over policy entrepreneurship. It can be argued that Germany's high consensus building requirements reinforce the general disposition of policy leaders to weigh losses more heavily than gains, to remember defeats more than victories, and to exaggerate the power of opponents.[19]

Leadership: Clarifying an Inexact Concept

Policy leadership requires greater clarification before it can be usefully employed, for leadership is an inexact concept. When is 'what a leader does' not leadership? [20] Its ambiguity stems from the difficulties of gaining agreement both about its boundaries and to what it refers, and of measuring its presence and effects. Disagreements exist about such matters as its empirical referents, the bases and forms of leadership (e.g., whether it is coercive or ideational), and how it relates to companion concepts such as power and management.

Many of these differences are ultimately not resolvable because they are linked to contrasting ontological starting points about the nature of reality. One source of contest is about whether the term 'leadership' refers to a property of one or more agents (and the relationship between them), or to a relationship between one or more agents and a policy subsystem and a macropolitical framework. To the extent that it is agreed that leadership is a relationship between actors and a policy subsystem or macro-political framework, there are disagreements about how this relationship should be conceptualised (notably between the 'contextualist' and the 'interactionist' approaches outlined below). There are also deep differences of view about what should be included and excluded (e.g., what types of effect, what types of role, which policy skills?) and what prioritised (e.g., personal traits or situational contingencies, like institutional and political context).[21]

For some, leadership is a transformational activity, involving vision, charisma, and symbolic powers.[22] The leader is 'an individual who creates a story' and someone to whom others attribute significant symbolic powers.[23] From this perspective, leadership is bound up with a process of attribution in which others, seeking to explain policy failure or success, invoke poor or good leadership as the 'real' cause. Another perspective, more skeptical of the 'romance of leadership' notion, focuses on situational contingencies, such as the institutional and policy environment.[24] Their stress on constraints leads them to identify a wider range of roles. Alongside transformational leadership, they identify 'transactional leadership', in which policy brokers are involved in negotiating difficult compromises, and *laissez-faire* leadership (similar to Mintzberg's 'quiet', enabling leadership) that focuses just on broad strategic direction but is 'hands off' in relation to policy management.[25]

A second reason why leadership is an inexact concept is that it cannot be numerically measured, at least not in a way that would avoid the accusation that the procedure and the results were arbitrary. Its use involves an unavoidable exercise of informed judgment, not scientific precision. It is difficult for those who use it to avoid entrapment in the 'romance of leadership' notion, in which special powers are attributed to leaders by those trying to explain policy success or failure when it is difficult to determine the 'real' causes at work.[26] This problem is made all the more difficult to handle because attribution by others is itself an important part of leadership.

These two problematic aspects of the concept mean that it is destined to remain contested and its application fraught with difficulties. In this context the book settles for the modest, but nonetheless challenging, task of seeking to describe the complex relationships that are associated with policy leadership in as precise a manner as possible, but it cannot hope to avoid the ongoing disputes that derive from different ontological and epistemological positions.

A review of the main literature on leadership within political science and organisation theory underlines the definitional problems. Given the endemic nature of these problems in discussing leadership, both bodies of literature tend to offer complex analytical models rather than definitions.[27] In both literatures there has been a clear shift over time from an actor-centered emphasis on personal traits to one that gives more attention to contextual variables, from ‘leadership character’ to what might be termed ‘contextualisation of leadership’.[28]

Beyond that, both literatures are characterised by tensions and unresolved conflicts. Notably there are those who give primacy to context—’contexts make leaders’—and those who stress the interaction between personal leadership skills and context, that leaders negotiate contexts and the resources, constraints and opportunities that contexts present.[29] Political science has great difficulties in disentangling leadership from the concept of power, and moving beyond the dualism of the cognitive and the strategic aspects of leadership. Organisation theory has similar problems of differentiation from the concept of management, and has no settled position about the relationship between the task-oriented and the socioemotional aspects of leadership. Both bodies of literature lack a settled position on contextualist versus interactionist approaches to leadership.

Within political science there is a widespread recognition that the concept of leadership overlaps with the concept of power. Thus, just as with the concept of power, definitions of leadership have proved contentious. Jean Blondel noted, ‘power is the key element of political leadership’, and went on to define leadership as the ‘ability to make others do what they would not otherwise do’.[30] This emphasis on the ‘powering’ aspect of leadership can be criticised for underplaying the inspirational and cognitive aspects of persuasion, whether through a common vision or through initiating policy learning.

Therefore in discussing leadership it is useful to distinguish ‘power over’, which derives from strategic skills in using constitutional position, executive organisation, and party, coalition, and electoral management, from ‘power to’, which rests on cognitive skills of imparting vision, of persuasion through convincing narrative, and of policy learning and lesson drawing.[31]

Reviewing the complex organisational and management theory literature on leadership, Charles Handy concluded that this concept ‘is a complex one, riddled with ambiguity, incompatibility and conflict’.[32] Rather than