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the author's summary of her doctoral (PhD) thesis entitled

**Reflection of NATO's strategic concepts in the security
and defence policy of the Federal Republic of Germany**

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Introduction

*“Looking into the past only makes sense if it serves the future.”
Konrad Adenauer*

The “German question” has, in recent years, found its way onto the transatlantic alliance’s current political agenda again. The Federal Republic gets referred to in relation to almost every single crisis or NATO participation, nearly always with negative connotations. A host of publications discuss Germany and in relation to its international roles the country is heavily criticised in most cases. In an article in the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* Erich Gujer wrote that *“Berlin always exercises leadership willy-nilly – by economic means for the most part, sometimes by means of foreign policy but never by military actions.”*¹ Today even Americans view the Germans as a nation that likes to benefit from the openness of the international market, using information received from US intelligence activities, while criticising its ally for spying excessively. Although the accusations of Germany for excessively exploiting economic and intelligence opportunities are a relatively new phenomenon, there is nothing new about Germany’s restricted participation in international security efforts.

According to the US and its allies Germany’s contribution falls way short of its economic weight. They regard Germany as a state that enjoys the benefits of an open world order without readily contributing to its maintenance. Hans Kundnani referred to Germany as a “geo-economic power”, a country that has accepted its leading position from an economic aspect and that is not afraid to stand up for its economic interests, but also one that is not ready to assume a leading position when it comes to security policy. And this is not refuted by German people either, as it was their very own head of state, Joachim Gauck who said in January this year that in Europe it is Germany that benefits most from peace and security and through its role in international trade it is Germany again that has built up the most advantageous position in the Eurozone as well. The Federal Republic of Germany is today the largest economic power of the European Union that could provide the necessary loans for all of the countries that became heavily indebted in the course of the economic crisis.

Despite the fact that the Federal Republic has, since the 1990s, increased its participation in international military operations to a certain extent, Germany is still without making it a clear-cut policy, yet for the most part with the excuse of its historical stigma, it usually tends not to actively take part in military operations. Germany’s refusal to participate in the military

¹ In: <http://www.nzz.ch/meinung/kommentare/die-neue-deutsche-frage-1.17383545>; downloaded on 25.09.2013.

intervention in Libya shook the very foundations of the Transatlantic relations, not only cast a shadow over the relations between President Obama and Chancellor Merkel but was even criticised by the majority of the for the most part pacifist German people who took a very definite stance against the participation in operations in Afghanistan. According to western diplomatic circles and German newspapers Germany's "*maverick*" tactics harmed not only Germany itself but the western alliance too. The civic conservative paper *Die Welt* went so far as to declare that Germany had become an unreliable ally in both NATO and the European Union.

The North Atlantic Council was rather shocked when the German government recently refused even to start negotiations aiming at resolving the Syrian crisis. Even some of Germany's closest European allies expressed concerns about the impossibility to rely on Germany. Scepticism concerning Germany's reliability as an ally seems to become an increasingly heavy obstacle in regard to international cooperation. Similar "hindrances" were observed in the early integration phase of the cold war. At that time it was France that went out of her way to counter any effort aiming at facilitating Germany's "acceptance and recognition" though France could not take its vacant position in Europe in economic or in military terms either. Germany has become a "new France" now, blocking any new initiative without making any constructive contribution to the development of the alliance. Unfortunately the Germans are apparently rather unconcerned about what their allies may think.

Germany's unwillingness to participate in international missions is being increasingly viewed by the Allies as a "poor excuse". The history of this excuse however, dates way back in the past. The "German problem" was a major concern for Europe between Germany's unification in 1871 and the reunification in 1990. However, Germany can still not forget its moral annihilation, something of a national catastrophe in the course of its history which the it had (and has) to undergo as a result of the crimes committed during the years of national socialism. Germany spares no effort to maintain its self-esteem which it has acquired at extremely great difficulties and which it considers to be rather fragile, and this is the reason why it tries to avoid taking on any central role. It is a particularly salient feature of Chancellor Angela Merkel's current policy, especially the way she behaves when expressing views of various conflicts. For Germany tends to avoid taking positions. Germany does not express solidarity with Europeans who are waiting for the very consent of Germany but it does not support its opponents either, those who reject this kind of support. There is one thing however, in which Germany is highly consistent, and it is the provision of assistance for those

who can identify with Germany's (that is, Europe's) stability policy, in the way of loans. Just like a good teacher, Germany rewards and punishes its "pupils", regarding education to be its historical duty, so that they "never again" have to face stigmatisation, privation, military and moral collapse. If it has to, Germany even resorts to a delaying tactic, to mete out punishment or to gain time, as by the time an official German standpoint is worked out, the problem concerned may even have got solved somehow. The German chancellor in office at any point in time, including Ms. Merkel today, protects the interests of the German people, that is the competitiveness of the "German Money" (the euro) and Germany in the world market and the country's leading role in the global economy

A high ranking NATO official referred to Germany in an Atlantic Council report as a "*lost nation*". Today's Germany is a first class economic super power but a second class political and military power. As a member of a collective defence organisation however, it needs to adapt because any chain is only as strong as its weakest link. My choice of a research subject I was motivated by the fact that I spent various periods in the FRG between 1992 and 1997 and as an individual interested in Germany's history I tried to get familiar with the German way of thinking. When in Munich, I met a former Wehrmacht and subsequently Bundeswehr officer, with whom I had several discussions before his death, focusing for the most part, on his military career. The image of the German soldier whom I got to know from his personal memories and the opinion about Germany is, in my view, different from today's official German standpoint from a variety of aspects. I think even the unified Germany has not been able to process the heavy burden of the nation's heritage and thereby they annul even the all-time Prussian-German history, with its outstanding successes and glory. Even by its very location Germany takes a central position in Europe and in terms of its economic achievements, particularly in the recent years, it could justly take over the leading role that has been expected of Germany for many years now. If we agree with the assertion that the Bundeswehr is the very means of German foreign policy, and if the Federal Republic of Germany also intends to pursue a more active foreign policy in the future, then the Bundeswehr and the German soldier himself, may be the answer to the "German question".

One of the most important questions in relation to the Federal Republic of Germany is whether it is capable of becoming a leading power and of assuming a leading role in Europe from both a political and a military perspective. Can Germany identify with this role and make the unavoidably necessary efforts? Will Germany continue to be a reliable partner, even

from the aspect of future NATO missions? Why is a country that is striving for integration, behaving increasingly as a “maverick” within the system of alliance? When and how did the Federal Republic get off the track laid out by NATO? What are the most contentious security policy issues today? Can these conflicts not be resolved, and who has to yield, if need be? What consequences may be brought about by the differences between standpoints?

In the course of my research I set up the following two hypotheses:

1. *Germany’s past, present and presumably future, role in NATO is determined by facing history and the assumption of a real military role and duties.*
2. *In view of historical facts, placing them at the same time in a security and defence policy context, I set up a hypothesis in relation to Germany’s NATO role, in that if Germany manages to part with its heavily criticised “reserved behaviour” and becomes a lot more active in a military sense as well on the basis of its leading economic power, it will meet the interests of its allies – particularly those of the United States of America – and thus it can open up new political and military perspectives for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.*

The objectives of the thesis:

1. To process, analyse and evaluate how the Federal Republic of Germany has, since 1949, become one of the leading/dominant member states of NATO.
2. To discuss NATO’s strategic concepts and their impacts on Germany’s foreign and security policy.
3. To discuss Germany’s participation in NATO operations in detail, along with an analysis of Germany’s national interests and NATO’s interests.
4. To prove that Germany’s foreign policy role is a dominant factor affecting NATO’s future.

Methods

To accomplish the above goals *I processed, sorted and studied Hungarian and foreign literature on Germany’s and NATO’s roles during the years of the cold war and the subsequent period.*

My research was focused on an *approach based on Germany’s perspective*, including a study of political, economic, military and social aspects of the subject.

I discussed only the most important issues that have had the most profound and lasting effects on Germany's role in NATO.

I did not study other member states' roles in NATO or Germany's activities in other international organisations (EU, UN, OSCE).

To fully accomplish my objectives, I relied primarily on foreign – for the most part, German – literature.

As for Hungarian sources, I drew on the work and the publications of members of intellectual workshops engaged in security policy research (including the Strategic Defence Research Centre of the National University of Public Service) and universities where subjects of international relations are taught (Corvinus University, National University of Public Service, Andrásy University).

As for foreign sources, particular emphasise needs to be laid on German constitutional bodies (Bundesrat – the Federal Council, Bundesministerium der Verteidigung – the Federal Defence Ministry, Auswärtiges Amt – Foreign Ministry) and international organisations that are important participants or analysts or that contribute to the shaping of Germany's Transatlantic cooperation on account of their purposes (e.g. NATO) or objectives.

The structure of the thesis

To accomplish its goals, the thesis is divided into four chapters:

1. Chapter One is an analysis of the events of the period between the end of World War Two and the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic as well as NATO (1945-1949), focusing in particular on the options available after the war, the proposed solutions and the actions actually taken in regard to the future of Germany.
2. Chapter Two evaluates the security policy of the Federal Republic of Germany during the cold war (1949-1989), focusing on and discussing certain strategic concepts adopted by NATO, as dominant bases of reference.
3. Chapter Three is a discussion of the main features of the reunified Germany's security policy and military role up to the present day (1990-2014).
4. Chapter Four highlights certain sensitive – but in my view, from the aspect of NATO, unavoidable – issues based partly on conclusions drawn in and from the preceding chapters, and partly on the basis of criticism relating to Germany.

The structure of the first three chapters is based on a sequence of the most important historical changes, discussing processes and results that are characteristic of the German army during the time. The fourth chapter is a synthesis of the subjects discussed in the first three chapters from a logical aspect and in terms of the technique of analysis.

Each chapter is closed by summaries and conclusions, while the end of the thesis outlines the research and scientific results.

Final conclusions

To accomplish the objectives of the thesis I carried out the tasks required for confirming or refuting the hypotheses. I discussed the foreign and security policy efforts and limitations of the Federal Republic of Germany in detail, including its particular position during the years following World War Two and during the period of the cold war, along with its relevant efforts after the end of the bipolar confrontation up to the present day. I paid particular attention to NATO's changing activities manifested primarily in strategic concepts; the international roles assumed by the Bundeswehr; and long contentious standing issues relating to the determination and management of Germany's position and role within the Alliance.

Aggregate conclusions

1. Germany's history was dominated initially by the Allies, and later on, during the era of a bipolar world, primarily by its relations with the United States of America, the Soviet Union and Europe, in which the most important goals were to avoid Germany's excessive growth in power – primarily as a military power – and the way the country was called to account for its actions in a way other than before (particularly, after World War One), the results of which differed materially owing to the different concepts adopted by the western countries and the Soviet Union.
2. In relation to the future of particularly the western half of the divided Germany the West European allies found it difficult or impossible to find shared and durable solutions – despite a number of initiatives – articulated ultimately in the resolute and sometimes strongly contentious actions on the part of the United States of America – as the tip of the scale – resulting practically in the FRG's joining of NATO. The main strategic considerations determining Germany's NATO membership included

its geographical location, industrial, economic and military potential and Germany's undisputed experience accumulated in fighting the Soviets in World War Two.

3. The confrontation during the cold war forced the two parts of the country along different development paths, resulting in major differences in military and economic aspects (along with social and political differences) as well. The relationship between the two systems are characterised by “effect and counter-effect” and “measure and counter-measure”.
4. The establishment and operation of the Bundeswehr entailed a very complicated psychological, legal, strategic, material and organisation challenge, in the creation of which the elaboration and application of the conceptual and practical elements of the concept of “checks and balances” were the most demanding tasks. At the same time, these steps resulted in the commencement of the external and internal rehabilitation of the German nation and laid down Germany's subsequent more substantial European and international roles.
5. Of course the FRG could not detach itself from NATO's concepts in the cold war either, at the same time the deployment of nuclear arms and the country's turning into a potential theatre of nuclear war generated major social and political debates and confrontations. These steps ensured Germany's and its European allies' security and at the same time dampened their concerns about a potential revival of nationalism in Germany.
6. In the midst of the sudden and surprising changes that got underway in the spring of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe the Federal Republic of Germany turned into a key participant and finally the time came for the reunification of the two German states with US and Soviet assistance.
7. One prerequisite for reunification was the *new* Germany's NATO membership, which the Soviet Union, then facing very serious domestic and international difficulties, could not but accept, so the unified Germany became the second strongest power of NATO after the United States of America.
8. The manoeuvring room of German foreign and security policies expanded after the end of the cold war, bringing up, at the same time, certain earlier and new concerns, the essence of which was that Germany might give up its institutionalised Euro-Atlantic and Transatlantic security relations but no such concerns materialised

ultimately. Indeed, each federal government emphasised that NATO played a central role in Germany's security policy.

9. Germany kept up with the transformation of the Alliance in the early nineties actively, with its own impulses, however, it only embarked on initiatives that were suitable and, from a security policy perspective, acceptable for it.
10. The changes in the international security environment in the wake of the terrorist attacks in 2001 definitely affected the stance taken by the Federal Republic of Germany as well, resulting in a major transformation of the Bundeswehr.
11. By today, Bundeswehr, often referred to as the means of Germany's foreign policy, has exceeded the geographical boundaries of the North-Atlantic region and its own restriction to participating in peacekeeping missions. These changes were enabled by the adoption of new defence policy guidelines in 2003.
12. Another trend is, however, that Germany's international roles have been the target of increasing criticism in recent years in international relations. Germany is mostly said to be unfairly benefiting from the opportunities offered by the Alliance without making active contributions, despite the fact by way of its economic and political dominance, Germany could even take up a leading role.
13. It is a fact that Germany's integration in the Euro-Atlantic and Transatlantic security structure and a series of activities as a member of that structure provides Germany with a particular kind of security as well, yet despite the successful development over the recent decades the German nation is still trapped in its historical catastrophe, or in other words, they are still struggling with the political leeway assigned to them, trying to passively accept the rules of the game. The earlier "guarantees" have become "checks" by now the application of which may even be regarded as a way of seeking for protection against the international – particular American – pressure that they find to be somewhat excessive, towards Germany's assumption of a more active and leading international role.
14. Global security, political stability and economic success continue to be priority goals for the Federal Republic of Germany in order to secure strong Transatlantic relations and long term strategic partnership. To this end, Germany continues to be a reliable partner for NATO, indeed, it has even offered increasingly active roles and a more open foreign policy.

15. In recent years – nearly from the moment of joining NATO – Germans have been attaching increased priority to western integration as opposed to a single nation state. The dynamic growth of the German economy offered an opportunity for the country to become an increasingly active geo-economic power, rather than focusing on its geo-political role. To this end, the country has practically given up excessively active cross-border policies and roles. In other words, as a member of the Atlantic Alliance, Germany has identified with the latter's values and fundamentals, making active efforts to cooperate, while the enforcement of its own economic interests is given priority over everything else.
16. By refusing to get involved in strategic debates concerning NATO's role, Germany is impeding its functioning as an effective political forum. At the same time, it was the German government that enabled NATO to regain its central consultative role.

Scientific achievements

1. I explored and analysed the processes of the Euro-Atlantic and Transatlantic integration of the Federal Republic of Germany following World War Two and the years of the cold war, and the period leading to the present day after the end of the bipolar confrontation, on the basis of aspects of the transformation of its security and defence policy and its army as well as its international roles, and I have evaluated the most important issues relating to the subject.
2. Accordingly, I have proven the validity of the assumption that Germany's past, current and, presumably, future, international security policy role and particularly its role in the NATO is determined by its refusal (denial) – or in some cases, undertaking – to face the past and to undertake an active military role.
3. I have explored and analysed the much criticised “reserved” role undertaken by the Federal Republic of Germany in NATO and the factors affecting that role.
4. I have proven that if the Federal Republic of Germany breaks with its “reserved behaviour” so much criticised so far, and becomes much more active in a military sense as well on the basis of its leading economic power, it will meet the interests of its allies, particularly those of the United States of America.

Proposals

I am making the following two proposals on the basis of my research and its results:

- To secure German – US relations emphasis should be laid in the near future on those areas of political culture where there really is room for different interpretation of fundamentally similar values and for making progress on the basis of the lessons drawn.
- Based on the research I find that only more resolute leadership and partly the reintroduction of the Prussian military traditions as well as the creation of an “active” military force adapted to the changed security environment could result in breaking out of the current deadlock.

Recommendations

The contents of the thesis may be used – in full or in part – for teaching at any level of higher education (BSc, MSc, PhD), and its propositions may form the basis or parts of further research.

Moreover, I am convinced that the processes explored and identified and the results and conclusions of the thesis may be useful for those working in the public sector, including employees of ministries, services or background institutions.

LIST OF THE APPLICANT'S PUBLICATIONS

In Hungarian:
A Bundeswehr afrikai szerepvállalása (Bundeswehr's role in Africa) Szakmai szemle, 2010/1, p. 171-179
A NATO szerepe a kalózok elleni küzdelemben (NATO's role in the fight against pirates) Szakmai Szemle, 2010/3, p. 170-179
A brit védelempolitika alakulása (Developments in Britain's defence policy) Szakmai Szemle, 2010/2, p. 101-112
Békefenntartás a XXI. században (Peacekeeping in the 21 st century) Sereg Szemle, 2010/2, p. 36-46
A fegyveres erők feladatai a változó stratégiai koncepció tükrében (The tasks of armed forces in view of the changing strategic concept) Sereg Szemle, 2010/4, p. 7-20
Az Egyesült Államok védelempolitikája (The US defence policy) Sereg Szemle, 2011/2, p. 164-176
Válaszút előtt a Bundeswehr? (Bundeswehr at a crossroads?) Szakmai Szemle, 2012/1, p. 200-212
60 éve ugyanazon az úton? (On the same path for 60 years?) Szakmai Szemle, 2012/3-4, p.
A NATO és a tömegpusztító fegyverek jelentette fenyegetés (NATO and the threat of weapons of mass destruction) Sereg Szemle 2012/4, p. 50-66
Angol nyelvű
The role of the Bundeswehr in Africa Tradecraft Review 2014/2

Budapest, 16 June 2014