The Test of Strategic Culture:
Germany, Pacifism and Pre-emptive Strikes

ANJA DALGAARD-NIELSEN*

Department of Conflict and Security Studies, Danish Institute for International Studies, Copenhagen

Germany was the first country to issue a categorical refusal to support the US-led war in Iraq. Some have interpreted this as the result of a clash between the strategic cultures of Germany and the USA, others as a sign that a more nationalistic and assertive Germany is emerging. This article explains the apparently contradictory aspects of Germany's stance on Iraq by identifying two competing strands within Germany's strategic culture. It concludes that the German refusal signals neither a reversion to a pacifist stance nor that Germany is in a process of shedding the bonds and alliances that have so far framed the reunified Germany's military policy. Iraq simply showed that Germany, like most other countries, has conditions that have to be met – in Germany's case, conditions flowing from the co-existence of two competing schools of thought within Germany's strategic culture.

Keywords Germany · pacifism · Iraq War · military pre-emption · strategic culture

Interpreting the German 'No' to Iraq

AT THE TIME OF GERMAN REUNIFICATION in October 1990, Germany followed a policy of strict military abstinence in relation to conflicts outside Europe. The notion that the Bundeswehr could be used for other purposes than the defence of Germany was inconceivable across the political spectrum, and thus not a single German soldier participated in the 1991 Gulf War.

Over the decade that followed, Germany gradually abandoned the policy of complete abstention in favour of a policy of engagement in a variety of different international crisis-management operations from former Yugoslavia to Afghanistan. However, 12 years after the first war in the Gulf, when another US-led coalition launched Operation Iraqi Freedom to oust the

regime of Saddam Hussein, the Germans were again absent. Germany was the first Western power to issue a categorical 'no' to any participation in potential military actions against Iraq. With this 'no', the German Chancellor fired the opening shot in a row that was to pitch Americans against Europeans and different European countries against each other. Had Germany come full circle?

Without suggesting an outright reversion to the abstinence that used to define Germany's policy towards international military crisis management, a number of scholars have, indeed, pointed to a clash between Germany's multilateral and diplomatically oriented strategic culture and the USA's action-oriented strategic culture, with its emphasis on military means. A new aggressive US security strategy, emphasizing pre-emptive military strikes, they argue, caused German policymakers to dig in their heels on the question of Iraq (Hacke, 2003: 8; Kaim, 2003–04; Szabo, 2004: 52).

A neorealist, however, might notice a different aspect of the German stance on Iraq. In 1991, the German government led by the Conservative Helmut Kohl had quietly extended substantial material and financial support to the US-led coalition.[1] The Social Democratic Party (SPD)/Green government of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, in contrast, not only declined to make a direct German contribution to the war in 2003, but in effect engaged in active counter-coalition-building by quietly lobbying other sceptical countries like France and Russia to support Germany's resistance (Hellmann, 2004; Schöllgen, 2003). If we focus on this aspect, it might appear that the neorealist prediction of a more assertive and independent Germany had, at last, triumphed over the culturalist emphasis on continuity between the security policy of the Cold War Federal Republic of Germany and the reunified Germany (Mearsheimer, 1999: 5–56; Van Orden, 1991: 352).

This article shows how Germany's security policy was indeed challenged and changed over the 1990s – however, not in the way the neorealist would have it. Concurring with a culturalist argument, it illustrates how German policy did not respond directly to external events, but was moulded by domestic culture.[2] Yet, based on a study of the evolving debate on international military deployments of the Bundeswehr beyond the territory of NATO (in so-called out-of-area operations) between 1991 and 2003, the article identifies two competing schools of thought within Germany's strategic culture, and thus emphasizes the plural and dynamic, rather than monolithic, nature of strategic culture. It suggests that neither the timing nor the outcome of Germany's policy transformation can be properly under-

---

[1] Germany's financial contribution amounted to more than $11 billion by February 1991. Germany also supported the movement of US and British troops to the Gulf, and supplied several ammunition shipments to the international coalition (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [1991] 1995: 792).

[2] For examples of culturalist analyses of German security policy in the 1990s, see Berger (1998); Duffield (1998); Maull (2000).

stood without taking these two schools of thought into account, and shows how their coexistence and the cross-pressures they placed on German policy-makers help explain apparently contradictory and puzzling aspects of Germany's stance on Iraq.

The article opens with a brief conceptual clarification, specifying how the concept of strategic culture is understood and where it is sought and identified. It then looks back at the emergence of the two competing schools of thought within Germany's strategic culture in the period after World War II; shows how the two schools evolved over the 1990s; and, analyzing German out-of-area engagements from Yugoslavia to Congo, illustrates how their co-existence helps make sense of Germany's out-of-area policy, including the 'no' to Iraq. The article closes with a discussion of how the nature and extent of Germany's future international military engagement will be shaped by the need to appeal simultaneously to the adherents of both schools, and outlines the kinds of military operations Germany can be expected to endorse and the kinds of operations that will provoke domestic resistance.

Strategic Culture: What and Where?

The first to explicitly apply the concept of culture to a study of security policy was Jack L. Snyder, in his 1977 study *The Soviet Strategic Culture*. Pointing to differences in domestic factors such as historical experience, political culture and national identity, Snyder set out to explain why US and Soviet nuclear strategy apparently reflected different logics of thinking, even though the two countries were facing the same geostrategic environment (Snyder, 1977; Gray, 1981; Johnston, 1995).

Snyder originally defined strategic culture as 'the sum total of ideals, conditional emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behaviour that members of the national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other with regard to nuclear strategy' (Snyder, 1977: 9) – a definition that drew criticism for conflating the dependent and independent variables by including behavioural elements (Johnston, 1995: 37). Whether such elements should be included remains an issue of dispute. In a recent culturalist study of German security policy, Kerry Longhurst (2004: 17) defines strategic culture as 'a distinctive body of beliefs, attitudes and practices regarding the use of force'. Other scholars have excluded behavioural elements – and thus 'practices' – from the definition. Ronald L. Jefferson, Alexander Wendt & Peter J. Katzenstein (1977: 56) refer to culture as 'a set of evaluative standards, such as norms or values, and cognitive standards, such as rules or models defining what entities and actors exist in a system and how they operate and interrelate'.

This article leans on the latter definition. It understands German security culture as the central values and operational beliefs behind the day-to-day positions of German decisionmakers on specific out-of-area operations. Culture is conceived as a system of beliefs composed of self-perceptions (Germany's role, interests and obligations in international security), beliefs about the generalized other (aversions and threat perceptions), and operational beliefs about the efficacy and legitimacy of different ways of protecting German interests and dealing with the threat environment (the efficacy of diplomatic versus more forceful means).[3] Behavioural elements are not included in the definition for the obvious reason: lumping both culture and actual policy decisions into the same category would complicate the purpose of the article, namely, to trace the impact of evolving and competing schools of thought on German out-of-area policy and the 'no' to Iraq.

In line with most existing culturalist studies of German security policy, the article focuses on the elite as the most important referent of security culture. Public opinion might reflect and sometimes influence the relative strength of rival schools within a security culture, but it is arguably the elite – owing to its role as gatekeeper, its expert knowledge and its privileged access to means of communication – that ultimately decides which way security policy goes (Berger, 1998: 328; Duffield, 1998: 34–35; Longhurst, 2004: 22).

Specifically, the article concentrates on the out-of-area debates in the Bundestag. A more comprehensive study would include a survey of key academics, editorialists and top bureaucrats. This, however, lies beyond the scope of the present article.

The average German parliamentarian traditionally took limited interest in security and defence policy. But, with the 1983 entry of the Green Party into the Bundestag, strong anti-militarism and universal pacifism found expression in the parliament, and security policy debates became more frequent and more contentious. When the out-of-area battle erupted in the early 1990s, the Bundestag initially split down the middle, and the subsequent debates thus provide a window into competing schools of thought within Germany's security culture.

Though Germany's post-Cold War governments all had a majority in parliament, both Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Chancellor Gerhard Schröder tended to take the Bundestag debates and votes seriously – a tendency reinforced by two rulings by the German Constitutional Court that established that all decisions should be properly prepared in the responsible parliamentary committees, debated 'substantially', and eventually approved

---

[3] The distinction between three categories of beliefs is inspired by cognitive and belief-system theories, and affords the advantage of being able not just to list ideas and values but also to rank them in relative importance and see how they form an internally coherent system (Jervis, 1976; Putnam, 1973: 125; Rokeach, 1960: 40).

or rejected in the Bundestag.[4] Faced with public scepticism towards out-of-area deployments, both governments were naturally reluctant to assume sole responsibility for decisions that might cost German soldiers their lives. Broad backing was particularly important for the Schröder government, which had to live with the constant danger of defection from its own left wing in the out-of-area votes.

Thus, while the Bundestag was not the forum in which decisions about out-of-area deployments were made, it was the forum in which the contenders in the out-of-area battle were repeatedly challenged to present and defend their assumptions and ideals regarding Germany's role in international security. Taken as a whole, the sequence of debates between 1990 and 2003 thus affords valuable insights into the values, self-perceptions, aversions and operational beliefs – in other words, the strategic cultures – of the German decisionmaking elite.

In sum, in order to identify and trace the development of competing schools of thought and their impact on policy, the article relies mainly on the Bundestag debates (what is being said) and Bundestag votes (what is being done) regarding international deployments of the Bundeswehr between 1990 and 2003. Whereas congruence in itself, naturally, is not proof of the culturalist assumption, such an analysis, coupled with careful consideration of possible alternative (neorealist) explanations of why German policymakers acted in the way they did, should provide useful insights into what drives German out-of-area policy.

Competing Interpretations of a Disaster

Studies emphasizing culture as a key determinant of security policy highlight how security culture is shaped by dramatic and existential events with a general impact on the national community – in Germany's case, the two competing schools of thought can be traced back to the country's defeat in World War II (Longhurst, 2004: 25; Maull, 1990: 91–106). More than six million Germans perished in that war, most major cities were transformed into heaps of rubble by Allied bombardment, and Germany lost large tracts of land as the Soviet Union shifted the borders of Eastern Europe westwards. What remained was soon to be divided between East and West. The defeat gave rise to self-reflection and soul-searching, as well as a strong desire to

---

[4] See the decision of the Constitutional Court (Berlin) in 2 *BvQ* 17/93, reprinted in *Stichworte zur Sicherheitspolitik* 7/1993; see also the decision of the Constitutional Court of 12 July 1994 about out-of-area operations by the Bundeswehr, reprinted in *Stichworte zur Sicherheitspolitik* 7/1994. *Stichworte zur Sicherheitspolitik* [References to Security Policy] is published in Berlin by the Press and Information Agency of the German Government.

understand when and why Germany had taken the wrong turn (Giesen, 1993: 237; Stürmer, 1990: 118).

Two major camps representing competing interpretations of the defeat eventually emerged. On the left, a pacifist interpretation took hold and 'never again war' became the rallying cry for a disparate coalition of intellectuals, educators, unionists, politicians and protestant clergy. In spite of differences in focus and agenda, most of these groups held self-seeking nationalism, excessive militarism, Prussian authoritarianism or crass capitalist materialism responsible for the two world wars. They converged on a principled objection to the use of force in international affairs and argued that Germany, because of its history, carried a special responsibility to work for peace and peaceful conflict resolution.

On the centre-right, the conclusion was different. 'Never again alone' was the precept for Germany's democratization, rehabilitation and reconstruction – a precept that guided and informed the policy of the first postwar German government, headed by the Conservative Konrad Adenauer. Sceptical as to the strength of the democratic instincts of his countrymen, Adenauer believed that moral, political and strategic integration with the West was crucial to bolster Germany's nascent democracy. But, if defeated Germany was to earn a second chance, it was necessary to pursue a policy that contained no new sources of mistrust, and a firm commitment to the West had to replace the perennial wavering of the past. The notion of Germany as part of a greater Western community had to take the place of excessive nationalism (Schwarz, 1986: 612; Herf, 1991: 14; 1997: 216).

'Never again alone' and 'never again war' thus represented competing interpretations of German history and diverging prescriptions regarding security and defence policy. But, though the adherents of these two schools clashed on several occasions during the postwar era, the political mainstream gradually converged on a set of assumptions and policies that honoured both precepts: a strong urge to seek partnership and cooperation, emphasis on creating trust between Germany and her partners and neighbours, renunciation of national nuclear weapons, an emphasis on the need to demilitarize international affairs, and a defensive military posture, with the role of the Bundeswehr circumscribed to territorial defence of Germany and its NATO partners.

An International Role for the Bundeswehr? The Battle at Home

Throughout the Cold War, Germany's Western allies had been happy to accept that Germany's military role was limited to countering the Soviet

threat at the country's eastern border. But, the end of the Cold War gave rise to new forms of conflict and new threats to the security and stability of Europe. Consequently, the expectations directed at Germany began to change. More and more international voices demanded a German contribution to the military management of sprawling conflicts beyond the territory of NATO.

The security environment of the 1990s thus rendered the old German security policy untenable and cracked open the working consensus between the adherents of 'never again alone' and 'never again war'. As a result, German politicians were thrust into a long and at times agonizing battle over Germany's military role in the post-Cold War world.

This battle can be divided into three phases: a first phase lasting from the 1991 Gulf War to the 1994 ruling of the German Constitutional Court establishing the legality of out-of-area deployments; a second phase stretching through the 1999 Kosovo War; and a third phase – still open – in which the conditions of Germany's gradually expanded willingness to deploy military might abroad became manifest.

Judging from the language of German policymakers, the impact of culture in this transformation process appears strong. The out-of-area battle did not, as an external observer might have expected, evolve around the question of reunified Germany's national security interests in the post-Cold War era. Instead, it represented a battle over the lessons of the past and the expectations of Germany's partners. The debate looked backward much more than forward, and was dominated by expressions such as 'Germany's historical responsibility', 'moral responsibility', 'international solidarity' and 'requirements of partnership'. In contrast, terms like 'national security' and 'national interest' were hardly ever used. Though language can obviously be deceptive, the impact of culture also shows in the timing of decisive shifts in the voting patterns of German parliamentarians on out-of-area deployments. As will be discussed below, different groups of policymakers revised their stances on the out-of-area question at those points in time when the pressure of events rendered the basic or operational ideas of their respective schools of thought untenable.

Phase One: Cracks in the Old Consensus

Between 1990 and 1994, the paramount issues in the domestic battle were the requirements of partnership and the lessons of Germany's past. The fault line ran between the centre-right and the left, the former arguing that the expectations of Germany's partners as well as the lessons of the past called for an extended German engagement in international security, the latter claiming the opposite.

The debate was triggered by a handful of Conservative security experts

seeking to win the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) mainstream for an extended German role in international security. Two factors aided this effort. First, increased international pressure for a German contribution to multinational peace missions made it possible to harness the sentiments condensed in 'never again alone' to the project. Given the culturally ingrained German inclination to behave as a good partner, international calls for an expanded role were powerful devices in the domestic debate. Second, the 1991 Gulf crisis, the 1993 crisis in Somalia and, most forcefully, the break-up of Yugoslavia indicated the impotence of unarmed diplomacy in managing the crises of the new era and protecting civilian lives. This threw into doubt the coherence of the consensus policy of international integration, military reticence and strong adherence to values such as democracy, international law and human rights forged over the postwar era (*Plenarprotokoll Deutscher Bundestag*, 12/58; 12/101; 12/132; 12/166; 12/169; 12/240).[5]

The existing beliefs and old solutions of the German centre-right came under pressure, eventually leading to a process of rethinking among Conservatives, Liberals and some Social Democratic leaders that slowly transformed the German policy. This rethinking found external expression as Germany gradually increased its engagement in international crisis management. Beginning in 1992 and 1993, respectively, German ships and aircraft helped monitor a sea embargo against Serbia–Montenegro and a no-fly zone over Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1993, Germany went a step further and deployed logistical and medical Bundeswehr units as part of UNOSOM II, a UN mission in Somalia. With UNOSOM II, German ground troops were dispatched beyond the NATO area for the first time since World War II.[6]

A majority on the left, however, remained opposed to any expansion of Germany's military role. The policy of the Christian Democratic Union/Free Democratic Party (CDU/FDP) government, they claimed, violated not only the lessons of the past, but also the German Basic Law.[7] Even after the Constitutional Court in 1994 ruled out-of-area deployments constitutional, provided they took place within a multinational coalition and were carried out to ensure international peace and stability, German politics remained split on the issue, and the out-of-area battle was to continue over the second half of the 1990s.

[5] Individual bibliographic listings for entries in the Plenary Protocol of the German Bundestag (*Plenarprotokoll Deutscher Bundestag*) and the Stenographic Record of the Plenary Protocol (*Stenographischer Bericht)* are not included in the reference list at the end of this article. The Plenary Protocol and the Stenographic Record are published by the German Parliament and available either through the library of the German Parliament or online at http://www.bundestag.de/parlament/plenargeschehen/index.html.

[6] Apart from an uncontroversial deployment of an unarmed medical unit and a German field hospital that formed part of the UN's UNTAC peace mission in Cambodia from May to November 1992. The German hospital did not fill a military function, but treated locals and civilians.

[7] Article 87a(2) of the German Basic Law limits the use of Bundeswehr forces to 'defence' only. Article 24(1–2) opens the possibility of transferring sovereign rights to collective security institutions. Article 26 prohibits acts intended to disturb international peace.

Phase Two: Reinterpreting the Lessons of the Past

In the battle's second phase, the lessons of the past and Germany's historical responsibility became the paramount topics, and the dividing line no longer ran between the centre-right and the left but through the left. On the one side were those left-wingers who argued that Germany had a historical responsibility to oppose and abstain from the use of military force under all circumstances. On the other side were those who argued that Germany's historical responsibility was not just a responsibility to resist war, but also a responsibility to stand up to aggression. Eventually, the latter position prevailed.

The mass killing of Bosnian Muslims in the UN 'Safe Area' of Srebrenica in the summer of 1995 constituted the turning point for numerous pacifists. In early July 1995, Serb security forces overran the UN 'Safe Area' of Srebrenica in the Eastern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Dutch peacekeepers supposedly protecting the enclave were confined to their compound outside the city while Serb forces went on a rampage lasting several days, systematically killing Bosnian Muslims who had sought refuge in the city. The outside world appeared to be doing nothing to stop the atrocities, which cost an estimated 8,000 Muslim men and boys their lives (Holbrooke, 1998: 69–70).

Srebrenica left German pacifists speechless. Diplomatic means and economic sanctions had done nothing to prevent the biggest single mass murder in postwar European history. The potential price of pacifism and the inner contradiction between humanism and principled military abstention had been exposed in the most gruesome manner.

In the domestic battle, the proponents of an expanded German military role in international crisis management now gained the offensive. They took on the core pacifist dictum 'never again war' by using the pacifists' own language – that of morality: 'From my point of view it has nothing to do with morality and especially not with higher morality, when people threatened by genocide are denied help', argued Friedbert Pflüger of the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) alliance. 'It can be highly immoral not to resist injustice by deploying soldiers', added Defence Minister Volker Rühe (*Plenarprotokoll Deutscher Bundestag*, 13/76: 6663 & 6447).

The shock of Srebrenica caused soul-searching and rethinking on the left. It prompted initial steps towards a more active definition of Germany's historical responsibility and, as a result, the common understanding of the precept 'never again war' was amended: Germany's historical responsibility was not only a responsibility to oppose war; it was also a responsibility to stop aggression against unarmed civilians, if necessary by threatening or using force. Among segments of the German left, 'never again war' underwent a literal inversion. From having advocated total German military abstention in international crisis management, 'never again Auschwitz'

became the new rallying cry for converted pacifists, advocating far-reaching German engagement against aggression and the violation of human rights in unstable crisis areas around the world (*Plenarprotokoll Deutscher Bundestag*, 13/74: 6448; 13/76: 6667; 13/242: 22448).

From having overwhelmingly opposed German out-of-area engagements, a great majority on the German left now came out in support of a German military contribution to IFOR, the NATO-led peacekeeping force established to implement the December 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement for Yugoslavia (Federal Press Agency, 1995).

The following years saw the crossing of several lines that had earlier defined the limits of Germany's international military engagement. IFOR's follow-up mission, SFOR, represented the first deployment of combat troops charged with security tasks, and in October 1998 German politicians took the final step on the road that led from military abstinence to full participation in out-of-area crisis management: Approving the contribution of 14 German fighter jets to Operation Allied Force over Kosovo, a broad majority in the Bundestag endorsed the first participation ever of Bundeswehr soldiers in a combat mission – a mission that was not directly legitimized by the UN Security Council. A new incoming SPD/Green government joined forces with the outgoing CDU-led government of Helmut Kohl in a successful attempt to mobilize broad cross-partisan support for the Kosovo War.

Tactical Considerations or Cultural Change?

A sceptical observer might suspect that when a German left-wing government eventually in 1998 pushed for German participation in Operation Allied Force, this was due not to moral convictions and cultural beliefs, but to tactical political reasons. The new SPD/Green government, many of whose members were former vocal pacifists, arguably felt a need to prove its 'Regeriungsfähigkeit' – its ability to govern and act as a responsible and reliable member of Western organizations. In other words, one might argue that it was not so much the weight of Germany's past as the weight of governmental responsibility that prompted the left wing to revise its view on Germany's role in international crisis management (Baumann & Hellmann, 2001; Hofmann, 1999; Maull, 2001: 117).

However, even if such considerations influenced the behaviour of the new government's leaders, arguably they were able to mobilize the rank and file only because the cultural beliefs of a majority of these politicians had already been challenged and revised in the wake of the massacre in Srebrenica. Prior to Srebrenica, clear majorities within both the SPD and the Green Party had opposed any German out-of-area engagement that went beyond Blue Helmet peacekeeping. After, in the vote on Germany's contribution to IFOR,

more than 75% of the Social Democratic and half the Green parliamentarians came out in favour.

It is difficult to see why the urge to appear as responsible candidates for governmental power should have caused a decisive shift in the balance between opponents and proponents of an extended German role in international security at exactly that point – a point at which the Bundestag was only one year into its four-year election cycle.[8]

In sum, the leaders of the new SPD/Green government might have been influenced by tactical calculations. Yet, challenged and changing cultural beliefs and values were the crucial factors that made German participation in Operation Allied Force possible.

Result: A Composite Working Consensus

Between the Gulf War and the Kosovo War, Germany travelled the road from total abstinence to full participation in international military crisis management – a transformation that from an external point of view might appear smooth and logical. A closer look at the German transformation, however, indicated that different groups within Germany had different reasons to accept the change. The centre-right had been driven by concern about Germany's influence and standing in international organizations such as NATO and the EU, as well as concern about the strength, coherence and development prospects of these institutions – 'never again alone'. The German left wing came around in the wake of Srebrenica in 1995. These politicians were driven by a perceived historical German obligation to combat ethnic violence and massive human rights abuses – 'never again Auschwitz'.

The policy that emerged over the 1990s thus rested on a working consensus between philosophically rival views. The possibilities – but also the limits – of this working consensus became apparent during the years following the Kosovo War, most dramatically in the unconditional German rejection of the war in Iraq.

Phase Three: Limits and Possibilities of the New Consensus

In the third phase of Germany's transformation, German reactions to crises in East Timor, Indonesia, Macedonia, Afghanistan and Iraq suggested the limits and possibilities of the new working consensus. A pattern emerged, indicating what kind of missions were acceptable to most German policy-makers and what kind of missions caused controversy and divisions because they jarred with the basic notions of one of the two schools of thought with-

---

[8] General elections had been held in October 1994.

in Germany's security culture. These years revealed how the dispatch of German soldiers to distant trouble-spots had become possible. However, the conditions for such dispatch were that Germany's partners participated, that military means were only deployed as a last resort, and that the mission served to stop an aggressor and alleviate large-scale human suffering.

In 1999, at the behest of Green Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer – a former ardent opponent of out-of-area deployments – Germany dispatched Bundeswehr personnel as far from home as East Timor. The German contribution formed part of a multinational UN force deployed to stop the aggression of armed militias against the population of East Timor – aggression that had forced approximately 300,000 people to flee their homes. The deployment won broad domestic support in Germany (*Plenarprotokoll Deutscher Bundestag*, 14/61).

In 2001, however, the commitment of German soldiers to a NATO-led mission in Macedonia proved domestically controversial. The deployment of soldiers to Macedonia, German left-wing opponents protested, was not a last resort to prevent an impending humanitarian disaster or stop ongoing aggression. Military means, they claimed, had been pushed to the fore by NATO in handling the latent crisis – a crisis that could and should have been handled by diplomatic means and by the UN (*Plenarprotokoll Deutscher Bundestag*, 14/184; 14/190).

Later the same year, the commitment of almost 4,000 German troops, including elite units, to the US military campaign against the Afghan Taliban regime was vigorously disputed on similar grounds: it was argued that a resort to war was not warranted; targeted commando raids should instead have been used to apprehend the perpetrators of the 2001 terrorist attacks on the USA; and, finally, the campaign would add to the suffering of the population of a desperately poor country. Eventually, Chancellor Schröder felt the need to couple the vote on Afghanistan with a vote of confidence, in order to force the support of his own backbenchers – a move that, in turn, caused the opposition to vote against the deployment, though, in principle, supporting it. In the end, the German contribution passed the Bundestag by only a very narrow margin (*Plenarprotokoll Deutscher Bundestag*, 14/202).

'No' to War in Iraq: A New Assertive Germany?

The deployment in Afghanistan approached the limit of what the German working consensus could sustain, placing its left flank under pressure. With the brewing crisis in Iraq and the tough talk of the hawks within the administration of US President George W. Bush, the limit was breached. Pre-emptive strikes against potential future threats carried out by coalitions of

the willing did not sit well with either school of thought within Germany's security culture. While the German centre-right wobbled on the question of whether Germany in this case should stand by its long-time US ally, the leader of the centre-left did not hesitate. Already in the summer of 2002, Chancellor Schröder was the first Western leader to issue an unconditional 'no' to any German participation in a potential war against Iraq.

The bellicose US line, the Chancellor charged, was ill-considered. A war against Iraq would distract from the efforts to combat international terrorism and might lead to uncontrollable escalation and mass casualties, and further estrangement between the Arab world and the West would follow. Containment, not confrontation, Schröder argued, was the right strategy when dealing with Saddam Hussein – a strategy that since 1991 had been successful in preventing renewed aggression by Iraq against its neighbours. Denouncing the USA's 'military adventurism', the Chancellor promised that an SPD-led Germany would be a voice of reason and restraint (Schröder, 2002: 8; *Der Spiegel*, 2003; *Die Welt*, 2003).

Domestically, the move was a triumph. The Chancellor was facing general elections in September 2002 and had consistently trailed his Conservative challenger, Edmund Stoiber, in the polls. The Chancellor's anti-war stance indulged the SPD's disgruntled left wing and stopped the flight of votes from the SPD and Green Party to the only unreconstructed pacifist party – the ex-communist Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS). It also tapped into widespread unease among the CDU/CSU's Christian voters – traditionally committed to avoiding the use of force and to a demilitarization of international affairs – with the new US line. Combined with floods in former East Germany that occurred just a few days before the election and gave the Chancellor an opportunity to pose as a uniting figure, the 'no' to Iraq permitted the government to turn a looming defeat into a narrow victory.

Internationally, however, the re-elected Chancellor was in for a rude awakening. The Chancellor's 'no' was issued during an election speech in August 2002 and clearly attuned to a domestic audience. Presumably, the decision to play the anti-war card had not involved the Chancellor's closest foreign policy advisers, and the extent of US anger had not been anticipated (Szabo, 2004: 137). Initially, Germany had to face the US fury alone. Soon, however, the German government managed to bring other countries around to its position. While US–German relations continued to deteriorate, Europe thus split down the middle on the Iraq question. This active German counter-balancing of the US ally, accompanied with language about 'the end of cheque-book diplomacy' and 'Germany's right to be consulted', was without precedent, and might, as mentioned, be interpreted as a sign that a new and more assertive Germany, with increased focus on German national interests, was emerging.

The culturalist approach, however, offers an alternative interpretation.

Arguably, when the German government in the autumn of 2002 was court-ing France and Russia, this might have had less to do with a wish to assert the German position than with a culturally ingrained urge to avoid the international isolation the Chancellor's electioneering had brought upon Germany. The counter-coalition was arguably an attempt to save the day for 'never again alone', and indeed, in confrontations with the domestic opposi-tion – which fulminated against the Chancellor and asserted that Germany's international standing and influence had been sacrificed for the sake of ensuring the Chancellor a second term in office – the government repeatedly emphasized how Germany did not stand alone (*Die Zeit*, 2003a,b,c; *Die Welt*, 2002a,b; Sturm, 2003).

Further underlining that the German inclination towards international cooperation and integration was alive and well, the re-elected government was soon found seeking to mend fences with the US ally. The USA was permitted unrestricted use of its bases in Germany, and German forces pro-vided physical security for US military installations in Germany during the war. Moreover, on US urging, Germany granted Iraq $2.5 billion in debt relief and engaged in various reconstruction activities, as well as the training of a new Iraqi policy force – training that took place in the United Arab Emirates.[9]

It is difficult to see why the German government should have offered such concessions against domestic protests if the ultimate aim of the 'no' was to assert Germany's independence from the USA. Furthermore, if German leaders wished to launch a German or European alternative to US hege-mony, it is perplexing that they largely refrained from exploiting and high-lighting the fact that most of the warnings issued by Germany about the consequences of a war in Iraq and the weakness in US planning eventually proved accurate. On the contrary, German policymakers kept emphasizing the need to look ahead and to cooperate in building a democratic Iraqi state, even as the Iraqi insurgency was escalating throughout most of 2003 (Blome & Krauel, 2004; *Die Zeit*, 2003c; Vincour, 2004; Wetzel, 2004).

A sceptical observer might interpret these apparently contradictory signals as evidence that Germany was simply keeping all options open by betting on both a US and an EU horse. Placating the USA while simultaneously working to create a European alternative might be a quite logical policy in an era where it remains unclear whether the future will be one of uni- or multi-polarity. However, the haphazard approach to decisionmaking in con-nection with the evolving diplomatic crisis (along with the at times clumsy German diplomacy) does not indicate that German policymakers were fol-

[9] *Germany Info,* 2003. Markus Kaim (2003: 142) also argues that the immediate German approval of the NATO Response Force at NATO's Prague Summit in December 2002, as well as German support for Turkish EU membership, confirmed at the EU's Copenhagen Summit, were concessions made with an eye to mend-ing fences with the USA.

lowing a strategic master plan. Even those German observers who welcomed Germany's 'liberation' from the USA admit that the process was event- and not policy-driven (Schöllgen, 2003: 72).

Making sense of the German stance arguably requires a look at the composite nature of Germany's strategic culture. Surely, the Chancellor with a track record of committing German troops to a variety of international peacekeeping operations was not moved by pacifist feelings when he issued his 'no' to Iraq. Yet, he was probably induced to do so (and confirmed in acting as he did) because of the existence of widespread anti-war sentiments among the German elite and broader population. In this sense, Schröder's stance had everything to do with ingrained cultural beliefs, even if not his own personal beliefs. At the same time, however, 'never again alone' remained alive and well, prompting the government to engage in apparently self-contradictory behaviour to limit the damage inflicted by the Chancellor's careless unilateral stance: ganging up with European countries against the USA, while at the same time attempting to repair relations with the US ally.

Surely, the notion that Germany had the right to have an opinion on how to deal with new security threats because Germany delivered an increasing contribution to international crisis management was emerging.[10] Yet, despite what one might conclude from a quick glance, Iraq did not herald a new Germany emancipating itself from bonds and alliances. On the contrary, it is arguable that the counter-balancing of the USA was precisely an expression of the ingrained German inclination to avoid standing alone on important international issues.

From Iraq to Iraq: Full Circle?

Iraq also did not herald a German reversion to the earlier policy of reticence and abstinence in military affairs. This was illustrated less than four months after the launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom, when the Bundestag voted 441 to 30 in support of a German contribution to the EU Operation Artemis in Congo. With the ease and skill that comes with practice, the SPD/Green government invoked the humanitarian need in Congo, the fact that civilians were being killed and forced from their homes, Germany's international responsibility, and the multinational nature of the intervention *(Stenographischer Bericht*, 51: 2.9 & 15).

Nobody, neither on the right nor on the left (except for a few members of

---

[10] As evident in, for example, the debate over Germany's contribution to Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan (*Plenarprotokoll Deutscher Bundestag*, 14/202).

the PDS), openly argued with the 'never again Rwanda' emphasized by the governing parties. Yet, to some members of the CDU/CSU, the new-found left-wing willingness to deploy the Bundeswehr had become almost too much of a good thing. 'Of course,' argued Christian Schmidt of the CDU/CSU, 'avoiding a humanitarian catastrophe has to be a criterion that prompts us to consider an engagement'. 'However,' he continued, 'we cannot simply conclude that no matter where it occurs, we need to go there' (*Stenographischer Bericht*, 51: 24).

In sum, by 2003 the German willingness to engage the Bundeswehr in out-of-area operations had become so rooted that the original proponent of expanding Germany's international military engagement – the Conservative Party – while supporting the Congo deployment, now cautioned the left wing that it needed to learn to say 'no'.

The German stance on Congo leaves no doubt that the Iraq War did not herald an end to the German willingness to engage in international military operations – a conclusion further supported by the fact that while other countries were preparing for war in Iraq, Germany stepped up its military engagement in Afghanistan and in February took over the lead of the International Security and Assistance Force, ISAF, in Kabul.

Out-of-Area for the Sake of Europe?

The French-led Operation Artemis was the first EU-initiated and EU-conducted international military operation. Previous missions carried out under the European Security and Defence Policy – operations in Macedonia and Bosnia – all began life as either UN or NATO missions that were, at a later stage, taken over by the EU. Considering the strong pro-European strand of German strategic culture, it could be argued that Europeanism was an intervening factor, facilitating German support for the Congo deployment.

Indeed, Europeanism has remained a constant feature of German political life, whereas Atlanticism has had its ups and downs. During the 1990s, proponents of an extended German military role frequently invoked 'Europe', arguing that only if Germany were willing to contribute to crisis management on an equal basis with other major European countries could Europe develop into a real political union with a real common foreign and security policy (*Plenarprotokoll Deutscher Bundestag*, 12/101: 8639).

Certainly, the European label was a facilitating factor. Yet, as proved repeatedly in the Bundestag votes from 1995 and onwards, the German left wing was also perfectly willing to commit troops under a NATO and/or UN banner, as long as certain conditions were fulfilled. IFOR, SFOR and KFOR, for example, were all NATO-led operations or UN-missions with a substan-

tial NATO element, and INTERFET in East Timor, which had a strong Australian–US–British but weak continental European participation was one of the least controversial of all German out-of-area deployments, as discussed above.

Germany's Conditions

Germany's contribution in Congo and ISAF exemplifies how Iraq did not indicate that Germany had come full circle and reverted to a pacifist stance. Instead, it could be argued, Iraq highlighted how the ability to generate domestic support for dispatching the Bundeswehr hinges on whether the circumstances of an intervention appeal to both schools of thought within Germany's strategic culture.

German reactions to the international crises that occurred between 1999 and 2003 – the third phase in the domestic German battle – indicate that domestic support generally materializes when it comes to engaging the Bundeswehr alongside the armed forces of major allies as a last resort in managing crises that entail large-scale ethnic violence or abuse of human rights. On the other hand, Germany's composite working consensus proved shaky when military means were introduced before a variety of political, diplomatic and economic strategies had been given a chance, or if military intervention did not serve to de-escalate violence or end a humanitarian crisis.

Based on the evidence presented above, it seems safe to predict that uni-lateral deployments, military interventions to protect oilfields or sea-lanes, pre-emptive strikes or punitive action against rogue regimes will find limited support in Germany. Such ventures would either jar with 'never again alone', bait residual anti-militarism and war angst, and/or make it difficult to invoke 'never again Auschwitz' to mobilize support on the German left, as well as on the Christian centre-right. Should a future German government attempt such engagements, it will either fail to obtain support at home or have to embed the military intervention in a broader civilian and humanitarian engagement in the targeted area.

Germany, Pre-emption and the US War on Terrorism

Throughout the 1990s, Germany would be called upon to deploy peace-keepers only after extensive diplomatic efforts had failed, only within broad multinational frameworks and, excepting the Kosovo War, only in UN-mandated missions. Most importantly, the 1990s were years in which the

armed forces of the Western world were rarely deployed to *make* war, but rather to *stop it*.

The post-9/11 US focus on the dual danger of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, however, created a different operating environment (White House, 2002; 2003). The new emphasis on pre-emptive military strikes carried out by coalitions of the willing challenged the composite German consensus and did away with some of the circumstances that had helped bridge the gap between rival schools of thought within Germany's strategic culture.

One might suspect this would diminish reunified Germany's international military relevance before it was ever really consolidated. Arguably, however, this will not be the case. Though it has again become conceivable that Western military forces start wars, the cases in which they end them will probably remain prevalent due to the numerous moral, political and practical problems entailed in full-scale pre-emptive or preventive wars – witness Iraq.

At the same time, the types of peace-creating and peacekeeping interventions around which reunified Germany's new consensus on international crisis management developed are as relevant as ever. Civil wars, ethnic violence and failed states will continue to demand Western military action. Arguably, the fight against international terrorism will make these tasks even more pertinent than before. With international terrorist networks on the lookout for new bases in the wake of their ouster from Afghanistan, regional wars and failing states no longer constitute a threat only to the directly affected populations, but have come to be perceived as a direct security problem for the Western world as well.

In sum, threat perceptions and security policy priorities have changed. Yet, this has not rendered the German contribution to international military crisis management politically impossible or militarily worthless. The country, which was dismissed by US hawks as part of 'old Europe', will remain an active participant in out-of-area crisis management.

Conclusion

The Germany that declined involvement in the 2003 Iraq War was in a number of respects different from the Germany that abstained in 1991. The geostrategic context of the 1990s and the nature of the crises of the era permitted competing schools of thought within Germany's strategic culture to converge on a new working consensus, and paved the way for an extensive German engagement in international military crisis management.

In spite of what one might conclude from a superficial glance, the German

resistance to the war in Iraq and the active attempt to build a counter-coalition against the USA did not signify that Germany had reverted to a pacifist stance or that Germany had changed along neorealist lines. The German abstention in Iraq instead highlighted the continued impact and cross-pressures created by the coexistence of these rival domestic schools of thought. It was a reminder that the ability to mobilize domestic support for dispatching the Bundeswehr hinges on a number of conditions: military intervention should be a last resort, must be multinational and should meet a humanitarian need or serve to de-escalate violence. In situations where these requirements are not met, a German contribution cannot automatically be counted on. But, in reverse, the next time a broad coalition of democratic states decides that the only way to stop massive international or domestic aggression against civilians somewhere in the world is by deploying military force, the Germans are likely to be there.

References

Baumann, Rainer & Gunther Hellmann , 2001. 'Germany and the Use of Military Force: "Total War", the "Culture of Restraint", and the Quest for Normality', *German Politics* 10(1): 61–82.

Berger, Thomas U., 1996. *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Berger, Thomas U., 1998. 'Norms, Identity, and National Security in Germany and Japan', in Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security*. New York: Columbia University Press (317–356).

Blome, Nikolaus & Torsten Krauel, 2004. 'Gerhard und George' [Gerhard and George], *Die Welt*, 26 February.

Der Spiegel, 2003. 'Die einsame Vorsitzende' [The Lonely Chairman], 31 March.

Die Welt, 2002a. 'Irak: Union wirft Regierung Täuschungsmanöver vor' [Iraq: Union Accuses Government of Misrepresentation], 23 December.

Die Welt, 2002b. 'Krieg und Wahlkampf' [War and Election Campaign], 21 December.

Die Welt, 2003. 'Union unterstützt Bushs Kriegskurs' [Union Supports Bush's War Plans], 19 March.

Die Zeit, 2003a. 'Hundertjähriges Chaos' [Hundred Years of Chaos], interview with Antje Vollmer (Green Party), 25 February.

Die Zeit, 2003b. 'Schröder hat Europa gespalten' [Schröder Has Split Europe], interview with Edmund Stoiber (CDU/CSU), 28 March.

Die Zeit, 2003c. 'Die Krise, die Europa eint' [The Crisis That Unites Europe], interview with Gerhard Schröder, 28 March.

Duffield, John S., 1998. *World Power Forsaken: Political Culture, International Institutions, and German Security Policy after Unification.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Federal Press Agency, 1995. 'Cabinet Decision', press release, 26 June.

Germany Info, 2003. 'German Role in Afghanistan Gains US Praise', 11 August, 2003; available at http://www.germany-info.org/relaunch/politics/new/pol_isaf_nato.html (accessed on 21 December, 2004).

Giesen, Bernard, 1993. *Die Intellektuellen und die Nation* [The Intellectual and the Nation], Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Gray, Colin, 1981. 'National Styles in Strategy: The American Example', *International Security* 6(2): 21–47.

Hacke, Christian, 2003. 'Deutschland, Europa und der Irakkonflikt' [Germany, Europe and the Iraq Conflict], *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 24–25: 8–16.

Hellmann, Gunther, 2004. 'Wieder die machtpolitische resozialisierung der deutschen Aussenpolitik' [Again the Power Political Resocialization of German Foreign Policy], *Welt Trends* 42(12): 79–88.

Herf, Jeffrey, 1991. *War by Other Means: Soviet Power, West German Resistance, and the Battle of the Euromissiles.* New York: Free Press.

Herf, Jeffrey, 1997. *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanies.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hofmann, Gunter, 1999. 'Wie Deutschland in den Krieg geriet' [How Germany Ended Up in the War], *Die Zeit*, 12 May.

Holbrooke, Richard, 1998. *To End a War.* New York: Random House.

Jefferson, Ronald L.; Alexander Wendt & Peter J. Katzenstein, 1996. 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security Policy', in Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security.* New York: Columbia University Press (33–75).

Jervis, Robert, 1976. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Johnston, Alastair Iain, 1995. 'Thinking about Strategic Culture', *International Security* 19(4): 32–64.

Kaim, Markus, 2003–04. 'Friendship Under Strain or Fundamental Alienation?' *International Journal* 59(1): 127–143.

Krause, Joachim, 1998. 'The Role of the Bundestag in German Foreign Policy', in Wolf-Dieter Eberwein & Karl Kaiser, eds, *Germany's New Foreign Policy: Decision-Making in an Interdependent World.* New York: Palgrave (137–152).

Longhurst, Kerry, 2004. *Germany and the Use of Force: The Evolution of German Security Policy 1990-2003,* Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.

Maull, Hanns W., 1990. 'Germany and Japan: The New Civilian Powers,' *Foreign Affairs* 69(5): 91–106.

Maull, Hanns W., 2000. 'Germany and the Use of Force: Still a Civilian Power?', *Survival* 42(2): 56–80.

Maull, Hanns W., 2001. 'Germany's Foreign Policy, Post-Kosovo: Still a "Civilian Power"?', in Sebastian Harnisch & Hanns W. Maull, eds, *Germany as a Civilian Power? The Foreign Policy of the Berlin Republic.* Manchester: Manchester University Press (106–127).

Mearsheimer, John J., 1999. 'Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War', *International Security* 15(1): 5–56.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [1991] 1995. 'Kooperation in der Golfkrise' [Cooperation in

the Gulf Crisis], 19 February 1991; reprinted in *Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Dokumente von 1949 bis 1994* [Foreign Policy of the Federal Republic of Germany: Documents from 1949 to 1994]. Bonn: Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Putnam, Robert D., 1973. *The Beliefs of Politicians: Ideology, Conflict, and Democracy in Britain and Italy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Rokeach, Milton, 1960 *The Open and the Closed Mind*. New York: Basic Books.

Schöllgen, Gregor, 2003. *Der Auftritt: Deutschlands Rückkehr auf die Weltbühne* [Coming Interview: Germany's Return on the World Stage]. Berlin: Propyläen.

Schröder, Gerhard, 2002. Speech by the Chancellor at the Opening of the Election Campaign, 5 August 2002, Hannover, Opernplatz; available at http://www.spd.de/servlet/PB/show/1019520/Schr%F6der%20Rede%20WahlkampfauftaktHannover.doc (accessed on 8 February 2005).

Schröder, Gerhard, 2003. 'Unsere Verantwortung für den Frieden' [Our Responsibility for Peace], government declaration, published in *Die Zeit*, 17 March.

Schwarz, Hans-Peter, 1986. *Konrad Adenauer*, Vol. I. Providence, RI: Berghahn.

Snyder, Jack L., 1977. *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Nuclear Options.* Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation.

Sturm, Daniel Friedrich, 2003. 'Schäuble fordert zu Irak-politik klaren Positionen im Sicherheitsrat' [Schauble Demands Clear Position on Iraq in Security Council], *Die Welt*, 3 January.

Stürmer, Michael, 1990. *Die Grenzen der Macht: Begegnung der Deutschen mit der Geschichte* [The Limits of Power: Germans Confronting the History]. Berlin: Siedler.

Szabo, Stephen F., 2004. *Parting Ways: The Crisis in German–American Relations*. Washington. DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Van Orden, Geoffrey, 1991. 'The Bundeswehr in Transition', *Survival* 33(4): 352–370.

Vincour, John, 2004. 'Berlin Says Europeans Need Close Bond to U.S.', *International Herald Tribune*, 17 July.

Wetzel, Hubert, 2004. 'Bush und Schröder wägen Interessen ab' [Bush and Schröder Balancing Their Interests], *Financial Times Deutschland*, 25 February.

White House, 2002. *The National Security Strategy of the United States.* Washington, DC: White House.

White House, 2003. *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism.* Washington, DC: White House.