

The Future of German National Security and Defense

Colonel Martin Krüger, Directorate for Political Affairs,
Federal Ministry of Defense

Looking at our current security environment, especially in the center of Europe, we see a number of risks and threats. In particular, complex challenges such as terrorism, hybrid challenges, and cyber threats are relatively new to our societies.

With Russia, however, calling into question the fundamental principles of the European security order, we not only need to reassure our Eastern allies, partners, and friends in NATO, the EU, and beyond. We also need to rethink the implications of hostile power projection or even hybrid destabilization in our very neighborhood.

Based on detailed considerations of these risks and challenges, the German White Paper 2016 is clear that Germany's security is inextricably linked to that of its allies in NATO and the EU.

The unsettling complexity of the new security situation and current threat landscape requires changes within both organizations and calls for active participation in shaping their future.

With Germany's political and economic weight it is our duty to take on more responsibility for Europe's security together with our European and transatlantic partners.

Taking on more responsibility, however, entails the allocation of appropriate resources and manpower. Consequently, the ongoing modernization of the Bundeswehr has meant (among other things) revamping our personnel strategy, establishing a dedicated cyber command, securing a continuous



increase of our defense budget over the next few years, as well as increasing our investment in equipment.

The Decisions on the "Defense Investment Pledge" taken in Wales in 2014 were confirmed in Warsaw in 2016 and in Brussels earlier this year. Budget figures are certainly significant – but what ultimately counts are contributions to current operations and especially capabilities within a truly strategic approach.

Against this backdrop, Germany has acknowledged all NATO planning objectives, which form the basis for the development of the German Armed Forces' capabilities. There are, however, many reasons to doubt, whether in Europe we really need 19 types of infantry fighting vehicles or 29 types of naval frigates.

With rising security challenges on the one hand and limited defense budgets on the other, we need to spend not only more, but also better and more wisely. That means: we need a concerted effort in Europe to increase European defense cooperation, and to better organize defense research and capability development. This will also contribute to better burden sharing in the Alliance.

Within NATO, the Framework Nation Concept (FNC), initiated by Germany in 2013, serves as an important forum to enable participating nations to align their national capability profiles. The very core of the concept is a harmonized and structured development of military capabilities between European states. This common development not only pursues long-term objectives, but has already improved interoperability between participating nations. By doing so, FNC strengthens the European pillar of NATO and adds to a more pragmatic approach to an improved cooperation between NATO and the EU.

Also, initiatives currently underway to strengthen the EU's CSDP, such as the European Defense Fund and the creation of a Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO for short) are to be seen in this context. PESCO, as set out in the Lisbon Treaty, is a crucial step toward a European Defense Union (EDU).

The purpose of PESCO is twofold: Make CSDP more operational and at the same time align our efforts and strategic thinking. In doing so, PESCO provides a more binding framework for the development of defense capabilities and making them available for operations.

Enhanced defense capabilities of EU member states will also benefit NATO. They will strengthen the European pillar within the Alliance and respond to repeated demands for stronger transatlantic burden sharing. With PESCO we can work toward a vision of a coherent full spectrum force package fully interoperable and based on NATO standards.

In conclusion: The future of German national security and defense is highly intertwined with the current changes and initiatives taking place within NATO and the EU. NATO will remain the cornerstone of our common security on the European continent and in the Atlantic arena. It will guarantee collective defense and express our common goal of a world in peace, freedom, and security. But, deeper defense cooperation with and within the European Union – and vice versa – will strengthen the European Pillar of NATO and contribute to a transatlantic burden sharing.

In this context, Germany's national security and defense will – to a large extent – depend on, but at the same time shape, these cooperation initiatives.