



## Welcome to the "Chleuhs"!

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**Les Cahiers had not published "Nouvelles d'outre-Rhin" since issues 29 (situation report on the Army, by the head of the French liaison detachment in Cologne) and 36 (sociological evolution of the defence tool, by a German researcher). This delay is caught up thanks to Colonel Philippe Seigneur, who gives us a particularly complete and precise description of the German defence and its army in 2017.**

There's nothing pejorative about the title. It refers to a French film, also very popular in Germany, which helped to dispel many prejudices about a little-known region. The ambition of this article is to give the non-specialist reader some elements to better understand the singular position of the German army (Heer). Indeed, Germany is often the object of erroneous and sometimes contradictory perceptions in France: the confused memories of three wars contrast with a feeling of inaction of its troops compared to an extremely committed French army. This impression needs to be qualified because we are witnessing a gradual but certain awakening of the German military tool, which needs to be taken into account in a rapidly changing security context. The question arises as to what we can do in concrete terms with our closest partner to ensure the security of our two countries, at a time when the collective structures are in doubt and both armies are in a period of revival in the face of two different but not exclusive threats: transnational jihadism for France, and hybrid activism in Eastern Europe for Germany.

After recalling some general characteristics of Germany, this article will focus on the conditions of the Bundeswehr's operational engagement, before elaborating on the technological, demographic and psychological challenges facing the Heer.

### What is Germany in 2017?

A country of 82 million inhabitants, at the geographic center of Europe, the largest net contributor to the European Union and the master of its institutions. A state that in the early 2000s was able to launch far-reaching economic and social reforms in order to emerge from the crisis following reunification[1]. An open country, which has generously and effectively welcomed more than one million refugees in two years. A flourishing economy, with a GDP of more than 3,000 billion euros [2], from which the defence budget should benefit.

These results are fuelling some resentment[3] among Germany's southern neighbours, which have been hard hit by the crisis. In France, many voices denounce German economic hegemony coupled with strategic pusillanimity. In Germany, on the other hand, France's economic stagnation and its possible political consequences are cause for concern. The effectiveness of the French armies has been viewed with a touch of admiration since Operation Serval, but also with scepticism about their ability to sustain commitments over the long term.

These two points of view can be explained by different cultures. The economic aspect is the most obvious and the most commented on [4], so we will limit ourselves to the military aspect. What do the 167,940 soldiers of the Bundeswehr do, what can they do?

## **Germany-France: Diverse Strategic and Political Cultures**

A country's strategic culture is the product of its geopolitics, history and institutions. Unlike France, which has a colonial tradition that goes back several centuries and is still present overseas, Germany remains a continental power. France, a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, has an interventionist approach to international politics, while Germany is more reserved. The two countries have a very different chain of decision-making, with the French President enjoying supreme power - including nuclear power - in military matters, while the German Defence Minister, head of the Bundeswehr [5] in peacetime, is accountable to parliament. The use of military force is very limited in Germany, whereas the use of armies is common in France, as Operation Sentinel shows. However, the German inhibition to intervene militarily has more political than legal origins. Some legal experts believe that Articles 24-II, 35-III and 87a of the Constitution provide the Bundeswehr with a wide range of options for action both at home and abroad. In this connection, discussions are under way to define the Bundeswehr's commitment in support of the police forces of the Länder following the attacks in Munich and Berlin in 2016.

## **Binding decision-making process**

The German decision-making process must be taken into account to understand the apparent slowness of Bundeswehr projections. The Constitutional Court did not authorise "armed operations abroad" until 1994, on condition that they be voted on by parliament. Each draft mandate is prepared by the Ministry of Defence, whose Strategy, Policy and Legal Affairs Divisions work with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Auswärtiges Amt). The draft mandate is then examined by the parliamentary foreign affairs and defence committees, which discuss the Bundeswehr's mission, geographical framework, maximum strength, capabilities and rules of engagement. The mandate is then voted on by the Bundestag, which renews it annually, sometimes with amendments to change capabilities or areas of operation, such as, for example, the dispatch of helicopters to

northern Mali as part of the mandate of UNAMIS[6]. 6] A law on the participation of the parliament relaxed this binding legal framework in 2005: training or support missions are not subject to a vote if there is no risk of armed confrontation. For example, German tanker aircraft refuelled French fighter-bombers during Operation Serval in 2013.

A major exception to this formal framework is the use of special forces. The Kommando Spezial Kräfte (KSK ) was set up in 1996, initially to carry out missions to evacuate nationals. The nature of these urgent missions requires a rapid decision-making process which is incompatible with the a priori control of the Bundestag . The KSK has built up solid operational experience in Afghanistan since 2001, and the arrival of an H145M helicopter squadron in 2017 should enable it to further broaden the scope of its operations. The commitment of special forces is subject to drastic operational security, as only the heads of the political groups in the Defence Committee are informed - often a posteriori - of the details of their operations. This emergency tool is highly flexible in its use, but its small size (less than 1 000 men) means that it has to prioritise its missions.

## **A prudent but determined operational commitment**

The Bundeswehr 's commitment to OPEX began even before the Constitutional Court ruling. As early as 1993, German troops were sent under a UN mandate to Cambodia and Somalia. In 1999, Germany took part in the controversial NATO operation in Kosovo, where it is still present 18 years later. The KSK opens the Afghanistan theatre with the US SEALs and participates in the battle of Tora Bora in December 2001. The Bundeswehr then deployed to Kabul from 2002 to 2006, notably with the Franco-German brigade in 2004, before taking over ISAF Regional Command North and committing more than 5,000 troops between 2010 and 2011 under "war-like conditions", according to the then defence minister.

This conflict marked the army by its duration and intensity. The Bundeswehr lost 56 soldiers, but has learned many capability and organizational lessons from it. Still present in Afghanistan as part of the Resolute Support mission, the Bundeswehr is now focusing on Africa and the Middle East and strengthening its guard in the east. In March 2017, Mali will become the first theatre ahead of Afghanistan and Iraq[7]. 7] The Bundeswehr will commit 1,000 troops as well as eight Tiger and NH 90 helicopters to Mali, providing air-mobile coverage for one year for MINUSMA. This mission will burden the training capacity of the entire German ALAT, a sacrifice reported by the General Staff but agreed to by the Ministry[8].

## **A structure destined to evolve**

The Heer 2011 structure was in line with the national level of ambition, which was to hire a brigade of two GTIA for four months in OPEX, with 20 months of presence in mainland France between two operations. This 24-month operational cycle, drawn from the experience of engagement in Afghanistan, required six brigades, with each division taking into account the preparation and conduct of OPEX for one year. At the end of 2016, the German Army (Heer) numbered approximately 60,000 men [9]. 9] It had an emergency division (Schnelle Kräfte Division, DSK) comprising all the airborne and air-mobile forces, responsible for national missions of evacuation of nationals, as well as two mechanised divisions each comprising three joint brigades.

The decisions taken at the Newport summit in 2014, following the clashes in Ukraine, and the expansion of the Islamic state in the Middle East led to a strategic reflection in Germany which resulted in a new white paper in 2016. This rather generic work will be broken down into a concept for the use of forces (Konzeption der Bundeswehr, KdB) in 2017, which should include for the first time an operational contract (Nationale Zielvorgabe). A new structure should enable the creation of a generic, projectable division with its joint reinforcements to meet NATO's commitments on its eastern flank, while continuing peripheral operations.

## **Capability shortfalls offset by deep integration**

The orientation towards stabilisation operations on the Afghan model has led the Heer to abandon certain capabilities, such as ground-to-air defence or counter-mobility. However, analysis of the conflict in Ukraine has highlighted the importance of these elements in modern high-intensity combat. Studies are under way to bring these elements back into service for the next VJTF [10] in 2019. The most successful reflection concerns joint fire support, for which the Idar Oberstein artillery school aims to become the European training centre in 2020. Dutch and Lithuanian artillerymen are already being trained there on the German Panzerhaubitze 2000, but the aim is to attract all European forward air observers (JTACs) in the medium term for their qualification and retraining.

The Bundeswehr 's shortfall in manpower could thus be compensated for by providing its partners with equipment and training, and shortfalls in capabilities could be made good. The lack of Bundeswehr personnel could be compensated for by the provision of equipment and training to its partners, and shortfalls in capabilities could be pooled in a framework nation concept, which Germany has proposed to the nations of northern and eastern Europe as the embryo of a "European army" [11]. 11] However, while Germany is increasing partnerships and the creation of military structures, including the creation of a bi-national tank battalion with the Dutch, problems of interoperability and sovereignty remain and make these units difficult to employ.

## **An increasing defence budget**

Germany has long remained at the level of the European benchmarks set by France and the United Kingdom. However, since the 2014 NATO Wales Summit, which invited member countries to invest 2% of their GDP in their defence, the federal government has announced its intention to gradually achieve this objective. Einzelplan14 (the defence budget) thus reaches €37 billion in 2017, with an increase to €39.2 billion in 2020. However, taking into account the German GDP, the 2% would correspond to 67 billion euros in 2018 and 71 billion in 2020 [12]. 12] This gives a comfortable financial margin of manoeuvre that needs to be translated into capability priorities, but achieving these capabilities in terms of equipment and manpower will take time and will come up against two major obstacles at the industrial and human levels.

## **A defence industry living on its achievements**

German Cold War equipment was an export success, with 18 countries using the Leopard 2, whose Heer flooded the market by reducing its fleet from 2,000 to 320 units. Small

arms and ammunition are also appreciated, as demonstrated by the choice of Heckler & Koch to manufacture the future rifle for the French army. However, the conduct of certain programmes has shown serious shortcomings. For example, the new Puma infantry combat vehicle, announced for 2010, has so many defects that its predecessor will remain in service until 2025. The tactical communications programme MoTaKo (Mobile Taktische Kommunikation) is slow to replace the obsolete third-generation stations. The infantry system of the future (IdZ, Infanterist der Zukunft) also suffers from poorly designed links. Digitisation and communication systems thus appear to be the weak points of the Heer, leading to a renewed interest in solutions available on the international market [13]. 13] Emergency operational acquisitions are being considered to avoid decommissioning during NATO commitments, including the VJTF 2019. However, material shortfalls can be filled relatively quickly within future budgets, provided that the personnel to serve them are found.

## **Disturbing demographics**

The development of the age pyramid in Germany has been a matter of political concern since 1970, with the number of births being 150,000 fewer per year than deaths. The use of immigration to compensate for this decline has been the subject of much controversy [14], but does not provide German citizens who can be immediately incorporated into the army. The pool of culturally and legally assimilable East European Germans (Spätaussiedler) is widely consumed, as indicated by the Slavic surnames of many non-commissioned soldiers. The Personalstrategie der Bundeswehr [15] of 1 December 2016 notes the impact of the demographic challenge on recruitment: "From 2015 to 2030, the annual pool of potential recruits of German nationality will be reduced by approximately 144,000 men and women (from 749,000 to 645,000)". In addition to this contraction in the volume of available personnel, there is also competition from the civilian labour market in a full employment economy. In 2016, the personnel directorate has written to all military personnel who are due to leave the service offering to serve beyond the statutory period, solely in order to make up the current deficits in the existing structures. However, in order to achieve a real increase in the number of personnel, it is essential to broaden the pool of personnel by relaxing the criteria of age, educational level and, no doubt, nationality. The document cited (p. 18) refers to the increased use of reservists and the "study on the opening up of the Bundeswehr to EU citizens". The impact of such a measure on the specificity of the military profession remains to be determined.

## **Corporate culture or esprit de corps?**

The military profession has a very different image and status today on both sides of the Rhine. The Bundeswehr was founded in the 1950s in a Germany traumatised by the consequences of Nazism and militarism. It was primarily intended to establish a European pillar of NATO made up of "citizens in uniform" to defend the liberal and democratic order. This is the culture of Innere Führung, the inner command, the exercise of authority that calls for respect for human dignity and no longer demands absolute obedience. This consideration of the "citizen in uniform" is reflected in the existence of a professional military association, the Bundeswehrverband, and a member of parliament responsible for receiving soldiers' grievances, the Wehrbeauftragte. The freedom of expression of military personnel can be seen in the magazines IF (publication of the Zentrum Innere Führung), die Bundeswehr (magazine of the Bundeswehrverband) and Loyal (organ of the Bundeswehr Reservist Association, headed by an influential parliamentarian).

Ministerial decisions are scrutinized and the views of the various ministers are frankly discussed.

The abolition of military service in 2011 has not put an end to the armed forces-nation bond, but it has complicated recruitment by depriving some young people of the opportunity to discover the profession of arms. Since then, the Bundeswehr has had to conduct an aggressive recruitment campaign (an "attractiveness offensive", to use the Minister's expression) in order to achieve its strength despite a significant downsizing since 2010, and this in an extremely competitive environment. A YouTube channel on the incorporation of naval recruits is a hit with young people, but is slow to translate into real commitments.

In the absence of sovereignty forces and overseas presence offering travel and exoticism, multimedia recruitment campaigns focus on training opportunities, acceptance of all differences and good working conditions within the "Bundeswehr company". However, without avoiding certain contradictions: the implementation of the EU Working Time Directive for military personnel as an attractiveness factor as of January 2016 raises numerous practical problems and limits their availability, which in turn leads to a need for additional personnel.

This progressive "civilianization" has been questioned by 16 young officers in a book: *Armee in Aufbruch* (An Army on Departure), published in 2014<sup>[16]</sup>.<sup>16]</sup> This book expresses the questions of young combat arms officers, torn between a particular vocation and a "post-heroic" society that expresses only a "friendly disinterest" towards the army (p.110). This collection has been the subject of many comments, notably in the review IF<sup>[17]</sup>, for its criticism of the new training course for cadres (p.41), but it proves the courage and passion of these young people for their profession, which they wish to exercise fully in operations.

### **Conclusion:**

This overview of the conditions of engagement of the Heer allows us to draw three lessons. On the political level, Germany is gradually moving towards greater international responsibility through increased partnerships and increasing involvement in NATO and UN operations. On the capability side, Germany is looking for CIS and optronics solutions, which its industry is struggling to provide despite a large budget. On the human level, it has a high-quality but increasingly scarce resource.

These three observations, combined with Brexit and the isolationism of the Trump administration, open up concrete prospects for Franco-German military cooperation, which has been structured for a long time <sup>[18]</sup>. These two armies, the largest in the European Union, have a definite interest in developing the EU's military action capabilities. The EU could provide them with a legal framework as well as complementary capabilities for joint operations outside the NATO framework.

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1] See Federal President Roman Herzog's "start" speech of 1997: [http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Roman-Herzog/Reden/1997/04/19970426\\_Rede.html](http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Roman-Herzog/Reden/1997/04/19970426_Rede.html)

2] In 2015, see <https://data.oecd.org/fr/gdp/produit-interieur-brut-pib.htm#indicator-chart>

[3] [http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2013/04/29/attaques-contre-merkel-la-presse-francaise-partagee\\_3167973\\_823448.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2013/04/29/attaques-contre-merkel-la-presse-francaise-partagee_3167973_823448.html)

[4] <http://www.europe1.fr/emissions/l-edito-eco2/allemande-le-pays-qui-defie-les-lois-de-la-politique-et-de-leconomie-2701507>

5] Inhaber der Befehls und Kommandogewalt (IBuK) with the power of command, Art. 65a of the constitution. Command passes to the Federal Chancellor in time of war, Art. 115b.

[6] <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/18/108/1810819.pdf>

[7] <http://forcesoperations.com/la-bundeswehr-aux-commandes-du-ciel-malien/>

[8] Loyal magazine, #2/2017, page 25

9] There are a total of 94,000 Heer uniformed personnel , but these additional 34,000 people serve largely in the joint support organization, the Streitkräftebasis (SKB).

10] Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, NATO Immediate Reaction Brigade, see <https://www.shape.nato.int/page349011837>.

[11] <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2015-03-25/germanys-idea-a-european-army>

12] Griephan Brief 05/17, 30 .01.2017

[13] <http://augengeradeaus.net/2016/11/gefaehrliche-funkstoerung/#more-25637>

14] Cf. the book of Thilo Sarrazin: "...the Lord is the Lord of the Cross...".Deutschland schafft sich ab"(the German suicide)

[15] <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article159898506/Bundeswehr-wirbt-um-Schulabbrecher-und-Auslaender.html>

16] Marcel Bohnert / Lukas J. Reitstetter (Hgg.): "Armee im Aufbruch. Zur Gedankenwelt junger Offiziere in den Kampftruppen der Bundeswehr", Berlin: Carola Hartmann Miles-Verlag 2014, 262 S., ISBN 978-3-937885-98-8

17] IF, Zeitschrift für Innere Führung, N° 2/2015

[18] <http://www.france-allemande.fr/Cooperation-franco-allemande-en-1471.html>

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