Chapter-7

Conclusion

German participation in UN peacekeeping operations in the post-Cold War era evolved under the influence of external events and the changes taking place in Europe. Changes in Europe affected the Germany's identity as a state as well as its immediate environment. Germany was in the midst of the reunification when the crisis in the Gulf took place. The German political class remained fully engrossed with the reunification process and anything else was considered a side show at this juncture resulting in a lukewarm German response. Caution was the only thing expected from them as any bold move could have aroused suspicion in many minds. It could also have threatened the reunification process as several treaties were still to be ratified forcing Germany to adopt a dilly-dallying approach.

But the Gulf crisis forced the Germans to rethink about the basic parameters of their foreign and security policy. 1990 through 1992 were the formative years of Germany's new foreign policy, which was couched in terms of 'Europe' and 'responsibility'. The participation of the Soviet Union in the anti-Saddam coalition changed the whole security environment and gave rise to a new thinking on security besides altering the threat perception.

The Gulf Crisis drew attention to Germany's regional priorities in the third world and it gave a global orientation to German foreign policy. It threatened to upset the established economic structure. Germany also had to prove that it was not an unsupportive ally which demanded that it goes beyond the chequebook diplomacy but did so only under pressure from its allies.
During the Cold War, Germany has sought solutions to the international problems through multilateral channels and the use of military was reserved only for the possible outbreak of the East West conflict. The Gulf War brought the role of military as an instrument of foreign policy on the agenda. Change took place in German attitude during the course of Gulf War especially after the attack on Israel. The allies particularly the US expected Germany to contribute militarily in the Gulf crisis. To deal with this new demand German government opted for an incremental policy as there was lot of confusion over the issue of out of area operations and leaders were reluctant to discuss it in clear terms. Germany tried to create precedents by taking part in out-of-area operations, but strictly within multi-lateral institutions. Government was ahead of both public and the federal law.

When the USA and the UN made request to support the international mine-clearing action in the Persian Gulf on 6 March 1991 Germany obliged them by offering 2700 German troops. It marked the beginning of government's incremental approach. Now onwards Germany participated in more and more far reaching UN military missions. It tried to get the German public and the military used to out-of-area deployments of German soldiers without a prior change of the constitution. As there was a general consensus that humanitarian missions were permitted by the constitution the government termed all the missions it approved humanitarian.

Germans had a strong sentiment against involvement in military activities beyond the defence of their own country. Hence a purely national approach was not feasible. To maintain the balance of power in Europe Germany was willingness to bind its interests with those of NATO and the European Union as this arrangement had served Europe
well. After the experience of Iraq crisis, progress took place in the development of a European security substructure. Several other fundamental political changes like waning of Soviet power, prospect of a reduced presence of American forces and a renewed trans-Atlantic partnership occurring in Europe since 1987 supported this development. As a result unification of Europe was given greater thrust.

German participation in later crises was more confident, though they were still intensely debated. It was difficult to change the ideas and ideologies shaped over a period of time instantly. But there was a general desire among the German political leadership to play a larger role in the world affairs. This approach could be seen in the policies of chancellor Helmut Kohl, Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel and Defence Minister Volker Ruehe. There were supporters to this policy even in SPD. In fact the most significant development in German role in UN peacekeeping operations took place when SPD came to power.

The peacekeeping operation in Cambodia toughened the Germans psychologically and made them accept even casualties in their stride. The Cambodia Mission was the first out-of-area mission in which Bundeswehr personnel actively participated.

German participation in the Somalian operation was based on humanitarian consideration in a fluid situation. It gave the Bundeswehr a unique experience of operating in a hostile territory. Apparently the motive behind German participation was to strengthen their claim for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. The German government continued with its incremental policy of gradually extending government's freedom of action until stopped by the Federal Constitutional Court. The failure of the Somalian mission could have jeopardised the German government's incremental policy.
But luckily for the German government the domestic political agenda was dominated by other unfortunate domestic incidents. The failure of the Somalia mission raised serious questions about UN peace enforcement operations. Events in Somalia indicated rapidly declining public support for an incoherent UN missions and showed that the public wants terms and tasks to be as clear as possible. Both these missions made the German government aware of the fact that it should carefully examine the goals, risks and chances of success of any mission before participating in it.

The ruling of the Karlsruhe Constitutional Court in 1994 ended the debate at the legal level. It declared constitutional the participation of Germany in all kinds of crisis and peace operations but did not give the government a free hand. The Germans still remained reluctant from participating in the military actions and the perception persisted that it would be difficult to obtain domestic political support for such operations. Once the legal questions were resolved political questions came to the fore circumscribing the German participation.

The *White Paper on German Defence* expanded the role of the Bundeswehr to support in international conflict prevention and crisis management measures besides collective defence. But the existing Bundeswehr is neither trained nor equipped for these tasks. To perform these functions a part of the Bundeswehr has to be transformed into a highly mobile force. Moreover, the White Paper is silent on the precise reasons for such deployments and the institutional framework.

The external influences have made Germany realise the need for military power in the post-Cold War international system. Among those external influences the ongoing tragedy in Yugoslavia is most important during which the most dramatic developments in
German participation in UN peacekeeping operations took place. It added new dimensions to German participation. The fighting in former Yugoslavia posed very serious threats to Europe, and hence to German security, stability and prosperity. Germany had to bear the burden of most Yugoslav refugees. The German public and political elite has witnessed the continuous atrocities being perpetrated and the regular failure of the non-military means especially when Serbs began to shell UN safe areas and take UN soldiers hostage. The Yugoslav crisis led to change of attitude in most segments of the German society. It gave rise to a cross party consensus for use of military in intra-state conflicts in order to stop atrocities or ethnic cleansing.

This brought the role of military as an instrument of foreign policy on agenda and made necessary to consider military resources. It has moved the ‘blue helmet debate’ in the direction, which recognises the need for military intervention. But support for Implementation Force (IFOR) and Stabilisation Force (SFOR) does not mean support for all kinds of crisis management tasks. A crucial role was assigned to geographic proximity and the thumb rule seems to be the closer to home the more likely is involvement.

The most intense German military participation took place during the crisis in Kosovo. At that time Germany was Chairman of EU and G-8 countries. It was also member of the Contact Group. It was only natural to expect more active participation from Germany otherwise the whole effort would have looked hollow. Moreover, after coming to power SPD had to prove that Germany was a reliable partner under their leadership and there was no Sonderweg for Germany. German participation in Yugoslav crisis widened its activities in out-of-area operations.
German military participation in Kosovo was a new chapter in post-war German history. It came as a shock to many traditional thinkers. The new government of Red Green coalition survived the severe stresses of German participation in the NATO force, which meant Germany has come a long way towards being a full partner in out-of-area operations of the alliance. During the Kosovo crisis German government crossed the two important thresholds with regard to its participation in out of area operations. It accepted the need for the participation of Bundeswehr in the NATO operation. Moreover, it was done without the mandate of the UN Security Council. But other limitations were retained. Germany honoured the three key conditions set up by the Constitutional Court. Bundeswehr acted only as part of a multilateral operation designed to uphold peace and international security with the approval of the Bundestag. But throughout the crisis a consensus existed that a ground war in Kosovo would be unacceptable. German participation remained below that critical level where it could be called normal. It is still not proved that the Germany is willing to risk the lives of German soldiers in the name of peace and security.

During the Yugoslav crisis existing multilateral crisis management mechanism were fully tested and their inadequacies were exposed. A European system of collective security to deal with such a crisis did not exist. The crisis demanded a substantial military engagement but Europeans were unable to proceed without US involvement. This was not only for political reasons but also because they lacked military resources. This forced Germany and other European powers to think in terms of a common European foreign and defence policy.
The Yugoslav crisis challenged the strongly held German belief that that the conflicts would be resolved through international negotiations and institutions within a framework of internationally recognised norms and procedures. The basic elements of Germany's institutionalist security policy proved to be very successful in Central and East European countries but failed in former Yugoslavia, as these conflicts were associated with the dissolution of state. Failure of political mechanisms and instruments made the recourse to military instruments increasingly necessary.

The Yugoslav crisis had major impact on the process of geopolitical maturation. It established the limits of leadership role of FRG. It forced a reappraisal of the diplomatic economic and military instruments at Germany's disposal. It provided the political context in which use of military force could be accepted. Germany successfully accomplished the transition to a normal regional power.

Most recently, a significant German participation has been in Afghanistan. After the horrifying terrorist strikes of September 11, United States earned worldwide sympathy. Recognising its responsibility in the world politics Germany decided to support the United States.1 Schroeder put the survival of his coalition on line to participate in international peacekeeping force. In November 2001 he linked German participation in the war against terrorism to a vote of confidence in the German parliament. This step of Schroeder earned respect for Germany in America. The German Parliament agreed on 23 December 2001 to supply up to 1,200 troops to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

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German soldiers made up part of the international peacekeeping force for Kabul and are taking part in the battle against international terrorism. But once again symbolism remained greater than their military contribution. Yet again Germany is mostly providing logistical support. It took a leading role to rebuild the Afghan police force. It also played a key role in helping to rebuild the Afghanistan schools and universities, many of which were closed or denied resources under the deposed Taliban regime. Another major area of attention has been provision of medical care.

German participation in Afghanistan further exposed the deficiencies of the Bundeswehr. It brought into focus lack of Bundeswehr preparedness for such missions. The Bundeswehr was not having a transport plane which could cater to peacekeeping missions in far-flung areas. Existing fleet of Transall were meant to supply troops in the event of a war between NATO and Soviet led Warsaw Pact.\textsuperscript{2} Dispute also arose over the number of planes to be purchased and how the finance was to be raised. German military lacked gear for Afghanistan.

German participation in Afghanistan pushed Germany’s armed forces to the limit of their capability. Germany currently has 6,400 troops in the Balkans in peacekeeping missions while almost 1,000 are in Afghanistan as part of an international security force to protect the interim government in Kabul. To deploy soldiers in Afghanistan, the military had to scratch together the rest of its last available forces. Funding remained a major a problem.

Bundeswehr has also suffered few casualties in its Afghan operation. Two German soldiers and three Danish service members were killed while trying to dismantle

two surface-to-air missiles. But Scharping reiterated that would not affect Germany’s commitment to such missions. Initial reactions to the casualties in Germany was calm. It seemed as if the country and its politicians might have matured. People were generally not questioning German involvement in Afghanistan, there were no peace protests, the coalition seemed stable and the Greens were not dissenting openly. Yet the calm was deceiving. Scharping warned against asking too much of society, given the speed at which Germany has stepped its military activity over the past decade. It indicated a belief that the mood in the country could turn very quickly. Surveys showed only a slight majority in favour of the current Bundeswehr mission.

Unlike American and British troops the German troops were apparently not supposed to hunt down Osam bin Laden, but handle security in and around Kabul as part of an international peacekeeping force. Only later it was known from the American military sources that Germans were being deployed in the combat zones and they were participating in “operation Anaconda”. This was the most dangerous mission the German military has ever undertaken. But all this information was shielded from the public. The government followed a policy that the public would not be told what was actually going on until after the mission was over.

There was a great demand for German security contribution by both Afghan interim government and the UN. They also demanded extension and geographic enlargement of the mandate. Though Germany participated Schroeder was against increasing the territorial scope of the mission as well as Germany’s involvement.

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Chancellor refused to accept a leadership role, citing limited resources, the country’s relative lack of experience in heading such military missions and German preoccupation in Balkans. Fischer also rejected a military leadership role as German armed forces had already reached the limits of its deployment capacity in part because of its commitments in the former Yugoslavia. German Defence Minister Rudolf Scharping was also of the same view and made clear that if the mandate of peacekeeping troops were to be extended, then other nations will have to take on more responsibility. As a result after Britain, Turkey had to take the charge of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). All this showed that still there was no stable consensus on the issue of peacekeeping.

Germany agreed to keep its forces in Afghanistan when the mission was extended. German lawmakers voted overwhelmingly on 14 June 2002 to extend participation by the country’s soldiers in the international peacekeeping missions in Afghanistan. Lawmakers voted 467-37, with five abstentions to keep the German contingent in Afghanistan until December 20.

German Defence Minister Rudolf Scharping justified the German participation in Afghanistan and defended intervention as a legitimate last resort. He considered the participation of German soldiers in the interests of worldwide security, the war against terrorism and hence German security. Germany participated in Afghanistan because the coherence of NATO and the support of United States were both vital to Germany’s freedom and security. Germany had now realised that it can not be consumers alone but must be guarantor’s of security as well. But important constraints remained on Germany.

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5 Schroeder Reiterates Germany will not take Lead Afghan Role, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 14 March 2002.
6 Ibid.
and its participation in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was largely on the lines of its previous participations.

The Yugoslav crisis and later German participation in Afghanistan made Germany recognise the importance of military as an instrument of foreign policy. This realisation made new demands on Bundeswehr. Now it became obvious that a substantial restructuring of German military would be needed. The Bundeswehr was trained to defend the homeland against a Warsaw Pact attack. Much of the army's equipment, such as heavy Leopard tanks, is of little use for peacekeeping. The structure of the Bundeswehr needed to be changed to be of practical use under combat conditions in a military conflict outside Central Europe. The Bundeswehr began to reorganise into two sorts of unit in the year 1995: those concerned with territorial defence, and reaction forces, 50,000-strong, which could be used for peacekeeping. Some of these forces were also to serve in NATO's rapid-reaction corps in 1997.

Some changes are also required in the nature of the force. The Bundeswehr was built-up as a deterrent force. It was largely a conscript army and has its ethos. Conscripts could not be expected to participate in UN peacekeeping or combat operations. Moreover, they have a right to refuse combat duty. Reduction in number of Bundeswehr soldiers has resulted in a shorter conscription period. The conscript army also faces a problem of morale and motivation.

The abolition of conscription and creation of a professional army is resisted by the politicians. Conscription was introduced to prevent the emergence of the military as an independent political force. But conscription is becoming unfashionable and unsustainable due to the absence of the threat of large-scale war. Reduction in defence
budget made difficult to maintain a force level of even 370,000. To adapt for the new tasks Bundeswehr established a crisis reaction force consisting of 50,000 troops. This force is to be used in crisis management in conflict out of area. At present Germany is able to play a support role but not a leading role in conflict intervention.

There is a serious mismatch between resources and commitments. Resource constraint for restructuring of Bundeswehr leaves little room for UN missions. Germany will be able to provide a small number of soldiers in next few years as a large part of its capacity is engaged in Balkans. The Bundeswehr is torn between old ideals and new tasks in the search for its identity. The report of the Weizsäcker Commission has suggested some corrective measures. But it will take some time before those suggestions are fully implemented.

The guiding principles of German foreign policy can be deciphered only on the basis of its participation in the previous operations. The crisis in former Yugoslavia has thrown some light on the likely framework principles, which may guide German policy with regard to Bundeswehr deployment.

1. Germany will participate only in those operations where its own interests are involved.

2. Germany will deploy its forces only within multi-national frameworks.

3. But there will be no automatic formula for German participation and most of the time decisions would be taken on a case-by-case basis.

Germany wants to strengthen multilateral structures like UN. The central thrust of German foreign policy is establishment of mechanisms to civilise international politics. Multilateralism is a core principle of German foreign policy. Germany believes that If
UN becomes an effective guarantor of international security; it can lead towards a trend of de-nationalising security policy and end to power politics.

**Prospects**

Germany is attempting to develop policies and procedures for participating in multi-national peacekeeping operations. Its participation in the previous operations indicates that Germany is moving in the direction of 'normalcy'. There has been a perceptible change in the nature of debate and now frequent references are made to 'German interests' and the concept of power politics, which was unthinkable some time back. The domestic situation in Germany is such that external expectations and pressures are absolutely essential to the further evolution of that country as a normal international actor. Although the German government has succeeded in substantially raising the threshold for Bundeswehr deployment in out-of-area missions, it would be premature to conclude that this indicates a new consensus with regard to the role of the German armed forces.

German participation would be different in different parts of the world. German interests lie primarily in Europe, which is reflected, in its Euro-centric policy. Middle East figures next in the priority list. Here important economic interests of Germany are involved. Rest of the world is very low in priority list. The intensity of German participation is likely to be according to the interest in that area. In Africa Germany intends to participate through regional organisations. It wants to provide them logistical support, but expects them to take care of their own troubles. Thus Germany is most likely to have two separate foci for diplomatic endeavours to deal with a crisis. A European
focus and a global focus centred around UN, US and NATO. There is large domestic support for German participation in peacekeeping missions in Europe but less support for participation outside Europe. It faces greater resistance in Eastern part of Germany. But a stable consensus still eludes Germany.

German politicians have avoided an open debate over the issue. People are still sceptical about out-of-area operations and the ‘culture of restraint’ is the dominating sentiment. German political parties prefer a case-by case decision, over broad clear policy directives. It would considerably depend on the area in which the crisis has occurred and the multi-national nature of involvement. Political elite holding the reins of power is dominated by the consensus that Germany should match its international role with economic power. However there is a lack of consensus in the political elite as a whole and in the general population, with respect to use of military force for purpose other than the territorial defence. German participation in the Kosovo conflict marked a decisive transition but political barriers still remain. The German defence policy is in transition but the complete change has not yet taken place. The consensual politics is likely to continue for some time to come. Challenge remains for the German political leadership to indulge in this kind of debate and decide about the precise nature of German operation.

German participation will also depend on the kind of reforms and restructuring undertaken in Bundeswehr. Though Germany has taken steps in this direction funding is going to be a problem. Recently Bundeswehr has been cut even below the level of what had been agreed in the ‘Two-plus-Four-Treaty’. Germany has committed a large number of soldiers for the peacekeeping in the Balkans and they would be occupied there for
some time to come. This leaves very limited capacity available for participation elsewhere.

No serious participation is expected from Germany in a crisis unless it seriously touches the core values of German foreign policy. Moreover the trouble spot should be geographically close to Germany or should be placed in an area where strategic interests of Germany are involved. The cross party consensus achieved in German foreign and security policy is still not stable on a new role for Germany in general and the Bundeswehr in particular.

The West in general is withdrawing from peacekeeping operations. They seem to have diluted the lofty goals, if not totally given up. The only superpower, US, is reluctant to send its men serving the cause of peace, peacekeeping and peacemaking. The ‘bodybag syndrome’ has greatly influenced their foreign policy. All these leading powers seem to be following a two-tier policy regarding peacekeeping operations. They are willing to participate directly where their own interests are threatened but do not want to send their men in crises elsewhere. German policy also seems to be very close to it. Germany is likely to participate fully in Europe but will extend logistical support elsewhere.