

Tom Dyson. *The Politics of German Defence and Security: Policy Leadership and Military Reform in the Post-Cold War Era.* Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007. xii + 215 pp. \$70.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-84545-392-3.



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Strategic Culture after the Cold War

For purposes of marketing, this book's publisher assigned it the categories of "Politics and Economics" and "German Studies/History." The order of the categories is appropriate: political scientists are more likely to benefit from reading this study than historians. The author engages several theories that are primarily relevant within the discipline of political science, and he derives some of his arguments from these theoretical debates. His starting point is the paradoxical nature of German defense policy between 1990 and 2005. With the end of the Cold War, Germany ceased to be a "civilian power," but a drastically altered international security environment has only brought about slow and incremental change in its military doctrine and structure.[1]

In order to solve this puzzle, Dyson employs a series of empirically and conceptually grounded arguments in his introductory chapter. First, in his opinion, a specifically German "culture of antimilitarism" or "strategic culture" does not sufficiently explain the reform process of the German armed forces (Bundeswehr).[2] Instead, he argues, policy leaders often selectively used

cultural arguments to manage the reform process by blocking or stimulating policy changes. In addition, Dyson directs our attention to the domestic political context, specifically electoral-strategic interests and political calculations around military base closures, which have social ramifications and are often determined by budgetary considerations. Thus, in his view, domestic politics trumped international power perceptions and the international structure more generally. Second, Dyson expands concepts of policy leadership in two ways. He shifts the empirical focus from the German chancellor to the usually neglected ministerial level. Policy leadership is not only practiced at the top of the German governmental hierarchy but can also be identified within the *Ressortprinzip*, the departmental principle that allows German ministries to exercise significant agency in developing and implementing policy as long as it adheres to the chancellor's guidelines. From a conceptual standpoint, Dyson argues against the normative assumption that leadership always implies new policies. Thus, he adds the role of veto player (advocacy of continuity

against pressure for change) to conventional characterizations of leadership as entrepreneurship (the advocacy of new policy solutions) and brokerage (the search for consensus among competing ideas). Finally, Dyson's expanded concept of leadership seeks to contribute to studies of the Europeanization of German defense and security policy. His emphases on domestic politics, ministerial agency, and the three concepts of leadership illustrate how Germany sought to manage military reform in the context of pressures to adapt made by NATO and the European Union.

Chapter 2 analyzes the historical and structural context of the Bundeswehr. As one of several "policy subsystems," the German military is characterized by a policy identity based on constitutional regulations, its exposure to U.S. and NATO doctrines, and the notion of the "citizen in uniform" to ensure that the military adheres to democratic principles while serving the interests of a democratic state (p. 18). The Bundeswehr is also subject to policy learning (the incorporation of operational experiences), actors at the level of the *Länder* due to its military bases, and the strong involvement of civil society because of *Zivildienst*, the civil service alternative for conscripts who do not wish to serve in the military. Furthermore, the German military is "nested" in a defense and security subsystem (in part defined by the German constitution and the defense ministry) as well as in NATO and EU structures (p. 19). In turn, this larger defense and security subsystem interacts with the budgetary and foreign policy subsystems.

While historically minded readers will be able to appreciate these structural explanations enough to follow Dyson's argument, however, they may find his historical background narrative lacking in detail. According to Dyson, the German military was bound by three "advocacy coalitions" that encompassed the entire political spectrum and divided it from right to left according to narratives of "freedom" (with an emphasis on western/Atlanticist ties and deterrence), "peace" (emphasis on disarmament and collective security), and "pacifism" (rejection of territorial defense and conscription) during the Cold War (p. 30). Both the threat environment of the Cold War and historical experience legitimated territorial defense and conscription as the dominant policy paradigms among Germany's major parties, which excluded the "pacifist" coalition embodied by the left wing of the Green Party and the peace movement. The end of the Cold War presented three challenges to traditional policy narratives. First, German unification created significant budgetary problems. Second, new secu-

rity challenges such as the First Gulf War, the crises in the Balkans, and 9/11 increasingly turned territorial defense into an anachronism and, perhaps more influentially, shifted the attention of the Bundeswehr towards multilaterally conducted international law enforcement to protect civilians. Finally, the roles of the United States and the United Nations changed under the presidencies of Bill Clinton, who strengthened Germany's "peace" coalition, and George W. Bush, whose preemptive doctrine strained U.S.-German relations and forced Germany to choose whether to promote its security interests within the European Union or NATO.

How Germany dealt with these challenges is the subject of the subsequent three chapters, which illustrate the varying leadership roles of defense ministers under the chancellorships of Helmut Kohl and Gerhard Schröder. Prompted by the First Gulf War (1990-91) and the 1992 Sarajevo crisis, during which the Bundeswehr could not be deployed outside of Germany due to constitutional constraints, Kohl attempted to establish an agenda-setting role for Germany by appointing Volker Rühe defense minister. Rühe, in turn, emerged as a policy entrepreneur to effect a new crisis management function for the German military from 1992 to 1994. He did so in institutional venues such as the Western European Union, NATO, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the European Union while pursuing "salami tactics," which did not challenge the doctrine of territorial defense and conscription but eventually led to the 1994 Constitutional Court ruling that permitted "out-of-area operations" (p. 59). As Dyson argues, this decision provided a window of opportunity for further reforms, but paradoxically, domestic concerns turned Rühe into a veto player. Bundeswehr reform took a back seat to budgetary implications of the European Monetary Union, while *Länder* protests against base closures and their consequences for social policy strengthened Rühe's desire to avoid discontent ahead of his own electoral campaign for chancellor in 1998.

A similar reform pattern prevailed under Rudolf Scharping after Schröder's election victory in 1998: opportunities for change were wasted due to the lack of a "powerful political sponsor," although the SPD-Green coalition established the Weizsäcker Commission as a new institutional venue for reform (p. 87). In light of the Kosovo Conflict, the subsequent Helsinki Headline Goals of 1999, and budgetary considerations, the commission recommended embracing crisis management as the dominant doctrine and reducing the number of conscripts to thirty thousand. However, these suggestions

violated *Wehrgerechtigkeit*, the principle that all eligible German males should serve, and posed serious questions about the constitutionality of conscription. Not surprisingly, then, Scharping reacted as a veto player due to domestic factors. Similarly to matters in Schröder's tenure, base closures, concomitant electoral strategies, budget consolidation to meet the goals of the European Stability and Growth Pact, and issues of social policy with respect to *Zivildienst* became crucial. No effective opposition was made to Scharping's veto because the CDU/CSU had itself failed to implement changes when it was in office. By the end of Schröder's first term in 2002, Bundeswehr reform was a failing concept, as highlighted not only by Scharping's personal shortcomings, but also by the operational deficits of German troops in Macedonia and Afghanistan.

When Peter Struck replaced Scharping as defense minister in 2002, he was expected to play the role of policy entrepreneur with a "reform of the reform," which he articulated in his Defense Policy Guidelines (VPR) of 2003 (p. 119). Germany was to be "defended on the Hindukush," but while some tasks of the Bundeswehr changed, conscription as a vital part of German strategic culture was left untouched (p. 123). Dyson locates the limited parameters of reform not primarily in the international context of 9/11, but in domestic budgetary concerns in the form of Schröder's "Agenda 2010." He also argues that Struck became a policy broker in addition to his entrepreneurship when the Iraq War revealed significant differences between German, French, Anglo-American, and eastern European security concepts. Thus, he first created a domestic consensus between the major parties by binding the "freedom" coalition to VPR and emphasizing the importance of the European Union and the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) for the "peace" coalition. Second, he tried to "bridge" Atlanticism and Europeanism by framing ESDP as a contribution to strengthening NATO rather than the European Union. Overall, Dyson describes the German defense ministry as having an institutional preference for NATO because the alliance was perceived as less of a threat to conscription than European, or more precisely French, security initiatives.

Due to the complexity of the topic, the interplay between military reform, NATO, and ESDP merits a separate chapter in Dyson's account, where he highlights "how Atlanticisation and Europeanisation were themes that united the Schröder, Scharping, and Struck periods" (p. 148). These policy leaders play a central role not only in military reform, but also in the process of Europeaniz-

ing German defense and security policy, with ESDP as an increasingly important part of the strategic context. Dyson combines a top-down model of Europeanization that posits a "fit" or "misfit" between European and domestic institutions with his own bottom-up approach to argue that domestic actors used Europeanization to manage "fit" in order to promote their own (institutional) interests.[3] The aforementioned preference of the defense ministry towards NATO thus clashed with other policy subsystems throughout the 1990s, but specifically with the foreign ministry under Joschka Fischer, who acted as a policy entrepreneur both in his marginalization of the "pacifist" coalition in the Green Party and in the development of ESDP in 1999. Due to this "disjointed discourse," the defense ministry emerged as a laggard in Europeanization, which casts doubts on Germany's current capacity to sustain its European commitments, including Europe's political integration (p. 176). Dyson's concluding chapter offers an even bleaker, but timely assessment: because the Bundeswehr is underfunded and suffers from overstretch, the success of NATO and the United Nations in meeting post-9/11 security challenges is also at risk.

Following a recent trend in political science literature, this narrative is based on a wide range of primary and secondary sources. Dyson drew on research at the SPD Party archive, newspapers, magazines, and interviews with officials from the CDU/CSU, SPD, and Green Party, but left little room for public opinion or non-state actors. At the same time, these sources seem to predetermine one of his arguments. The emphasis on agency at the ministerial level of German politics makes a welcome contribution to leadership studies, but it is mainly constructed with primary material from the defense ministry, whereas the chancellor rarely appears in either the endnotes or the narrative. An alternative explanation might have pointed out that federal ministries have become more important because of the increasing complexity of political structures and bureaucracies. Historians may also object to his claim that policy leaders used "strategic culture" only selectively to advance or block reforms. In fact, they used this argument consistently, at least in order to defend conscription. Thus, Dyson does not consider the possibility that culturally grounded reticence to professionalize the Bundeswehr could be the result of long-term learning due to the Allied occupation of postwar Germany. He also overstates his case when he argues that his book "raises questions about the utility of strategic culture as a stand alone explanatory framework" (p. 185). Both the monocausality implied in this statement and the fact that it is not supported by evi-

dence are methodologically problematic. Finally, as some of the language in this review indicates, Dyson's account frequently relies on jargon and abbreviations that may be unfamiliar to readers not well versed in Germany's recent history and political environment. This critique notwithstanding, *The Politics of German Defence and Security* offers a new perspective on military reform with wide-ranging implications for Germany, Europe, and the United States. Specialists may benefit from its arguments to derive much-needed policy solutions.

Notes

[1]. Hanns W. Maul, "Germany and Japan: The New Civilian Powers?" *Foreign Affairs* 69 (1990): 91-106, and "German Foreign Policy Post-Kosovo: Still a Civilian Power?" *German Politics* 9 (2000): 1-24.

[2]. Thomas U. Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); and Kerry Longhurst, "Strategic Culture: The Key to Understanding German Security Policy?" (PhD diss., Birmingham University, 2000).

[3]. Thomas Risse, Maria Green Cowles, and James Caporaso, "Introduction," in *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change*, ed. Maria Green Cowles, James Caporaso, and Thomas Risse (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 1-20; Kenneth Dyson and Klaus H. Goetz, "Europeanisation Compared: The Shrinking Core and the Decline of Soft Power," in *Germany, Europe, and the Politics of Constraint*, ed. Kenneth Dyson and Klaus H. Goetz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 349-376.

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