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Rudolf Scharping and the formation of Social Democratic foreign and security policy in the 1990ties²

Since October 1998 the German policy is being led by a new breed of post Second World War politicians who while sharing the basic convictions of their predecessors such as the necessity of European integration and the special responsibility deriving from the German past are more assertive in defining the national interest and less shy in expressing them in public. This is not necessarily to the disadvantage of the European integration process as long as the national interest is not defined in a parochial but in an enlightened way. Following Chancellor Schröder this means, firstly, stating openly one's interests and not denying them; secondly, to define one's interests and to present them with rational arguments; finally, to find a balance between one's own interests and those of the neighbors in order to present a common European position.³

The coalition comprised of the Social Democrats (SPD) and Alliance 90/The Greens took office at a fairly unfavorable time. Within the SPD a power struggle was lingering. Right from the beginning the government was confronted with the dynamics of the Kosovo conflict which after the escalation to a genuine war against a sovereign country turned out to be probably the most important foreign policy event in the FRG's history – aside from Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* and the German reunification. The new government had to cope with the double presidentship of EU and WEU. The German armed forces were and are under increasing pressure from the dynamic military technological landscape and the shrinking defense budget. Although it is still too early for definitive conclusions one can see first effects on Germany's international standing and self-image.⁴

One of the men who are on the frontline of these process is Rudolf Scharping. He is in the hub of this analysis that tries to reconstruct a reliable picture of the German Defense Minister and Vice Party Leader of the SPD. At the same time it is a vignette of the development of the SPD's foreign and security policy thinking in the nineties. The first part deals with Scharping's personality and his political career. The second one analyses his role in the out-of-area debate and his engagement in the Kosovo conflict. Then I ask about his political belief system in terms of being European or Atlanticist and finally the question is raised if he is a mere administrator in dealing with one of the most difficult ministries or if he will turn out to be a reformer who brings Germany back on the European track by restructuring the Bundeswehr. In the last part I end with some tentative conclusions and a clear standpoint.

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² I am grateful to Ingo Schnelle for his valuable research assistance.

³ *Le Monde*, 4 September 1999, p. 28.

⁴ See Gerhard Schröder, *Politique étrangère: y a-t-il une „troisième voie“?*, in: *Le Monde*, 7 September 1999, pp. 1 and 17.

Who is Rudolf Scharping?

Remembering the former Chancellor Helmut Kohl who steered the tanker Germany for sixteen years a green observer could probably not imagine that the German defense minister Rudolf Scharping is also what the French call a “bete politique”. He is a devoted politician and a real professional who started his career in 1966 when the then 19 year old lad became member of the SPD. Now, at the age of 52, he is heading one of the trickiest ministries of the Federal Republic. Although the US and NATO lobbied hard to lure him to become NATO secretary general in summer 1999 he stuck to a job that quite often in the history of the FRG turned out to be a political suicide mission. One of the arguments used by insiders from the Alliance was that he has won high marks for his role in the Kosovo conflict and that he has launched a fundamental defense review that is expected to lead to a radical overhaul of Germany’s armed forces. In other words, NATO wanted to have a political heavyweight to succeed the designated Mr. CFSP Javier Solana. The gentle reader who might ask why Scharping has declared not to be available for this job could be answered that he probably still has national ambitions. Of course the minister felt flattered, as he admitted in a press conference⁵, whereas Chancellor Schröder stated publicly that he needs Scharping in the government and “also in the SPD” so that he was not willing to let him go.⁶ Thus, two former political opponents seem to be closing ranks – at least for the time being.

Who is this man courted so much at these times on the national and the international level? Well, he can surely be called a political jump-starter. President of the Young Socialists of Rhineland-Palatinate in the age of 22 and vice-president on the federal level of the Young Socialists he was elected Member of Parliament of his Land already in 1975. During the 19 year long membership in the Landtag (state parliament) he became parliamentary whip (1979 – 1985), President of the SPD parliamentary group (1985 – 1991), President of the SPD of Rhineland-Palatinate (1985 – 1993) and in 1991 he conquered Helmut Kohl’s conservative place of origin being elected leader of the Land. Scharping’s party career on the federal level started in 1988 when he entered the executive board of the SPD and reached its peak from 1993 to 1995 when he was Leader of the SPD. He is Member of the Bundestag (Federal Parliament) since 1994. During this time he headed the SPD parliamentary group until the election victory of his party in October 1998. Since 1995 he is Vice President of the SPD and President of the Social Democratic Parties of Europe.

Mr. Scharping is the youngest of the so called grandsons of the former Chancellor, father of the German Ostpolitik and Nobel Peace prize winner Willy Brandt. One of them was supposed to lead the SPD out of the dark ages of opposition which endured since 1982 when Helmut Schmidt was toppled by his coalition partner, the Free Liberals, and the left wing of his own party. The mere fact that there were several “grandsons” was (or is?) a guarantee for continuing political infighting. At the

⁵ Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 5 June 1999, p. 2

⁶ Frankfurter Rundschau, 5 June 1999, p.1. and International Herald Tribune, 15 July 1999, pp. 1, 6.

beginning four heirs existed, each of them leader of a Land. The first one, Björn Engholm from Schleswig-Holstein, left the political stage due to a scandal in 1993. As the second one, Oscar Lafontaine from the Saarland, had lost the first federal election of the unified Germany in 1990 and subsequently declined to put things back on the rails, Scharping left the background and threw his hat in the ring to gain the leadership of the SPD.

At this time he was not part of the inner circle of power in Bonn and he was the last one who was asked to apply for the job. In the meetings of the executive board he was known as the strong silent type. As Horst Ehmke, a former leading SPD fossil, used to say: "Scharping speaks as last. Scharping speaks briefly. But what he says is well done".⁷ He has been characterized with positive attributes like being diligent, who is extremely eager to learn and obsessed with details and who is very efficient and determined. He is said to be a strategic thinker with the feeling for the right timing and to be persistent. His political friends from Rhineland-Palatinate dubbed him "Godfather" because, as his successor Kurt Beck put it, "he knows all, he is ever present and if necessary also almighty".⁸ On the negative side he is said to be stiff and distant, even sometimes autistic. Some people say he has no guts because he does not fight for a cause without any ifs and buts. In any case, he is no media star at all, no master of rhetoric and no patter-merchant. Perhaps more important is that ordinary people tend to like him. This is due to his normality, to his unpretentious talk, perhaps to his provincial habits. In contrast to his prominent competitors within the SPD the married father of three daughters, who learned to assume responsibility very early as the eldest of seven brothers and sisters, climbed the career ladder while guarding personal modesty as well as political reserve, proving stamina and exerting political continuity.

His political pendulum within the SPD today is oriented to the midpoint. Scharping is a no ideologue at all but a pragmatic. He is not loved by the left and sometimes criticized by the right wing. In all, he is a rather conservative social-democrat who prefers the company of business people than of the Greens with which he does not like to do political business. However, Scharping started his political career on the left as many prominent Social Democrats used to do. In 1968 he was even excluded from the SPD, because he distributed leaflets against the purchase of US starfighter aircrafts pleading instead for more investment in welfare. But this was only a brief episode and he was readmitted in the SPD shortly after. His foster-father was Wilhelm Dröscher, a very traditional and influential social democrat in the region. He taught Scharping how politics is functioning in the structural conservative Rhineland-Palatinate, thus it is not astonishing that Scharping never ran the risk of becoming a "soixanthuitard". If he began his political career on the left wing, then because it was useful at these times in order to make progress. Consequently his political curve went from the organized left, the so called "Frankfurter Kreis", to the organized right, the so called "Seeheimer Kreis". When he was preparing to conquer the helm of the SPD at the beginning of the 1990ties the conservative commentator Günter Bannas wrote: "These pragmatic social-democrats, who are close to the unions and above all willing to rule, are regarding for a long time the former lefty as one of them and as somebody who carries the hope of the party".⁹

⁷ Cited in Elke Leonard, *Aus der Opposition an die Macht. Wie Rudolf Scharping Kanzler werden will*, Köln: Bund-Verlag, 1995, p. 46.

⁸ Cited in Thomas Leif/ Joachim Raschke, *Rudolf Scharping, die SPD und die Macht*, Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1994, pp.24 – 34.

⁹ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 November 1992.

However Scharping never let himself to be integrated totally one political circle, always playing with several keyboards. While stars Ike Oskar Lafontaine and Gerhard Schröder tended to interpret Scharpings modest and reserved way as weakness, the pragmatic image made him acceptable for the bulk of the party, 40.3 percent of which voted for Scharping to become party leader in a consultation of all members of the SPD. This was an unusual and unique procedure that had been set up by Scharping and a strange coalition between the moderate Johannes Rau, who was then heading the German power house North Rhine-Westphalia, and Oskar Lafontaine, the informal head of the left party wing. Their common objective was to prevent Schröder, who was seen as a political maverick with no solidarity and darling of the media, from becoming party leader. Although Lafontaine was convinced to be the better choice he struck a deal with Scharping comprising his renunciation from the candidacy for the party leadership in the hope to become in return the SPD's candidate for next federal election in 1994. But there was one thing Lafontaine had not reckoned with, that was Scharping wanted to run for chancellor himself. Being a loyal party soldier, the real number one stepped back leaving the field for Scharping.¹⁰

So the youngest party leader became the youngest candidate for the post of chancellor – and lost the federal elections on 16 October 1994. Already before tactical mistakes and electoral defeats had darkened his winner image, so that he was framed in his electoral campaign by Lafontaine and Schröder, the three of them forming the so called "Troika" comprised of a star (Schröder), a strategist (Lafontaine) and a candidate. After the lost election Scharping became leader of the SPD parliamentary group in the Bundestag, but his inclination for lonely decisions, especially in the very sensitive field of personnel policy, and his lack of political aggressiveness produced growing criticism whereas his political opponents within the party were making points. In a sort of putsch Lafontaine – with the backing of Schröder - took the "spontaneous" decision to run for party leader during the Mannheim party convention in November 1995 and got 62.6 percent of the votes. Thus Scharping lost his job as top leader of the SPD only after 28 months suffering the first political "Waterloo" in his career. But he remained in the party executive as a vice party leader as well as remaining leader of the SPD parliamentary group of the Bundestag.

In the election year 1998 nobody thought of him to be candidate again. The choice was between Lafontaine and Schröder with the latter as the winner thanks to the renunciation and the full backing of the former. After the election victory of October 1998 Scharping wanted to continue to head the SPD parliamentary group, while the new Chancellor Schröder and the undisputed party leader and architect of the election victory Lafontaine pushed him to take over the defense ministry in order to get rid of someone of whom both have a poor opinion and who continued nevertheless to be a potential rival. Scharping at first fought hard to keep his job and then, after he recognized that he had no chance to prevail, to limit the influence of Lafontaine in the parliamentary group by successfully hindering the party boss to install one of his men. Instead Peter Struck, the parliamentarian whip and one of his few confidants, became head of the parliamentary group. Nevertheless, it was the second "Waterloo" for Scharping, even if it was smoothed by a tactical victory over Lafontaine.¹¹

Thus Scharping took over the German Ministry of Defense reluctantly but selflessly and with great zeal. At the beginning, the public's estimation of his capability to do a good job was rather weak. In a poll only 39 percent believed him to be suitable for being defense minister whereas 41 percent

¹⁰ See Leondard, op.cit., pp.88ff.

¹¹ See Der Spiegel, No. 42, 1998, pp. 23f. and No. 43, 1998, p. 26.

thought the contrary.¹² However, for Scharping it is nothing new to being underestimated. It has often been a mistake of his political competitors to underestimate him and to forget that he becomes strong if he is in the defense. Half a year later, after three weeks Yugoslav war, he reached the highest popularity score ever since, following Foreign Minister Fischer and Schröder but heading before ex-Chancellor Kohl and opposition leader Schäuble, and in July and August 1999 he even passed the Chancellor.¹³

Meanwhile, the mighty Oskar Lafontaine who had humiliated him two times, had left the political stage and it was Scharping who was a nail in his coffin by forging a tactical alliance with the Chancellor. To be precise, it was Schröder who backed Scharping who felt cheated by the then Finance Minister Lafontaine in the question who is going to pay the bill for the Kosovo engagement of the Bundeswehr. The day after Lafontaine's resignation it was Scharping who to the surprise of some participants took part in the tiny but illustrious coalition meeting of the big wigs.¹⁴ Since then he is a pillar of Schröder's power system: very useful to do the extremely difficult job to reform the German Armed Forces in times of declining budgets and uncontested within a SPD. However, his political career has been dampened a little bit at the Berlin party convention in December 1999 when he was re-elected vice-president of the SPD with only 73.4 per cent (against 92.3 per cent two years ago). The main reason for this unexpected and disappointing result was – apart from the revenge of the pacifists because of his Kosovo policy – the anger he had provoked in the right wing by giving the impression to be a sort of reserve chancellor. Nevertheless it was no question that Scharping became executive head of the SPD commission on the new party program and chief of the international commission.¹⁵ Thus he gained two important tasks which can be used to influence the orientation of the SPD in general and its security policy in particular.

The Out of Area Issue : Towards moral engagement with military means?

The decision to approve NATO's air war against Yugoslavia with the full participation of the Bundeswehr was one of the biggest challenges a German government had to take since the very existence of the FRG. It is not without irony that it was a red and green coalition which was right after the election victory confronted with a worsening situation in Kosovo that demanded a tough decision: to wage war without a mandate from UN Security Council. The whole question of a German participation in so called "out-of-area" or, to use the NATO jargon, "peace support operations" (PSO) has been settled legally only four years before, when the German Constitutional Court issued a ruling declaring constitutional the participation of Germany in all kinds of PSO, including peace enforcement, subject to the consent of a majority of the Bundestag. Ten days later, on 20 July 1994 the latter gave *ex post facto* approval to the participation of the Bundeswehr in the UN mandated NATO and WEU missions in the former Yugoslavia.

To get there, the FRG had to go through a heated out-of-area debate which was fought mainly with superficial political and judicial arguments.¹⁶ Before 1989 this question was not relevant for at least four reasons: the international structure, the division of the country, the historical legacy and the official interpretation of the constitution. Thus the Federal Security Council affirmed in 1982 that the

¹² See Der Spiegel, No. 43, 1998, p.24.

¹³ See Süddeutsche Zeitung, 17/18 April 1999; 24/25 July 1999 and 21/22 August 1999.

¹⁴ See Süddeutsche Zeitung, 13/14 March 1999.

¹⁵ See Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 9 December 1999, p. 3.

¹⁶ For further information see Hans-Georg Ehrhart, Germany, in: Trevor Findlay (Ed.), Challenges for the New Peacekeepers, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 32-51 (SIPRI Research Report; No. 12).

constitution forbids out of area-use of German armed forces.¹⁷ During the second Persian Gulf War (1990-91) Germany supported the international coalition against Iraq with considerable assistance, but without military personnel in the war zone. The controversy started at these times and was dominated by differences between the governing parties (CDU/CSU and FDP) on the one hand and the SPD on the other, not at least because the votes of the largest opposition party were needed for an amendment to the constitution, for which a two-thirds majority is necessary.

The dispute was further complicated by the fact that the government was creating a *fait accompli* before political agreement had been achieved by declaring all the missions it approved humanitarian, since all major parties had agreed that such missions were covered by the constitution. Since what was disputed was the dividing line between humanitarian and non-humanitarian missions, the opposition suspected the government of using false labeling tactics for the purpose of getting the public accustomed to out-of-area missions. On the other hand, the government could not simply ignore constitutional reservations, since the FDP, which was part of the coalition and provided the government with its foreign minister, considered an amendment to the constitution to be necessary. While the coalition parties advocated involvement of German armed forces in PSO also without UN mandate, the SPD had great difficulties to find a common standpoint. As to the other parties in the Bundestag, Alliance 90/The Greens and the former communist Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) all rejected the idea of combat missions under UN flag.

In the summer of 1992 the SPD had already introduced a bill proposing an amendment to the constitution with the objective of ensuring German involvement in UN peacekeeping activities. Enforcement missions were not permitted under this bill.¹⁸ At these times Scharping did not play a main role being in the same camp as Schröder, Lafontaine and others. These "young wilds" fought against the old guard of social-democrats who favored German participation in UN peace enforcement missions. At a special party conference held in Bonn months later it was decided, in the light of the experiences in the former Yugoslavia, that German involvement in peacekeeping operations could include the armed protection of relief convoys and protection zones, provided their defensive, de-escalatory and humanitarian aspects were respected.¹⁹ When the government decided to make available an armed forces contingent for the UNOSOM II in Somalia in April 1993, the candidate for the party consultation Scharping did not object to this mission provided it has a solid political fundament.²⁰ After being elected, the new party leader's position seemed to harden when he objected at a special party conference the Somalia mission because of the danger of getting involved in military fighting and because the SPD parliamentary group could not approve a mission, against which it had sued.²¹ Furthermore he expressed against a Bundeswehr mission in the former Yugoslavia for historic reasons.²²

¹⁷ The Federal Security Council is a special cabinet committee responsible for security matters, comprising the Chancellor and the Ministers of Defense, Justice, Foreign Affairs, the Interior, the Economy, Finance and - since 1999 - Economic Cooperation and Development.

¹⁸ Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 12/2895, 23 June 1992.

¹⁹ Minutes of the Special Party Conference, Bonn, 16/17 November 1992, p. 413.

²⁰ See Der Spiegel, No. 23, 1993, p. 41.

²¹ The SPD sued against the participation of German soldiers in AWACS flights over Bosnia and in the UNOSOM II mission. In the first case the Court refused to order a withdrawal and in the second one it decided that a prior approval of a majority of the parliament is necessary. These rulings were in force until the Court's final decision on the constitutional issue in July 1994.

²² See SPD, Protokoll vom Außerordentlichen Parteitag in Essen, 25 June 1993, pp. 92f.

However, shortly after he started lobbying in favor of the Bundeswehr's participation in UN peace enforcement missions provided it is approved by a two thirds majority of the Bundestag. He became distant to the parliamentary group by saying: "It was you who have sued!"²³ Referring to the Somalia mission in this case it was obvious that for him the difference between peace keeping and peace enforcement missions was marginal if not merely theoretical at all. He was supported by the head of the parliamentary group, Ulrich Klose, and by the party whip and a foreign policy expert Günter Verheugen. Facing the next federal election in October 1994, they not only tried to readjust the approach of the SPD to international security questions but also to problems of asylum and organized crime. The party should become modern and realistic, above all it should give up its nay-sayer-image in order to become able to govern. As to the out-of-area question Scharping argued before the parliamentary group in the same way as the Kohl government did by emphasizing that the SPD would not be able to refrain from international obligations permanently, especially if Germany was to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Finally, he could not keep up his position against Lafontaine agreeing to a compromise formula that allowed the use of force only in self-defense and in the restrictive and de-escalatory protection of a peacekeeping or humanitarian UN mission.²⁴

This formula was kept valid for the election year of 1994. The election party conference in June 1994 even stated more precisely that there will be no participation of the Bundeswehr in wars such as the Gulf War "regardless if it takes place under the auspices of the UN, the NATO or the WEU."²⁵ In the debate at the end of the year on a possible greater German military contribution in Bosnia-Herzegovina the party leader, stressing the primacy of UNPROFOR's humanitarian mission, claimed that there was no need for such a decision, thus using the same delaying tactics as Chancellor Kohl. A letter from Scharping to members of the parliamentary group of the SPD in which he stressed that the participation of the Bundeswehr in the event of UN withdrawal from Bosnia-Herzegovina was an alliance obligation provoked a harsh negative reaction from the SPD's left wing.²⁶ Six months later, Scharping issued a statement in the name of the SPD executive board stressing the need to strengthen the security of UNPROFOR by a multilateral force and approving logistical support by the Bundeswehr "only for a clear UN peacekeeping mission under UN command" while objecting to any mission by German ground forces and combat aircraft.²⁷ Nevertheless, at least 40 members of the parliamentary group voted in favor of the government decision to support the French-British-Dutch rapid reaction force with the dispatch of ECR Tornados.²⁸ Thus, the parliament brushed away a half-century-old taboo against sending German combat troops abroad.

In autumn, Scharping and Verheugen succeeded the SPD towards accepting the sending of German combat troops in the Balkans. Naturally, the approval was restricted to a limited protection mission, but in doing so the SPD went along with the ruling coalition. In his intervention before the Bundestag Scharping underlined the nature of the mission which was not war but protection and peace. He made also clear that the SPD has changed its position by coming to the conviction that the military protection and the imposition of the Dayton peace accord is necessary and justified. Scharping emphasized that humanitarian aid is not enough to stop aggression and genocide, but that a decisive

²³ See Der Spiegel, No. 27, 1993, p. 22.

²⁴ See SPD, Protokoll vom Parteitag in Wiesbaden, 16-19 November 1993, pp. 991f.

²⁵ SPD, Protokoll vom Wahlparteitag in Halle, 22 June 1994, p. 203.

²⁶ See Der Spiegel, No. 1, 1995, pp. 21f. and No. 2, 1995, p. 16.

²⁷ Presseservice der SPD, Mitteilung an die Presse, 276/95, 12 June 1995.

²⁸ See International Herald Tribune, 1-2 July 1995, p. 1.

engagement by the civilized world is needed. Another main argument was the broad international participation. Of course he qualified this change by stating that the SPD will examine carefully each case and that conflict prevention and conflict resolution will keep priority in social-democratic foreign policy.²⁹

Afterwards Scharping continued the consensus-oriented opposition course in security related matters. Again he pressed ahead when he approved the dislocation of German soldiers in Bosnia-Herzegovina proper, violating a decision of the presidency from 3 September 1996. But now it was obvious for the whole leadership that the Bundeswehr was running a peacekeeping job and no combat mission in the Balkans and that military protection was indispensable.³⁰ Heading the party commission for foreign, security and development policy the floor leader specified the new SPD approach for the next party conference of Hannover at the end of 1997 by defining criteria for German participation in UN military peace missions: a clear and coherent mandate, all non-military means must have been used before, the peacekeeping character of the mission must be beyond any doubt, the political obstacles for Germany are to be evaluated as well as the risks for the soldiers and the realistic possibilities of such an endeavor including a timely limitation.³¹ In his address to the party conference he stressed the necessity of a comprehensive security approach "on our common earth" oriented towards new security threats such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, hatred and intolerance as well as hunger, natural disasters and struggle for scarce resources. As to Bosnia-Herzegovina he called it a big mistake that the international community concentrated so much on military side of the peace process and did too little for its civilian aspects.³²

When he took over the Ministry of Defense he pledged to guard the consensus that had evolved recently in German foreign policy affairs in general and the out-of-area issue in particular. Already in October, on the occasion of the last session of the old Bundestag who dealt with the German participation in NATO air operations, he explained the leitmotiv of his approach in the Balkans, i.e. the safeguarding of human rights. In this respect, two things were deemed to be necessary in the Kosovo case: Firstly, putting constantly military pressure on the Milosevic regime because this was a language he understood. Therefore, if there was any chance for a political solution, the military pressure had to be maintained. Secondly, he contradicted strongly the argument, that because of the difficult and questionable fundament in international law nothing could be done and if, a dangerous precedence would have been created. Scharping argued the other way round, maintaining that it would be a wrong signal for future emerging ethnic conflicts if the international community did nothing. If the instruments of a UN that lay claim to the universal validity of human rights do not allow to deal with a imminent humanitarian catastrophe, then the real question for him is how it could be enabled to deal with the completely changed nature of conflicts.³³

After the inaugural speech of Chancellor Schröder the Defense Minister emphasized the comprehensive security approach as a goal of the security policy of the German government, mentioning three aspects: early warning, conflict prevention and promotion of democracy, civil society as well as human rights. He also stressed the civilian side of the Bundeswehr's engagement in

²⁹ See Deutscher Bundestag, 13. Wahlperiode, 76. Sitzung, 6 December 1995, pp.6634f.

³⁰ See Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 23 September 1996, p. 1.

³¹ Rudolf Scharping, Sozialdemokratische Außenpolitik in einer multilateralen Welt, http://www.spd.de/archiv/events/dortmund_97/scharping.html, p. 3. Chancellor Schröder argues in the similar way. See Schröder, *Politique étrangère: y a-t-il une "troisième voie"?*, op. cit., p. 17.

³² http://www.spd.de/archiv/events/hannover_97/scharping_r.html, pp.4f.

³³ See Das Parlament, No. 45, 30 October 1998, p. 20.

the Balkans not at least in order to strengthen the public acceptance.³⁴ Three days later he confirmed in the debate about the NATO extraction force that these force has absolutely nothing to do with military intervention.³⁵ Still at the end of February 1999 when he applied for the authorization of the Bundestag to the German participation in the military implementation of a peace agreement he seemed to hope that the Rambouillet agreement would be signed. At any rate, one of his main arguments was that the German soldiers are to be brought into action only after the FRY's approval. The other argument for a positive decision of the Bundestag even before the signing of the Rambouillet agreement - typical for German understanding of national security - was that Germany would have been isolated in the alliance if its military contribution would have been reserved and that it could not bear this risk.³⁶

In the evening before the start of the NATO air campaign Scharping was asked by a journalist if he is aware of being the first social-democratic defense minister of Germany who is going to order the use of weapons. After a long pause he answered briefly "yes". After another long pause he added: "It is strange which considerations and comparisons are arising these days", remembering probably that there were only four social-democratic defense ministers in German history: Schmidt, Leber and Apel between 1992 and 1982 and Noske, called the "bloodhound", because he ordered to open fire against revolutionary insurgents in the early days of the Weimar Republic. The long pauses, the quiet tone and the awkward manner expressed his uneasiness to do something that he felt to be his obligation. Pointing to the considerable risks for the soldiers he continued: "But there is no alternative. Be it you accept to meeting your own history and new mountains of corpses coming into being. Against this background it is an extraordinary serious situation for me. But we have no other choice unless violate our own ideals and values."³⁷

Thus, Scharping became indeed the first social-democratic defense minister who ordered the use of force. During the 78 day war he did all he could to justify this enforcement action. Within the party, not only considerable parts of the left wing had to be convinced, but also conservative social-democrats as well as couple of leader of the lands. But at last, Scharping helped the Chancellor to convince his party which elected Schröder as its chairman - though with the disappointing result of 76 percent - and passed a resolution backing the official line while explicitly rejecting the possibility of German soldiers participating in any possible troop deployment in the FRY.³⁸ The defense minister claims to have started the fundamental change in the SPD's out-of-area approach in 1993 and solidified its baselines in 1999. Very early and often he spoke in these days of genocide, concentration camps, massacres, nightmarish conditions and so on, using a harsh terminology that was not only supposed to remind Germans of their own bloody history in this century and the resulting lessons, but expressed his mental state and his deep conviction.³⁹ At the beginning of their

³⁴ See Das Parlament, No. 48, 20 November 1998, p. 10.

³⁵ See Das Parlament, No. 50, 4 December 1998, p. 4.

³⁶ See Das Parlament, No. 10, 5 March 1999, p. 13.

³⁷ Cited in Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 25 March 1999, p. 3.

³⁸ See International Herald Tribune, 13 April 1999.

³⁹ In a book published during the election campaign of 1994 he argued vehemently against the theses of the German right, that Germany being a normal state can leave behind it the shadow of history. For Scharping being normal is not a question of guilt but of responsibility which derives from "our values and our interests, from our geographic position and our historical experiences. If people have to pack their bags in order to escape war and suppression, poverty and ethnic cleansing, that concerns our values and our own situation as well as our historic memories." Rudolf Scharping, Was jetzt zu tun ist, München: Piper, 1994, p. 199. See also his article "Der Stein auf unserer Seele. Deutschland und der gerechte Krieg – Eine Antwort auf György Konrad, in: Frank Schirrmacher

career, the leitmotiv of all "grandsons" of Willy Brand was "No more war!". In the past, they fought against armament projects and NATO's dual-track decision. Now, two of them underwent a learning process, that is not without irony: While the moral engagement survived, the means to do foreign policy became "militarized" in a way.

European or Atlanticist?

This could be a very brief chapter if I would confine myself to remarking that it is a main element of the German *raison d'état* to prevent a situation in which you have to choose between France and the US. This was true in the old days of the East-West-conflict and so it is today. Even the Gaullist aspirations of some leading politicians at the beginning of the sixties were only a short and tactically motivated intermezzo. To become eligible for this job, German defense ministers have to have a certain image: They must be pragmatic, political moderate and strong supporters of the alliance. However, as politicians have learnt to play a role in order to maintain their hold on the political market, the real question is where are they coming from and what are their convictions or long-term orientations, provided there are any at all.

As to Scharping, he certainly does not differ significantly from his predecessors as defense minister. But he had to go an extra mile to become the ardent proponent of NATO that he is today. However, what does that mean if one is also an ardent proponent of EU? If one put it in terms of a political science Scharping can be called an "institutionalist". For realists the national interest and the freedom of maneuver comes first, institutionalists primarily seek security within international organizations. While the former prefer solo runs with the risk to enter a confrontational course, the latter think more in terms of cooperative security. Scharping is a institutionalist for at least two reasons: One the one hand he is convinced that the global problems mankind is facing can only be solved by multilateral cooperation. Even the EU framework is not sufficient for that, and therefore it has to be complemented with a transatlantic partnership. On the other hand he detests nationalism and any kind of German inclination for a "Sonderweg" or explicit national foreign policy à la Rapallo, as it is discussed sometimes especially in the right political spectrum. For him it is an important function of both NATO and EU to prevent security policy from becoming again a purely national affair.⁴⁰ Of course he has German history in mind when he writes that integration in the West is more than the sense of belonging to a sphere of same economic systems and shared foreign policy interests. "It was and is the decision for a European and civilization idea of freedom and dignity of man and his social and cultural responsibility".⁴¹

At the beginning of the nineties the SPD was strongly oriented to the goal of reforming the CSCE in a system of collective security. The concept of collective security, which should not be confused with collective defense, has a long tradition within the SPD and was seen as the long-term goal for all-European security already in the fifties. With the end of the east-west-conflict, the demise of the Warsaw Pact and the unification of Germany for the first time in the FRG's history the build-up of such a system taking the place of the foregone block system seemed realistic. Accordingly, the social-democratic party conventions until 1993 confirmed this goal and opposed the WEU's

(Hrsg.), *Der westliche Kreuzzug. 41 Positionen zum Kosovo-Krieg*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags Anstalt; 1999, pp. 129 – 136.

⁴⁰ See Rudolf Scharping, *Was jetzt zu tun ist*, op. cit., pp. 203-205.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 197.

Petersberg declaration and the NATO Rapid Reaction Forces as well as blueprints for a Franco-German corps. This was also true under Scharping's party chairmanship in 1993. However, while not at all mentioned in the 1992 protocol, a year later NATO was admitted the role of playing an important stabilizing role in the transitional process towards an all-European security system.⁴² Concerning the EU, the SPD (and Scharping himself) was a proponent of a civil Europe, that is "guaranteeing peace by economic interdependence and political cooperation and not by armed forces".⁴³ Social-democratic peace policy meant comprehensive, non-military prevention and resolution of conflicts.

In 1994 he tried to readjust the programmatic orientation of the SPD in a more realistic sense while making allowances to the general mood of the party towards collective security which remained the long-term goal. The SPD wanted to strengthen the CSCE institutionally and financially in order to enable it to better assume its role as regional organization under Chapter 8 UN Charter and pleaded for the interweaving of existing security organizations and systems such as NATO, NATO Cooperation Council, WEU and CSCE. There was no talking any more about transforming the CSCE in a collective security system.⁴⁴ Later on, while conceding the OSCE a key role for peace and stability in Europe, Scharping confirmed that it was not the only vehicle for this purpose.

The UN played a prominent role in his thinking. The catchword was and is "Weltinnenpolitik" (global governance). So, the SPD pleaded at the party convention of Wiesbaden for a European satellite system, mine clearing capacities and medical service to be put at the UN's disposal. Scharping himself supported the proposals of UN Secretary General Butros Butros Ghali's "Agenda for Peace", which included elaboration of a stand-by-arrangements system. For him it was obvious, that the UN do neither have the legal nor the financial nor the military means to cope with the present conflicts. Consequently, for him and the SPD strengthening and reforming the UN was supposed to be a main focus of social-democratic foreign and security policy following the motto "from the right of the strongest to the rule of international law". He expressed his support for a permanent German seat in the UN Security Council hoping that one day it would be a EU seat and transposed the vision of a collective security system on the UN level.⁴⁵

In the coalition treaty from October 1998 SPD and Greens have agreed inter alia to strengthen the UN, to guard its monopoly on the use of force and to offer stand-by-forces for peacekeeping measures. As to the second point, the contrary became true, but concerning the stand-by-arrangement system, Scharping corrected the policy of his predecessor by promising a German military contribution to the stand-by-forces, which is seen as a signal "to strengthen the role and importance of the UN very concretely",⁴⁶ though the implementation is a long time in coming given the financial shortfalls the Bundeswehr is facing.⁴⁷

The EU and the transatlantic relations are more prominent in today's security thinking of Scharping. For him the strengthening of EU and NATO is in the national interest of Germany. It is the old tune

⁴² See SPD, Protokoll vom Parteitag in Wiesbaden, 16 – 19 November 1993, p. 987-989.

⁴³ *ibid.* p. 986.

⁴⁴ See SPD, Wahlparteitag von Halle, 22 June 1994, p. 203.

⁴⁵ Rudolf Scharping, Was jetzt zu tun ist, *op. cit.*, p. 201f.

⁴⁶ Rudolf Scharping, Europa und Amerika – gemeinsam auf dem Weg in das 21. Jahrhundert, in: Europäische Sicherheit, No. 7, 1999, p. 8.

⁴⁷ See Thorsten Stodieck, Der deutsche Beitrag zu den "Standby Forces" der Vereinten Nationen, Hamburger Beiträge zur Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik, No. 113, March 1999, pp. 31f.

of an integrated Germany preventing his nightmare of a re-nationalized German foreign policy that is a crucial factor behind this kind of reasoning. On the one hand, it is obvious that the united Germany will play a European key role due to its population, economic strength and geographical position – ”regardless if we want that or not”.⁴⁸ On the other hand, the fate of the country is influenced decisively by the political and economic development of a Europe that cannot be not confined to the EU but that is including stable and unstable zones, regions of poverty and regions of wealth but also of war and peace. Already from that follows that it is in the very German interest of stability to further the process reform in Central and Eastern Europe. But, typically for Scharping, there are two other reasons for an extraordinary engagement: humanity and international solidarity.

For Scharping it goes without saying that Germany cannot and should not assume this stabilizing task alone. First, it has to be a European and transatlantic project including Japan. Second, coordinating the stabilizing efforts with these partners prevents the misunderstanding of a Germany striving for supremacy. Last but not least France fearing German domination and the Franco-German relations are crucial. That is why Scharping pleaded in 1994 in favor of a common active Ostpolitik. However, building Europe is more than that – its core is the social and democratic substance - and impossible without a functioning Franco-German motor. Scharping complained about the decline of the bilateral relations in the last years of the Kohl government and supported Jospin’s proposal for a new Elysée Treaty.⁴⁹ Accordingly, the new German government attended a paragraph to this relationship in the coalition treaty promising that it will give new impulses to it.⁵⁰

Expansion of EU and of NATO are for Scharping two sides of the same coin. Basically, there were three schools of thought in the SPD: One small group favored the status quo and was against any new legitimization of NATO by its expansion, thus meeting the position of conservative NATO officials who wanted the Alliance to remain a exclusive club. Another group pleaded for a comprehensive approach including Russia therefore being confronted with the reproach of deliberately undermining the cohesion of NATO. Scharping, as Günter Verheugen and Karsten Voigt, was part of the dominant group who consisted of proponents of a careful, risk minimizing expansion - they call it ”opening” - of the Alliance. However, neither he nor the others of this school of thought were and are able to cope with the dilemma of defining the red line of this process and of explaining how the strategic parallelism between EU and NATO widening can be guarded. The opening of NATO for new members is not seen as a single step but as one whom others might follow without nurturing unrealistic expectations. However, what does this mean in the light of his argument according to which the alliance must be open for countries which share the political values of the transatlantic alliance? His realistic assessment for the foreseeable future is that the primary task is to consolidate the first wave of new members leaving the alliance in the somewhat uncomfortable position of having integrated exactly those three countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary) that are not threatened at all while keeping others, which were either of geostrategic importance (e.g. Rumania) or hosting NATO troops (e.g. Macedonia or Albania) at arms length.

For Scharping, NATO is *the* indispensable security organization. It is the stability anchor for European security and guarantor of the undisputed US engagement in Europe. Moreover, it is, as the recent violent conflicts in the Balkans have proven, becoming more and more the ”core and

⁴⁸ Rudolf Scharping, Was jetzt zu tun ist, op. cit., p. 211.

⁴⁹ See Rudolf Scharping, Sozialdemokratische Außenpolitik in einer multilateralen Welt, op.cit., p. 2.

⁵⁰ See Hans-Georg Ehrhart, Kontinuität oder Erneuerung? Paris und Bonn/Berlin nach dem Machtwechsel, in: Internationale Politik, No. 4, 1999, pp. 47 – 54.

motor of the new European peace order” and the ”central forum for the common security interests of the alliance partners”.⁵¹ The simple reason for this is that there is no other organization ”that has at its disposal for the foreseeable future the efficient mechanisms of political consultation and for the diplomatic as well as for the military accomplishment to cope with such crises only about this successfully”.⁵² NATO has to meet the challenge of new tasks that are integration of new members, cooperation with new partners, crisis prevention and crisis management, and these tasks more and more necessitate out-of-area activities. Although an ardent proponent of the new NATO he sometimes criticizes the US for certain tendencies of complacency and the strive for dominance, but at the same time he makes clear that one cannot reproach the US seriously that they follow their national interest. The right conclusion for the Europeans should be to stop their whining self-pity and to concentrate on their own abilities, in order to reach equality in the emerging bilateral relation between Europe and Northern America. But this presupposes that Europeans do overcome their national egoism and their small-minded provincialism and instead ”exchange the seemingly disadvantages of a renunciation of national sovereignty against the indisputable advantages of a global player with the power to act – and that the European Union must become”.⁵³

Following Scharping, Europe ”cannot restrict its interests regionally”. That is why the EU governments must develop the common vision of the EU ”as a global lead nation”, able to meet the global challenges together with the US.⁵⁴ From that does not follow that NATO should be an instrument for global military intervention. On the contrary: As the military aspect of security is diminishing after the end of the cold war, economic aspects are becoming decisive. Therefore the EU has to combine its economic potential with political creative power. As to NATO, its area of activity is in and around Europe. While emphasizing that NATO is no global alliance and that Article 4 missions should not gain priority over its defense mission because this would damage its cohesion and its efficiency, Scharping is on his guard against any clarification of NATO’s out-of-area responsibility.

Not only the Kosovo crisis has proven to the defense minister that the build-up of a European security and defense identity (ESDI) is of utmost importance. The overall goal is to reach equality and a future oriented task-sharing with Washington. In this balanced transatlantic partnership Europe has to assume more responsibilities. That presupposes that the EU becomes more able to act in foreign and security affairs. But what does that mean concretely? Scharping underlines three main points: First there has to be a common political will to act decisively. The EU must learn to speak with one voice in order to look after its interests more effectively. The experience of Bosnia-Herzegovina that in his perception was a shame for Europe, can under no circumstances be permitted to be repeated. On the one hand, he warns to be too optimistic bearing in mind that a lot of hurdles still have to be taken and that parochial national interests are overwhelming European ones again and again. On the other hand, he is asking for swift progress, hoping that the momentum built by the Franco-British initiative of St. Malo will push the EU towards a common security and defense policy.

⁵¹ Rudolf Scharping, *Frieden und Stabilität in Europa – Europas Herausforderungen und Deutschlands Beitrag*, Rede beim ”Forum der Chefredakteure zur Sicherheitspolitik” am 26. Januar 1999, in: *Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung*, Bulletin, No. 6, 1999, pp. 62 and 63.

⁵² Rudolf Scharping, *Europa und Amerika – gemeinsam auf dem Weg in das 21. Jahrhundert*, op. cit., p. 7.

⁵³ Rudolf Scharping, *Sozialdemokratische Außenpolitik in einer multilateralen Welt*, op. cit., p. 3.

⁵⁴ *Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung*, *Stichworte zur Sicherheitspolitik*, No. 2, 1999, p. 24.

The second aspect relates to the institutional conditions. For Scharping it is obvious that the European process of integration remains uncompleted without a common European defense policy. To this end he hails the innovations of the Amsterdam Treaty, namely the integration of the "Petersberg tasks" in the Treaty, the new competence of the European Council to issue guidelines for the WEU, and the nomination of Mr. Solana as Mr. CFSP who is supposed to become also WEU Secretary General in the year of 2000. The political and military decision making structures of the WEU are to be merged with the EU combining the political institutions such as the Council of Ministers or the Permanent Council with the related counterparts as well as putting the military institutions under the control of the EU's High Representative. Until the end of next year, the General Affairs Council is supposed to hold ordinary meetings with the defense ministers, a security-political committee is to be created as well as a EU military council and a military staff. Problems such as the integration of the more binding article 5 clause of the WEU-Treaty, the differing memberships of EU countries or the role of European NATO countries are deemed to be solvable.⁵⁵ As to the decision making, the defense minister (as his party) is a proponent of majority voting in the framework of CFSP. In the Amsterdam Treaty, the enhanced cooperation clause has been a step in this direction, but it is not valid for defense matters. Thus, the reform package is not diminishing.

The third aspect relates to the military means. In this respect he mentions primarily a European strategic reconnaissance and strategic transport capacity. As to the former, already his predecessor was forced to withdraw from the 1995 agreement of building a spy satellite system (Helios 1a, Horus) for budgetary reasons, provoking some anger in Paris. How Scharping will get what he deems necessary with a shrinking budget remains to be seen. As to the latter, several systems are competing to start with the Russian-Ukrainian-German Antonov 70, and the European Military Airbus Company project A400M to the US solutions Hercules J and C17. While France is said to be interested in the purchase of US transport aircraft and Germany is having its eye on the Antonov, no decision has been made in Berlin until now.⁵⁶ Scharping is hoping that the Europeans are going to build a common transport aircraft – that would favor the military airbus solution - and is pleading for a European air transport command.⁵⁷ Regardless the final procurement decision, the idea of a European military transport capacity pool remains logical if the Europeans want to enhance their military mobility for crisis reaction.

Other capabilities that have priority are sophisticated command and control systems as well as rapid reaction forces. In the first case France and Germany are going ahead with the development of a satellite communication system after Great Britain has left the TRIMILSATCOM project in favor of a national solution. As to the last mentioned point, two important decisions have been taken: First, the Franco-German Security and Defense Council declared in 29 May 1999 to form the Eurocorps in an European Rapid Reaction Corps beginning with the build-up of a mobile headquarters.⁵⁸ Second, facing the future tasks in the Balkans Scharping has ordered to augment the strength of the German crisis reaction forces from presently 50.000 to 63.000.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ See Rudolf Scharping, *Europas Stimme in der Allianz*, in: *Die Zeit*, No. 8, 18 February 1999, pp. 8f.; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6 July 1999, p. 4.

⁵⁶ See *Behörden-Spiegel*, June 1999, p. B XVIII.

⁵⁷ See Interview with Rudolf Scharping in *Rheinischer Merkur*, 2 July 1999, p. 6.

⁵⁸ See *Deutsch-Französischer Sicherheits- und Verteidigungsrat*, Erklärung von Toulouse, 29 May 1999.

⁵⁹ The increase of 13.000 is for the benefit of the army, which is lacking staff especially for medical service, logistics, signals corps and reconnaissance. To enable this step it is necessary to fall back upon the Main Defense Forces and to substitute job performing drafties by volunteers or professionals. See *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1 July 1999, p. 5.

Two topics have yet to be touched upon: armament and disarmament. Starting with the former one has to see that Scharping is strongly in favor of a better coordination of the European planning and procurement of arms as well as of an enhanced cooperation of European arms industries. The promise to strengthen the bilateral cooperation with France especially regarding the planning of the common development of arms in order to harmonize the operational necessities is, however, nothing new bearing in mind the Franco-German Security and Defense Concept of December 1996.⁶⁰ Even if one cannot exclude that Scharping is more eager to implement the provisions of the Concept than Volker Rühle was, the defense budget is under severe constraints so that the cancellation of multilateral programs based only on Memoranda of Understanding - two candidates are the last lot of the Eurofighter (version fighter-bomber) and the Multi-Role Armored Vehicle - is probable. As far as cooperation in arms production is concerned, the German industry does not wait until the politicians have found an agreement, neither seem the French. Consequently, on the one hand, a trend of more transatlantic cooperation is becoming apparent.⁶¹ On the other hand, the "big three" of the EU are still too inclined to national options, not at least to support their industry.⁶² Although the Franco-German agreement on the creation of a European Aeronautic, Defense and Space Company (EADS) in October 1999 has been a great leap towards the restructuring of the European defense industry, a more European approach is doomed to fail because of both the clinging to the national interest and the expectation of better synergies with US partners.

As to questions of arms export, the German government is a strong proponent of the EU's code of conduct of 8 June 1998, especially concerning the human rights dimension. This aspect will be integrated in the "Political principles of the Federal Government concerning the export of weapons and other armament material" from 1982 that is currently under revision. Since Scharping is defense minister, he has said much on that topic, what can be interpreted as an expression of a changed position. In the past, he argued against any arms exports beyond the boundaries of the alliance and pleaded even for a corresponding change of the constitution.⁶³ He criticized the export policy of permanent members of the UNSC⁶⁴ and was responsible in his capacity as chairman of the SPD motion commission on foreign, security and development policy for the party convention of Hannover for a critical approach towards the export of arms.⁶⁵

He has also become more reluctant to criticize nuclear weapons. In the past, he was part of the German mainstream arguing in favor of a denuclearised world, the withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons from German soil, the inclusion of France and Great Britain in nuclear disarmament talks and a no-first-use declaration of the atomic weapon states. While the second and the third goal has been skipped the first and fourth goal are still valid. In the no-first-use question Scharping had to retreat from his opposition against Foreign Minister Fischer's corresponding initiative after

⁶⁰ See Hans-Georg Ehrhart, Von der GASP zur GEVP? Das deutsch-französische Sicherheits- und Verteidigungskonzept, in: Dokumente, No. 2, April 1997, pp. 102 – 107.

⁶¹ See for example concerning the transatlantic alliances between DASA and Lockheed Martin, Aerospatiale Matra and Lockheed Martin and between Thomson-CSF and Raytheon Le Monde, 28 February 1999, p. 3, 18 June 1999, p. 24 and 24 July 1999, p. 18.

⁶² One example is the military satellite communication, the other is the radar reconnaissance satellite. See for the former Defense News, 14-20 September 1998, p. 44 and for the latter Defense News, 16-22 November 1998, pp. 4 and 36.

⁶³ See Bild am Sonntag, 5 September 1993.

⁶⁴ See Rudolf Scharping, Was jetzt zu tun ist, op. cit., pp. 209f.

⁶⁵ See SPD, Leitantrag zur Außen-, Sicherheits- und Entwicklungspolitik, 3 December 1997, p. 8, http://www.spd.de/archiv/events/hannover_97/aussen_1.html

Chancellor Schröder supported Fischer by declaring his initiative as legitimate and as backed by the whole government.⁶⁶ Scharping's arguments were fourfold: the alliance must preserve its deterrence capability, no global and controllable agreement on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction exists, it is against the interest of NATO's nuclear weapon states and of the new members of NATO. And two other aspects played a role: The defense minister feared an isolation in the alliance and he expressed tactical objections against the debate at a time, when problems of crisis management capabilities are more relevant.⁶⁷ It can be assumed that Scharping's stance in this case together with his behavior during the Yugoslav war made him eligible for being knighted by the main allies by the offer of becoming NATO Secretary General.

Administrator or reformer?

The German armed forces are undergoing a complicated process of restructuring. Since unification Germany has had to tackle three structural problems in relation to the Bundeswehr: the merging of two armies, the implementation of the NATO force structure guidelines following the promulgation in 1991 of the alliance's new strategic concept and preparations for out-of-area missions. Correspondingly, the structure of the Bundeswehr has been adapted and is now consisting of three branches: crisis reaction forces, which are rapidly available, main defense forces, which are largely dependent upon mobilization, and a basic military organization, which form the basis of the armed forces. Since the promulgation of the Defense Planning Guidelines for the Bundeswehr of 1992 and the Defense White Book of 1994, German armed forces have, in addition to their traditional mission of national defense in the framework of the alliance, to perform an extended defense mission such as humanitarian assistance and peace support operations. These are new tasks, for which the Bundeswehr was neither trained nor equipped. They require multinational, readily available, highly mobile and flexible components available for deployment in both the whole of the NATO area and beyond. Equipment has to be adapted and improved and priority given to logistics, command, control and communication capacities, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities as well as strategic transport facilities.

Given that each year in the 1990s Germany has to transfer 150 billion DM to the eastern part of the country and the constantly shrinking defense budget, the process of restructuring the Bundeswehr went on very sluggishly. While the air force and the navy had the military capacity to participate in peace support operations, the ground forces' light brigades were only able to be used in traditional peacekeeping. Even such engagements turned out to be problematic. For example in the case of Somalia, the German battalion had to be formed using soldiers detached from more than 380 offices and units. Already at that time, the Bundeswehr was facing an identity crisis due to a lack of political and strategic clarity. There were discussions about how far the Bundeswehr has to be reduced and rumors suggesting targets from 325.000 to 200.000. In his 1994 report to the Bundestag, the parliamentary commissioner for armed forces criticized the negative effects of volatile and unsteady plans on the self-confidence and motivation of the soldiers.⁶⁸ In April 1994 Defense Minister Rühle made public the main conceptual guidelines of his budget cuts which necessitated a reduction of the

⁶⁶ See *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 6/7 February 1999, p.7.

⁶⁷ See *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 25 November 1998,

⁶⁸ See *Deutscher Bundestag*, Drucksache 12/6950, 8 March 1994.

armed forces to 340.000 and a further reduction of the period of conscription from 12 to 10 months.⁶⁹

The SPD favored at that time a Bundeswehr of 300.000 men, to be reached within a three years period. While confirming its attachment to a conscription army, the party convention of Wiesbaden pondered over the alternatives of a volunteer army or a mixed system with a militia component. It stated that if the security environment will continue to improve further reductions could be possible and that conscription must be questioned if the overall strength be reduced by one third.⁷⁰ These were compromise formula which show that there are proponents and opponents in the SPD concerning the conscription issue. Four years later, the SPD criticized the government because of its unreliable financial policy and wrong planning causing the Bundeswehr's critical state. A resolution edited by Scharping called for a further reduction of the Bundeswehr in the light of yet unexplored possibilities for disarmament. Conscription should be maintained as long as it can be reasonably justified and a parliamentary commission for the reform of the armed forces should be installed. Finally, the SPD asked for the creation of a parliamentary commission on the reform of the Bundeswehr.⁷¹

This endeavor became part of the coalition treaty of October 1998 which stated that this commission shall examine "on the basis of an actual threat analysis and an extended understanding of security mission, strength, defense model, formation and equipment of the armed forces and present options of a future structure of the Bundeswehr until the middle of the parliamentary term".⁷² While it is evident that the tasks and the structure of armed forces have to be adapted in relation to the changing security environment, it is contested which kind of reforms is necessary. The answer is depending inter alia on the evaluation of the security situation, the financial room of maneuver as well as bureaucratic and political interests.

With the creation of the reform commission – the official name is "Commission on Common Security and the Future of the Bundeswehr" - the German government ties to the experience made at the beginning of the 1970s, when the former coalition of Social-Democrats and Liberals under the leadership of Chancellor Willy Brandt already installed a reform commission with the task "to examine the development of the defense posture and to present options for the end of the seventies".⁷³ The reform commission, whose members are appointed by the defense minister, is a governmental commission and not a parliamentary one. In order to prevent conflicts of loyalty and to keep them out of daily politics, no active politicians and officers are part of it. Instead, the commission is comprising representatives of important organizations of German society as well as security experts. Following Scharping, their mission is "to evaluate the capabilities of the Bundeswehr openly and unconditionally, to develop options for the future and to make recommendations for

⁶⁹ The Conceptual Guidelines were published in BW-aktuell, 28 July 1994, 2 August 1994 and 4 August 1994.

⁷⁰ See SPD, Protokoll des Parteitag von Wiesbaden, op. cit., p.988.

⁷¹ See SPD, Leitantrag zur Außen-, Sicherheits- und Entwicklungspolitik, op. cit., p. 12. See also similar formulations in the SPD election program of 1998, p. 3,
<http://www.spd.de/archiv/events/pttleipzig/programm/12.htm>

⁷² Koalitionsvereinbarung zwischen SPD und Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 20 October 1998, p. 47. The commission has to present its final report until 15 September 2000.

⁷³ Wehrstruktur-Kommission der Bundesregierung (Ed.), Die Wehrstruktur in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Analyse und Optionen, Bonn 1972/73, p. 5.

change to the political leadership”.⁷⁴ The commission is absolutely free in choosing their fields of deliberations and their methodology while respecting three premises:

- ”Germany remains integrated in the North Atlantic Alliance. The Bundeswehr remains an alliance army and performs appropriate contributions to the spectrum of tasks of the Alliance. Its development must be in accordance with that of NATO.
- The foreign and security political capabilities of the European Union will be strengthened.
- Germany supports the United Nations and the OSCE and contributes to programs for partnership and cooperation”.⁷⁵

The Defense Minister aims at launching a broad dialogue within the German society in order to forging a consensus on the security of the country and the future role of the Bundeswehr. The report of the reform commission ”together with the evaluation of my ministry and after the discussion in the government, the parliament and the public will serve as the basis for my decision on the development of the Bundeswehr”.⁷⁶

The opposition has criticized the commission because it is seen to be unnecessary and damaging the armed forces. It also reproached the government for striving for a new structure for the Bundeswehr while the present one is not yet fully implemented. Furthermore, the opposition has raised doubts about the commission’s ability to act really independently and it is fearing additional reductions of the defense budget, reductions of the personnel as well as a growing uncertainty of the soldiers and their families. In addition, the concern has been expressed that the present social consensus on the Bundeswehr would be put at risks. Finally, there are objections against a public debate on specific military questions. The main reason for these kind of objections which is partially shared in the Bundeswehr and also in the SPD is the fear that the whole process might get out of control because of a possible growing public pressure for further reductions and, as a consequence, for the abolishment of conscription. This thinking relies on the one hand on a traditional fixation on the status quo that is nurtured on a quasi romantic understanding of civil-military relations in a democratic society⁷⁷, a somewhat dubious definition of national interest and an atavistic balance-of-power thinking.⁷⁸ On the other hand, they are specific vested interests involved. As long as the Bundeswehr is a conscription army, there will be no fundamental changes and as a consequence the MPs of the related constituencies can evade the highly tricky question of the shut-down of garrisons as well as the loss of jobs and purchasing power. Another aspect relates to the vested interests of the armed forces. The present structure preserves especially the army from hurting cuts in its officer’s corps and a lost of influence. In the defense industry a shifting of weight would take place to the detriment of the powerful ”Panzerlobby”.

At the beginning, Scharpings leitmotiv was *continuity*. He wanted to calm down the armed forces and he succeeded in building trust in his policy by sticking to conscription, by demanding that the financial status quo of his house will be preserved until the commission’s final report from the

⁷⁴ Cited in Information für die Truppe, No. 12, 1998, p. 8.

⁷⁵ See Auftrag der Kommission ”Gemeinsame Sicherheit und Zukunft der Bundeswehr”, unpublished doc., p. 1.

⁷⁶ Ibidem.

⁷⁷ The MP Siemann of the CDU asked for example the Foreign Ministry’s Secretary of State Vollmer, who had questioned the present defense model, if he is going to sacrifice the state, too. See Süddeutsche Zeitung, 5/6 December 1998, p. 6.

⁷⁸ The argument goes as follows: With a conscript army with intervention capabilities Germany could balance France and Great Britain who have a professional army and nuclear weapons. See for example Hartmut Bühl, Wehrpflicht hat für Deutschland strategische Bedeutung, in: Behörden-Spiegel, August 1996, p. 6.

Chancellor and his Minister of Finance,⁷⁹ and by visiting the armed forces right after his assumption of the defense ministry.⁸⁰ Another aspect of confidence building was his personnel policy. He appointed two MPs from the conservative wing of the SPD as parliamentary secretary of state, Brigitte Schulte⁸¹ and Walter Kolbow⁸², and kept the permanent secretary of state of his predecessor, Dr. Wichert.⁸³ Furthermore, Lieutenant General Harald Kujat, who worked as a deputy adjutant for the social-democratic Defense Ministers Leber and Apel and headed the IFOR coordination center in Mons, has become chief of the planning staff. Finally, two members of the reform commission – the Director of the government think tank "Foundation Science and Policy", Christoph Bertram, and the editor of the weekly *Die Zeit*, Theo Sommer - were already in the 1970 review commission. However, forging a reliable team is one thing, coping with the tremendous problems confronting him is another one.

The budget battle Scharping is facing and the discussion on the structural reform of the Bundeswehr are two sides of the same coin. As to the former, he had started with the promise by the Chancellor that there would be no deep cuts in an already reduced defense budget. Until 1990, its share of the Federal budget was 19 percent on average. In the first half of the nineties, defense expenditures were reduced from 53.4 billions DM to 47.2 in 1994 or approximately ten percent of the Federal budget. Although the defense budget was supposed to be stabilized from 1995 to 1997 and then even to grow slightly, it reached only 46.9 billions in 1998. Hence, not the defense budget but the charge on it grew especially because since 1996 the salary increases have to be paid from the defense budget, the so called Einzelplan or budget section 14,⁸⁴ as it is the case since 1994 for international missions of the Bundeswehr.

Scharping stressed right from the start that there was absolutely no room in his budget for cuts any more. Nevertheless he had to accept a 0.5 percent reduction demand for the fiscal year of 1999 by Finance Minister Lafontaine and was confronted by growing demands from the rapporteurs of the budget committee, the social-democrat Volker Kröning and the Green Oswald Metzger, who proposed a cut-down to 45.9 billion, to implement inter alia by canceling of the Franco-German Tiger projects.⁸⁵ Although he succeeded to counter at least partially this "declaration of war to Scharping",⁸⁶ the fall of Lafontaine gave no relief to the Defense Minister. On the contrary, having appointed Hans Eichel finance minister, the Chancellor did not feel obliged to keep his promise any more. The new Finance Minister's declared main task is to bring down the German budget deficit. Consequently, Eichel asked budget cuts from all ministries, and from Scharping's DOD alone 3.5

⁷⁹ Actually, Scharping wanted to get confirmed what was already part of the coalition treaty. There it is stated that "before the finishing of the work of the commission on the defense structure no decisions, regardless of the general budget reservations, on factual and budget questions will be taken which change significantly the areas to be analyzed or produce new facts". See Koalitionsvereinbarung, op. cit., pp. 15f.

⁸⁰ The Minister held six conferences with 200 participants from all ranks each. This was part of a general stock-taking ordered by Scharping, that was supposed to be a first basis for the reform commission. See Bundesministerium der Verteidigung (Hrsg.), Bestandsaufnahme. Die Bundeswehr an der Schwelle zum 21. Jahrhundert, Bonn 1999.

⁸¹ Ms. Schulte is a budget expert and MP since 1976. She was deputy spokeswoman on defense policy of the SPD group in the Bundestag, member of the defense committee, spokeswoman of the North Atlantic Assembly.

⁸² Mr. Kolbow, MP since 1980, is a security expert, member of the North Atlantic Assembly and was spokesman on defense policy of the SPD group in the Bundestag.

⁸³ The other permanent secretary of state is Walter Stütze, who headed the secretariat of the 1970 commission on the defense structure and was a close collaborator of former Defense Minister Georg Leber.

⁸⁴ Before the DOD could fall back to budget section 60 "General Financial Administration".

⁸⁵ See Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 12 March 1999, p. 4.

⁸⁶ Ibidem, p. 12.

billion for the fiscal year of 2000, i.e. a reduction of 3.7 percent. Until 2003, the Defense Minister has to economize in all 18,6 billion DM, leaving him with a budget of 43.7 billion DM in 2003.⁸⁷ Since then, Scharping has been under fire of the opposition, who asked his resignation, and even the union of the soldiers, the Deutsche Bundeswehrverband, took the same line.⁸⁸ In 12 September 1999 for the first time in the FRG's history 5000 soldiers rallied in Berlin to protest against the budget cuts.⁸⁹ Scharping's obstinate efforts to alleviate the burden by demanding that main armament projects should not be paid for from his budget section fell, however, on deaf ears. The Chancellor commented laconically, that nobody could be excluded from the 30 billion austerity package.⁹⁰ Thus, Scharping had "to take notice" of this decision but without accepting the financial planning beyond the year 2000.⁹¹

Coming to the defense structure as other side of the coin, it seems to be obvious that some hard decisions must be taken. If the Bundestag's Commissioner on the armed forces referring to the budget cuts lamented that the Bundeswehr's readiness for action was in danger, that does not change the conventional wisdom, that in the end the finance ministers are the most effective disarmament politicians. Facing the new financial framework and the fact that there are not many possibilities left to economize significantly in areas such as maintenance, administration or stretching of procurement, the question of the future structure of the Bundeswehr is coming to the forefront, and with that the taboo topic of conscription. The stock-taking of the Bundeswehr, ordered by Scharping and presented in March 1999, comes to the conclusion, "that the conceptual and structural framework is offering no development potential any more for the Bundeswehr. (...)Therefore, the necessary renovation of the Bundeswehr has to bring again in a permanent balance structure, strength, armament and formation. This new orientation will take some years and has to be supported by a broad political and social consensus".⁹²

Initially Scharping might have thought that he can win some time for thorough and decent analysis provided for by the reform commission.⁹³ However, time is pressing and decisions have to be taken already before the submission of the final report in May 2000. In order to preserve the structure he already had to decide to economize another billion Deutschmark in the 2000 budget by delaying the procurement of the transport helicopter NH 90 and by slightly reducing the strength of the Bundeswehr to 321.000.⁹⁴ The Green rapporteur of the budget committee has stated, that the Bundeswehr must be reduced from currently 340.000 soldiers to 250.00 or 280.000 in this legislature, the bulk of which will be to the debit of the army, and that the civilian personnel is to be reduced by 15.000 to 20.000.⁹⁵ His colleague from the SPD has publicly argued in favor of reduction to 270.000 while preserving a term of service of ten month.⁹⁶ An internal analysis of the Bundeswehr maintains that a 44 billion budget equals a strength of 261.000, 126.000

⁸⁷ See Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 24 June 1999, pp. 2f., 25 June 1999, p. 12. And 15 July 1999, p. 3.

⁸⁸ See Süddeutsche Zeitung, 3 July 1999, p. 6 and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 6 July 1999, p. 2.

⁸⁹ See Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 13 September 1999, p. 1.

⁹⁰ See Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 15 July 1999, pp. 1f.

⁹¹ Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 22 July 1999, p. 1.

⁹² Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, Bestandsaufnahme, op. cit., p. 169.

⁹³ See Hans-Georg Ehrhart, A quoi sert la "Commission sur l'organisation de la Bundeswehr"?, in: Le débat stratégique, No. 43, Mars 1999, p. 5.

⁹⁴ See Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 27 August 1999, p. 1.

⁹⁵ See Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 15 July 1999, p. 3. The defense establishment of the Greens favors a volunteer army.

⁹⁶ See Volker Kröning, Ein gangbarer Weg in die Zukunft der Bundeswehr, 6 July 1999.

professionals.⁹⁷ The commission has been presented more than half a dozen of reports proposing future models of the German armed forces from various sources such as think tanks and politicians. If one excludes the two extreme analyses one arguing in favor of a defensively structured conscription army and the other in favor of an integrated supranational volunteer army, the remaining analyses, although varying in their assumptions and premises, go in a similar direction. Nearly all of them advocate either implicitly or explicitly a volunteer army as the most cost effective and most appropriate to the new strategic environment. Their force models goes from about 160.000 (volunteer army) on average to 200.000 (volunteer army plus militia reserve system) to 270.000 (volunteer army plus short-term conscription).

One central argument for the necessity of a reform is the financial situation. As there will be no budget increase in the foreseeable future, the modernization of the Bundeswehr must be made possible by its restructuring while guaranteeing that the most of the savings will be invested in the Bundeswehr. The declared goal is to reach again an investment share of the defense budget of thirty percent – from 23.7 percent in 1998 - that is deemed as absolutely necessary for modern armed forces. Most of the studies are proposing the abolishment of the present dual organization of the army in crisis reaction forces and main defense forces and are pleading for the strengthening of the former. Other reform proposals are concerning the organization of the logistics, the formation and the territorial defense. Another one, which has been briefly mentioned only in two studies, has already been picked up by Scharping when he proposed that women should be allowed to serve armed guard duty.⁹⁸ As the Defense Minister knows very well that the German constitution forbids explicitly this kind of service, one might think that he was using diversionary tactics.⁹⁹

The other central argument for the necessity of reform is the changed security environment. The official goal of German security policy since there is no direct threat of an armed aggression against the country is to maintain long-term stability in Europe. But there are risks which might endanger stability and trigger military conflicts such as ethnic, religious, economic or ecological tensions. Furthermore, the probability of regional conflicts at the periphery of NATO with effects on the security of NATO partners is growing. Finally, there are risks stemming from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems as well as from the possibilities of information warfare. Against this background the least probable mission of the Bundeswehr is territorial defense, the most probable one is conflict prevention and crisis management, followed by the task of alliance defense as well as search and rescue operations. From these priorities conclusion has to be drawn with respect to the future capabilities. Facing the financial restrictions the main priority must be given the crisis reaction forces with the consequence, that the already existing trend toward a two-classes-army will be reinforced if there are no structural changes. In this context it is worth mentioning that Scharping himself said recently that in two years there will be no difference between crisis reaction and main defense forces any more.¹⁰⁰ Rationalization efforts must be undertaken such as the outsourcing of specific tasks, the canceling of projects, and the streamlining of commands. The reorganization of the command and control system towards a joint command system is an important short-term goal. Presently the creation of a general staff - or whatever it will be called because this term is biased - is being examined.¹⁰¹ Another one is the modernization of the

⁹⁷ See Die Zeit, No. 28, 1999, p. 10.

⁹⁸ See Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 14 July 1999, p. 1.

⁹⁹ Article 12a,4 states: "They [women, HGE] are under no circumstances allowed to serve with arms."

¹⁰⁰ See Neue Ruhr Zeitung, 11 August 1999, p. 5.

¹⁰¹ Until now the Bundeswehr is an army without a general staff. This is due to the militaristic past of Germany and the endeavor of the young FRG to guarantee political control over the armed forces once after the rearmament had

equipment, if possible in a European context. The defense minister made absolutely clear in his programmatic address at the German Armed Forces General and Staff Academy that the Bundeswehr will be renovated completely in the next ten to fifteen years, starting with the year 2001.¹⁰² The future trend seems to be clear, but the question of feasibility is still open. Therefore Scharping issued a warning in saying: "One cannot play permanently in the world league of foreign affairs if one slips down in the direction of the second league of security policy".¹⁰³

Conclusion: A true love?

Four questions have been posed in this analysis and the reader has the right to know the answers. These questions were centered on the personality of Germany's Defense Minister Rudolf Scharping, but the intention was also to sketch a picture of the German political debate on security issues as well as on the security and defense policy of the new government. As the Defense Minister is a leading political figure in the new government and the SPD, the question of who is Scharping seems to be answered easily. It is absolutely not, of course, and the other three questions are neither. Complex issues deserve differentiated handling and mostly lead only to tentative conclusions. At least, this is the case here.

The fact that Scharping declined to become NATO's Secretary General can be seen as a proof for his national ambitions but also for his sense of duty towards his important and very tricky job as defense minister. Nearly all observers agree that he went successfully through his baptism of fire constituted by the Yugoslav war. He met this challenge in a typical manner, mixing bone dry realism with a strong sense for moral engagement. Interpreting Walter Benjamin he put it this way: "If we stop talking about the humanity, the liberty, the dignity of man and to stand up for it we will lose it. Heart and reason, knowledge and hope, thoughts and action, policy and morals are belonging together".¹⁰⁴

A similar approach can be observed in his dealing with the transatlantic relations. On the one hand, he is aware of the power of the USA and its inclination to unilateralism. On the other hand, he does not forget to mention the fact that this country saved European democracies three times in this century. Thus, "Europe and America are bound together by democracy and freedom".¹⁰⁵ Scharping does not blame the USA for being so strong but he accuses Europe for being too weak. From that follows that the EU has to be strengthened and a European security and defense identity has to be built up. So far for the question of vision.

Turning to the realities, one has to state that Germany's defense posture is in a permanent process of adaptation without reaching a satisfactory result until now. The reason for this has, on the one hand, to do with the financial situation of the country in general and with the decline of the defense budget

been decided in 1954/55. The highest ranking German officer is the inspector general, who is advisor of the defense minister, but he has no command over the armed forces. This is entirely with the defense minister while the military command is with the different forces that are coordinated by the Command and Control Center in the Ministry. See Berliner Zeitung, 2 August 1999, p. 4.

¹⁰² See Rudolf Scharping, Grundlinien deutscher Sicherheitspolitik, Rede an der Führungsakademie der Bundeswehr am 8. September 1999. In the same address he contradicts this position in saying that „we will avoid interventions in the structures“.

¹⁰³ Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 26 July 1999, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ Rudolf Scharping, Der Stein auf unserer Seele. Deutschland und der gerechte Krieg – Eine Antwort auf György Konrád, in: Frank Schirrmacher (Hrsg.), Der westliche Kreuzzug, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1999, p. 130.

¹⁰⁵ Scharping, Was jetzt zu tun ist, op. cit., p. 203.

in particular. On the other hand, there are strong obstacles – e.g. within the armed forces, the political parties, and other social groups - for a radical reform which are leading to more or less senseless efforts of squaring the circle. If Scharping has the strength to split the Gordian knot he surely will get a place in German history as the great reformer. Until now, he is in the defensive confirming the present structure of the Bundeswehr and conscription while waiting for the proposals of the reform commission.

However, this situation can and will not endure forever. The coalition wars in the Gulf and in Yugoslavia have demonstrated that warfare is changing dramatically. The so called revolution in military affairs (RMA), which is driven on in the USA and the conceptual consequences of which are laid down in "Joint Vision 2010", will have its effects on the German and European security landscape. While Great Britain and France have already drawn the right conclusions, Germany is lagging behind without, so at least it seems sometimes, even realizing the qualitative change that is taking place. Nevertheless, a radical structural reform is indispensable because this is the only way to get more political leeway in several aspects:

- Budget: The defense budget could be stabilized on the level foreseen in the mid-term financial planning.
- Industry: New possibilities to support high value added high-tech industry would be opened up.
- Europe: The goal of a Common European Security and Defense Identity envisaged at the EU summit of Cologne would be furthered.
- Security: The EU would have the option of really European PSO in order to strengthen the stability in and around Europe.
- Alliance: There would be more interoperability with the USA while relatively reducing the American influence.
- Peace: New possibilities in the field of disarmament would emerge as well as better prevention capacities.

One needs a lot of guts and political foresight to go this way. But given the decisions of the NATO summit of Washington, of the EU summits of Cologne and Helsinki as well as the developments in the most important European partner countries, there are not much options left. So, it is up to the Defense Minister to face the challenges and to do what has to be done. Bearing in mind the problems he is facing, it is difficult to say if the Bundeswehr is his true love. He volunteered for a two years service in the sixties but had to quit the Bundeswehr after a few months because of bad eyesight. He stood by the Bundeswehr when President Clinton wanted to lure him to NATO. The Chancellor had left the decision to Scharping, that is to the man, from whom is said that he wants to become chancellor one day. However, that presupposes that he survives his suicide mission.