

FORUM:	Disarmament Commission
ISSUE:	Measures to Evaluate the Legitimacy of Germany's Rearmament and Expanded Military Capabilities
STUDENT OFFICER:	Joshua Smith
POSITION:	Deputy Chair of Disarmament Commission

Introduction

With the Federal Republic of Germany planning on “spending 5% of the country’s GDP on its military armed forces, the Bundeswehr” (Van Rensbergen), the issue of the legitimacy of Germany’s rearmament efforts is becoming more and more pressing in our current times. Claiming to be because of the growing threat of Russia to European nations other than Ukraine, Germany has been “bolstering its military capabilities and expanding its military spending” (Axe).

With these increments of Germany’s military spending, many questions of its legitimacy in various areas have arisen. For example, spending more on Germany’s military despite it being “possibly debt-funded” (DW News) is a pressing issue. In addition, the question of whether it is legitimate for Germany to expand their military capabilities considering the atrocities committed by Germany in WW2 has remained a “considerable issue for German rearmament” (DW News).

There are various views on this topic, and many subjects come into play when considering how to evaluate the legitimacy of German rearmament. “Some view this expanding of the Bundeswehr to be essential in preparing for a possible further west-bound invasion of Europe by Russia, while some view it as an unnecessary effort for an issue that will most likely not catastrophically affect Germany’s sovereignty” (Jaeger).



Figure 1 German Military Personnel



TIANMUN

Background

Germany's History

During WW2, Germany was at the peak of its military power, having one of the most powerful militaries in the world. Because of this, millions of people, who were mostly civilians, died during World War II, and a myriad of cities collapsed into ruins due to the destructive force of the German war machine. During the antebellum years, however, Germany's military was critically restricted by allied nations because of Germany's violent deeds and atrocities committed during the Second World War. This was embodied in the "Potsdam Conference, which demilitarized Germany" (US Dept. of State).

After Germany was split into East and West Germany, "militaries started building up on both ends of Germany, and soon enough, both East and West Germany had built up formidable armies" (DW News). After East Germany fell and Germany reunited, "West Germany's military, the Bundeswehr still remained in place and does to this day" (Bundeswehr). The Bundeswehr is currently the main military force of Germany and is what the German government is currently trying to expand the capabilities of. The Bundeswehr presently has "over 270,000 personnel currently serving" (Bundeswehr), and that number may continue to rise.

Recent Events

In February, 2022, Russia's aggressive invasion of Ukrainian territory marked a turning point in

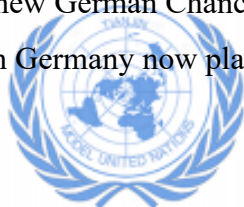


Figure 2 Ukrainian Military in Battle

Europe's history. NATO decided to support the Ukrainian government and member states of NATO prepared their militaries for a possible conflict with Russia. As Germany was also a member of NATO, preparing their own military for a possible armed conflict seemed to be the right way to go, but many disagreements have broken out about whether this is legitimate in terms of the historical and political context of Germany.

In 2022, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz "made his speech now known the 'Zeitenwende speech', also known as a historic turning point speech" (Burdeau). In this speech Scholz declared that "100 billion euros would be spent on improving the German Bundeswehr, and that at least 2% of Germany's GDP would be poured into expanding military capabilities" (Jaeger) such as tanks, armored vehicles, military aircraft and more in accordance with NATO recommendations.

In 2025, the new German Chancellor Friedrich Merz has been "determined to create the strongest army in Europe, with Germany now planning to spend an entire 5% of the nation's GDP on military



TIANMUN

development” (Van Rensbergen). This may prove to be more achievable for Germany since it has one of the most flourishing economies in the whole of Europe.

Problems Raised

Questions of Democratic and Historical Legitimacy

Many members of the German public, especially particular political parties within Germany and the elderly population are reluctant about whether or not this rapid rearmament should proceed. Many harbor mixed feelings about this issue because of Germany’s diplomacy-first view of international affairs. For example, the left-leaning “Social Democratic Party is still reluctant about Germany rearming, while the right-leaning Christian Democratic Union strongly favors Germany’s rearmament” (Van Rensbergen). In addition to this, money that will and has been spent on the military, such as the “100 billion euros being poured into the Bundeswehr” (Jaeger), seems to be a diversion away from essentials such as social services, infrastructure, and healthcare and medicine. This has led the population to be unsure whether or not becoming the most powerful nation in Europe is a worthy priority.

In addition to this, Germany’s dark history of military power in World War 2 plays a substantial role in the possible rearmament of Germany. Considering Germany’s past, there are many Germans who “believe that Germany should not amass a large military force but should remain peaceful and without a powerful military, and that it is advisable that Germany stays out of any future conflicts” (DW News). In addition to this, many individuals from other European nations such as Poland express unease over Germany’s rapid remilitarization.



Figure 3 German Soldiers Marching in WW2

Lack of Coordination Multilaterally

Despite Germany’s rearmament being in accordance with NATO’s recommendations to prepare for European armed conflict, there are some critics who believe that Germany’s rearmament efforts do not have as much multilateral oversight by the United Nations and the European Union as they should have. Because of the rapid speed of rearmament in Germany, the EU may not be able to “steer Germany in effectively rearming their military forces along the guidelines which various European institutions such as the United Nations implemented” (Moneiro). This is because Nato’s Defense Planning Process



(NDPP) leaves space for countries to decide on their own how national defense efforts should be implemented. Additionally, the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy is aimed at boosting cooperation in defense and security, but because it requires unanimous votes, having an effective oversight mechanism over Germany will prove to be difficult within the range of this policy. This improperly monitored German remilitarization could rise tensions between Germany and its neighboring nations, as well as lead to unilateralism within Germany's defense policy.

International Actions

NATO's Support and JSEC Involvement

The North Atlantic treaty organization has expressed greatly its support for Germany's rearmament and has endorsed Germany's remilitarization through encouraging Germany's spending on defense and stating that Germany's rearmament is a necessity. In addition, Germany has currently been consistently "hosting NATO's Joint Support and Enabling Command (JSEC) in the German city Ulm, which is responsible for facilitating reinforcement movements and sustain military forces" (JSEC NATO). This demonstrates that Germany has been actively involved in cooperation and the coordination of security and defense efforts in NATO, which lowers the likelihood that Germany is acting unilaterally. It puts Germany on the forefront of the defense of Europe. Germany's remilitarization efforts have been put to use in Lithuania, where "German troops have been allowed to deploy" (Guardian). However, questions of whether this resolves the legitimacy of Germany rearming its own military force still remain unanswered by these actions.

EU Military Movement Initiative

The EU Military Movement Initiative is an intricate communication network with the goal in mind being "swift, flowing movements of troops within the EU" (EEAS). This initiative assumes that each member state of the EU has a military that is completely functional and capable of jointly working together with member states, which implies the support for Germany's rearmament. However this doesn't directly address the problem of whether or not Germany's rearmament is legitimate; instead, it expresses support for the German remilitarization.



Figure 4 EU Armed Forces Being Deployed



Key Players

The Federal Republic of Germany

Germany stands as the main issue of debate on this topic, and part of the German government believes that increasing their military strength to be ready to defend against Russia in the future is a necessary step for the structural stability of Europe as a whole. Germany recently declared there would be a “100 billion euro infusion into military spending” (Burdeau) in accordance with these views. Germany holds the view that it is due time for Germany to build up a stronger military after many years of having an unformidable military force.

The Russian Federation

The Russian Federation’s invasion of Ukraine has played a pivotal role in the rearmament of Germany and the expansion of its military capabilities. The threat of Russia invading other regions of Europe has led Germany to begin increasing their military spending and capabilities in response to this threat. The Russian Federation has viewed Germany’s support of and donation of military supplies to Ukraine as an “act of escalating tensions, and believe Germans are preparing for a pre-planned war with Russia” (Al Jazeera).

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s support of has been “very supportive of Germany’s rearmament efforts and military capability expansion because of the looming threat of the Russian Federation” (Burdeau). NATO views German rearmament as positive and reasonable since it means Germany “will meet NATO’s guideline for member nations to spend at least 2% of their GDP on the military” (Van Rensbergen).



Figure 5 A NATO Summit

Poland

Poland is also a member state of NATO along with Germany, but still has mixed feelings about Germany’s rearmament and “mission to become a much more powerful national military than it is now” (Axe). During World War 2, Poland fell victim to a swift and destructive German invasion, which is why



Poland is not completely content with Germany's rearmament efforts. These historical tensions are a reason why many Poles are worried about Germany's remilitarization, especially since Poland directly borders Germany.

Possible Solutions

Establishing a Multilateral Oversight Mechanism

Establishing an advisory group led by either the UN or NATO in order to monitor as well as evaluate member states' military strengthening and expansion efforts. This advisory group would ensure that countries' military expansions are transparent, proportional to the country's spending in various areas, and are strategically aligned with international agreements and treaties between nations.

Figure 6 German Parliament



Strengthening Civil-Military Accountability

In order to ensure public trust and democratic legitimacy within Germany, reinforcing civilian control mechanisms such as increasing parliamentary scrutiny and hosting more public consultations within Germany are necessary to ensure that the German remilitarization is within the interest of the German public and goes through proper legal proceedings within the German parliamentary system.

Confidence Building Between Nations

Because some nations such as Poland and many Baltic nations are still unsure whether it is wise to allow the country that devastated them in the 20th century to rearm and expand their military capabilities, building confidence and diplomatic cooperation between nations historically affected by the German war machine remains an essential piece of the puzzle. Confidence building between these nations can range from hosting more conferences and reports on German military activity and movements to increasing cooperation in various aspects such as business, military, and diplomacy.

Glossary

Antebellum

The years of peace after a wartime; the period after a war



TIANMUN

Bundeswehr

The national armed forces of Germany; the German military

European Union (EU)

An economic and political alliance between European nations to encourage and foster economic growth and political cooperation between member states

GDP

A country's Gross Domestic Product, or the total market value of a country's goods and services

Multilateral

Agreed on by more than two parties

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

A military and political alliance between member states to combat against mutual threats

Remilitarization

The process of rebuilding a country's military force after being military restricted

Sources

- Axe, David. "Germany Is Re-Arming for War with Russia." *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 18 Mar. 2025, www.forbes.com/sites/davidaxe/2025/03/18/germany-is-re-arming-for-war-with-russia-heres-what-hundreds-of-billions-of-dollars-will-buy/.
- Burdeau, Cain. "Germany, Europe's Powerhouse, Is Rearming – but Slowly." *Courthouse News Service*, 21 Mar. 2023, www.courthousenews.com/germany-europes-powerhouse-is-rearming-but-slowly/.
- Dickinson, Peter. "Battle of Avdiivka: Putin's New Offensive Continues despite Heavy Russian Losses." *Atlantic Council*, 24 Oct. 2023, www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/battle-of-avdiivka-putins-new-offensive-continues-despite-heavy-russian-losses/.
- "'Extremely Dangerous Decision': Russia Scorns Germany over Tanks." *Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 26 Jan. 2023, www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/25/russia-denounces-germany-over-dangerous-tanks-decision.
- "Defence: How the EU Is Boosting Its Security: Topics: European Parliament." *Topics | European Parliament*, www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20190612STO54310/defence-how-the-eu-is-boosting-its-security. Accessed 30 July 2025.
- "German Troops Start First Permanent Foreign Deployment since Second World War." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 22 May 2025, www.theguardian.com/world/2025/may/22/germany-anti-russian-defence-nato-lithuania-friedrich-merz.
- "German Wartime Expansion | Holocaust Encyclopedia." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, encyclopedia.ushmm.org/. Accessed 30 July 2025.
- "Homepage." *Bundeswehr*, www.bundeswehr.de/en/. Accessed 29 July 2025.
- Hilde-Gunn Bye. "NATO Summit: Little Reference to the Arctic, but Region Still on the Radar." *High North News*, 15 June 2021, www.highnorthnews.com/en/nato-summit-little-reference-arctic-region-still-radar.
- Jaeger, Markus. "Why Germany Can and Should Increase Defense Spending." *Internationale Politik Quarterly*, 31 July 2024, ip-quarterly.com/en/why-germany-can-and-should-increase-defense-spending.
- "JSEC at a Glance." *Jsec.Nato.Int*, 17 Mar. 2025, jsec.nato.int/about-us/jsec-at-a-glance-effective-efficient-enablement.
- "Military Mobility." *EEAS*, www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/military-mobility-0_en. Accessed 30 July 2025.
- Moneiro, Antonio Bras. "EU's Arms Spending Splurge May Outpace Its Strategic Control." *EUobserver*, EUobserver, 17 Apr. 2025, euobserver.com/eu-and-the-world/arb81f37b0.
- "The German Parliament and the Parties." *Deutschland.De*, 30 Apr. 2025, www.deutschland.de/en/topic/politics/the-german-parliament-and-the-parties.



Van Rensbergen, Arno. "German Rearmament Tests Time, Money and Resolve." *The Parliament Magazine*, 23 May 2025, www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/news/article/german-rearmament-tests-time-money-and-resolve.

