

From the year 2016 up until February 24, 2022, most U.S. foreign policymakers focused on America's strategy in countering a rising China. Many policymakers [placed Europe on the backburner](#), taking for granted the durability of American primacy on the continent. The invasion of Ukraine changed this dynamic. Since the start of this war, [America's attention has shifted back towards Europe and NATO](#).

However, many policymakers seem to be regurgitating old solutions to new problems. These solutions include the expansion of NATO and more American troops sent to Europe. Essentially, such solutions are a Cold War and 1990s answer to today's new security environment. Whereas in the 1990s, America's [position as the sole great power](#) permitted it to expand NATO, today's NATO faces a revisionist Russia tired of the status quo of NATO expansion. Moreover, unlike the Cold War, today's international environment [consists of multiple great powers](#).

All of these concerns begs the question: What is the U.S. to do about Europe? The answer lies with increasing Germany's military.

Germany remains one of the richest countries in Europe, possessing a [GDP of \\$4.479 trillion in the year 2022](#). Germany possesses much latent power, a form of power that John Mearsheimer defines in his book, [\*The Tragedy of Great Power Politics\*](#), as “the socio-economic ingredients that go into building military power.” In essence, the more money and resources a country has, the more likely it can use those resources to make a strong military.

In the face of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Germany seems to be attempting to transition this latent power into military power. As German Chancellor Olaf Scholz stated in a [speech to the Bundestag](#) on February 27, 2022, Germany and Europe were at a *Zeitenwende*, or a turning point. As Scholz [elaborated in December 2022](#), this *Zeitenwende* involves Germany's plan to build up its military capabilities to serve as "one of the main providers of security in Europe." Despite critics pointing out Germany's [lack of ammunition stockpiles](#), and that [Germany's rearmament plans are lagging behind schedule](#), there remains hope and reason for the U.S. to encourage German rearmament.

The main reason why the U.S. should desire a formidable German military: the dilemma of extended deterrence. Extended deterrence is defined as the capability and willingness of a country to deter and defend its allies against a potential attack. [The dilemma with extended deterrence](#) lies in its difficulty to credibly defend an ally at risk of military attack. This is the biggest [issue with extended deterrence](#).

It is understandable for critics of this German strategy to be hesitant in loosening the leash on Germany's military. After all, Germany was the primary antagonist of [two world wars in the 20th century](#). Thankfully, the German government has taken measures to prevent this from occurring within its country again, [having implemented laws on hate speech](#), and the German government employed its [first rabbis to serve as a chaplain within the Bundeswehr](#). To be clear, there is a difference between militarism and maintaining a strong military. Militarists glorify war and the military, whereas prudent military strategists understand the necessity of a military to protect their country's national interests. In other words, the difference between militarism and having a

military is in the ends of having a military: militarists see war and the military as ends to themselves, whereas prudent strategists view these as means to achieving the ends of security.

Another way to make certain that Germany does not fall back into its militarist past, is for it to create a people's military. Such an ideal is not unfamiliar to German thinking. In fact, [Gerhard von Scharnhorst](#), a high-ranking Prussian military reformer, strongly advocated for such a military. As Trevor Dupuy details in his book, [A Genius for War: The German Army and General Staff, 1807-1945](#), Scharnhorst sought to extend military participation to common Prussians and grant them rights in a new constitution. Scharnhorst's logic was to create a common identity with the military and Prussian citizens, thereby improving Prussian morale and military effectiveness.

The good news is that today's Germany has made considerable progress in creating this people's military. [As James Angelos notes](#), Germany possesses "homeland protection" units within its military reserves, many of its personnel serving as part time soldiers. To further progress this people's military, Germany might consider [reintroducing military conscription](#), creating an increase in citizen-soldiers within Germany.

The U.S. should encourage this development of German civil-military relations. Creating a people's military within Germany would water two plants with one hose: improve its military effectiveness and solidify its democratic governance amid a strengthened military.

An independent Europe would be the goal of all this remilitarization and engaged civil-military relations within Germany. Essentially, this would involve Europeans providing for Europe's security. Germany would lead the way in this increased defense spending effort.

The world is anarchic, meaning there remains no international government to induce order. Creating order and stability is left to the most powerful countries to compromise over their interests. In this world, states can only count on themselves to guarantee their protection. Amid the need for the U.S. to deal with its domestic issues, such as [increasing economic inequality](#) and [a mental health crisis](#), and a world of multiple great powers, it will be difficult for the U.S. to continue to be the security guarantor in Europe. Prudence and careful analysis are needed in foreign policy. Such statecraft is especially needed in our present world, where history is back with a vengeance in international politics. If we are not careful, we may be at risk of repeating history's gravest mistakes.