

# 2016/5/1: Notes on the operativeness of the Armed Forces of the German Alliance until 1866

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In what sense history is a good instructor has been assessed variably at all times. One fact, however, is definite: Everybody trying to move nations and civilizations, states and societies towards "future", without knowing them, has failed. Nevertheless: it will not always be successful to take advice from history, especially so if one does not study and analyse it in its amplitude, profundity and context, in correlation with prospective derivations. The military has always been interested in this kind of questions, especially when it was and is confronted with neoteric challenges. Here – apart from the historical perception perspective – at present it is certainly worthwhile, when searching sustainable security-political and military structures for (coalescing) armed forces in Europe, to consider historical models, which – almost comparable in the number of different armies in a confederation – were permanent for several decades. Additionally, anniversaries and "new projects" are often triggers for looking for sometimes era-spanning structural analogies in order to achieve a wider basis for justified assessments concerning practical "doctrines", chances, but also risks. Thus, in this concrete case, an analysis of the military of the German Alliance (1815-1866) with its Armed Forces against the background of "round" anniversaries – or better: commemoration and/or remembrance days – such as "200 Years Viennese Congress" or "150 Years German Brothers' War 1866" on the one hand, and current EU-projects (Juncker-Initiative for creating a European Army and the permanent quest for a coherent EU security strategy) on the other hand, possibly has some helpful potential of "lessons learned" ready. For this reason, the campaign of 1866 – as seen in the example of Prussia – is another example for the fact that the conjunction of a clear mission doctrine with a clear political objective target, up-to-date arms and equipment, adequate training, and coherent command and control, are more important for success than mere superiority concerning troops and material which were in league with its adversaries. Thus, the campaign of 1866 proved to be the apex of all misperceptions of the military of the German Alliance. The contingents of the Armed Forces at that time were (1.) not figured for a war or mission abroad. On the contrary, they were meant for maintaining internal (neo-) absolutistic system stability. Even if some armies in Europe (in fact professional armies like the contingency armies at that time) can be called on for such situations in exceptional cases, this will not represent a structural analogy. European Battle Groups are certainly no followers of the Federal Corps. Additionally, (2.) in the course of their first "joint" operation, the contingents of the armed forces suffered from their "Waterloo" as the system-immanent culmination catastrophe in the War of 1866, which led them against each other in the end. As, however, in military assessments success represents the non plus ultra, a too close reference to the armed forces is interdicted. Heterogeneous security-political objective targets, the lack of integration concerning organisation, command and control, armament, training, etc., as they were practised especially in the armed force virtually "ideally" for half a century, can certainly not gain the character of exemplariness for the present time. Apparently exactly this is the reason why most European states still bet and rely on (indispensable) NATO as the security- and defence-political stability guarantor. At that time, however, such a security-political "authority" did not exist. Today there would be lack of such an authority as well, and this is not supposed to be an excuse for the necessity of a strongly accelerated establishment of a punchy European instrument.

