The procurement of defense material can be regarded, first, as a self-evident technical process in a security environment or, secondly, as an economic policy measure that is part of a government’s fiscal framework. The first approach is obviously of vital importance for evaluating the military efficiency of defense material. However, if we want to understand why certain armaments are procured, we also have to take a closer look at the second aspect.

From the very beginning, procurement of armaments has been influenced by various fields of politics. In the Federal Republic of Germany, the main fields of government involvement include foreign and security policy, home affairs, fiscal policy as well as economic, foreign trade, and regional policy. Of course, military factors also matter, but they have often been subordinated to “civilian” affairs. Another aspect of the period under review was the particular situation surrounding Germany. As it triggered and lost World War II, the Federal government, amidst reconstruction, was concerned to integrate the country into the Western alliance in order to achieve true sovereignty in foreign policy matters.\(^1\)

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\(^1\) Modern military history is overwhelmingly concerned with political/strategic/operational issues and leadership. Yet, without adequate equipment, soldiers would never be able to carry out the military plans of and missions given to them by their political leaders. There has been some serious discussion of the effect of technology and equipment production upon military affairs—for example, one can point to the excellent studies on the effect of steel production upon warfare in World War I, or studies of motor vehicle and tank production in the interwar period and its effect upon the operations in World War II. Nonetheless, the issue of military equipment, its production, and its procurement as a central variable in warfare is a subject that has not been thoroughly studied—and certainly needs more attention.

In early 1955, when the decision was finalized that the Federal Republic of Germany would establish its own armed forces within the framework of NATO, it became quickly obvious that one of the toughest problems would be to quickly and efficiently provide the major items of equipment for Germany’s defense—namely, tanks, aircraft and warships.\(^3\) There were several reasons for Germany’s difficult position of the time. First were the fundamental economic issues of budgeting and adapting the national economy, which were essential if Germany wanted to keep the promise to the alliance to stand up a military force of 500,000 men in the shortest possible time. Another reason was the lack of essential knowledge. In the years following the Second World War, Germany lacked the know-how to build the latest weapons, and German industry was, on the whole, poorly prepared to begin renewed arms production. It would all be very expensive. The Federal Republic wanted to build its own armed forces—but not at any price. The Germans faced some further daunting problems that illustrate the complexity of creating a conventional military of a half million men from virtually nothing. Yet this force was needed to contribute to the defense of freedom and democracy right on the front line of the border separating east and west. To carry out this mission required the creation of a new and elaborate procurement system. Yet there were factors unique to Germany that also inhibited the development of a true military-industrial complex on the model of the Americans.\(^4\)

Essentially, the procurement of weapons serves as a means by which states can exercise their sovereignty. States defend themselves through deterrence or, when necessary, by waging war. Yet other factors sometimes play a significant role in the decisions to produce or not to produce weapons. Some of the most important factors to consider are the general level of economic prosperity of the nation and the military
