

# A Reluctant Warrior

## The German Engagement in Afghanistan

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Shot of multinational flags at  
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## Intra-alliance Analysis: Policies and Approaches of NATO Allies in Afghanistan

*A CMI-PRIO study of the US, the UK, Germany and Norway*

The growing difficulties facing the NATO mission in Afghanistan had by mid-decade led to increases in commitment and innovations in policy. Pressure on allies to make more robust military commitments mounted, coupled with policy innovations designed to meet the growing insurgency with more appropriate strategies and better use of resources. The 2006 Riga summit endorsement of a strategy that stressed the integration of military and civilian policy elements was an important step in this development. While the terminology and its implications differed (American policy-makers were already talking of ‘counter-insurgency’, while their European counterparts preferred ‘comprehensive’, ‘integrated’ or ‘whole of government’ approach), the Riga meeting signified a broadening as well as a deepening commitment of the alliance. In the years that followed, each NATO member and other allies struggled to adjust their policy to deal with often conflicting contexts and demands – a worsening situation on the ground, demands for alliance solidarity and awareness that NATO’s prestige was on the line in Afghanistan, an increasingly critical public at home as casualties were rising, and growing concern over the economic costs of the war.

The papers in this series examine the strategies of four NATO members in this regard. Each case study first contextualizes their Afghanistan engagement in light of the broader foreign policy concerns of the country concerned, and then focuses on the development and adjustment of military strategy in relation to other components of the engagement. In this respect, special attention is given to the importance of realities on the ground in Afghanistan, organizational (NATO) interests, and domestic factors. The story is taken up to the NATO Lisbon summit meeting in November 2010, which marked the counter-point to Riga by announcing that security responsibility would be transferred to Afghan forces by the end of 2014.

What are the implications of this analysis for NATO’s role in out-of-area, unconventional engagements? This question is addressed in a separate series of Policy Briefs presented as part of the project.

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## 1. Introduction and overview

Germany's engagement in Afghanistan post-9/11 is a milestone in German foreign policy. It is historically significant, as it marks the first deployment of German combat troops outside Europe since World War II. It has also heavily influenced public and scholarly debates about German foreign policy. In particular, the operation has called into question the popular notion that reunified Germany is exclusively a "civilian power", whose foreign policy culture inhibits the offensive use of force. This notion was dramatically challenged in September 2009, when a German commander called in an US airstrike against Taliban insurgents near Kunduz that killed up to 142 people, most of them civilians.

Which factors have determined Germany's Afghanistan policy and how can we explain its evolution over time? This study examines the nature and determinants of Germany's engagement from 2001 to the present. It argues that neither a foreign policy culture of restraint, nor challenges posed by the operational environment in Afghanistan can sufficiently explain German policy. The paper advances a "two-level game" argument based on liberal-institutionalist approaches to foreign policy analysis: in brief, Germany's Afghanistan policy is motivated by the need to simultaneously navigate international expectations and domestic pressures.<sup>1</sup>

Firstly, Germany's commitment is determined by shifting demands for engagement from the US and other major NATO countries. Germany has a strategic interest in meeting the demands of its major allies. As a middle power, Berlin depends on allied support for achieving objectives in international politics. Secondly, Germany's approach to the mission in Afghanistan is shaped by the decreasing level of public support at home. As a result of these two, opposing forces, Berlin's readiness to contribute resources and accept risks for German personnel has varied significantly since 2001.

This study proceeds as follows. The second section outlines three explanations for Germany's Afghanistan policy: Firstly, German foreign policy elites' belief in military restraint and civilian conflict resolution; secondly, policy adaptation to the operational environment in Afghanistan; and thirdly, the "two-level game" argument. Sections 3-6 below use these approaches to examine Germany's Afghanistan policy in the decade from 2001 to 2011.

Section 3 analyses Germany's Afghanistan policy in the first weeks following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. This phase was characterized by an offensive, risk-taking German engagement. The German government was confronted with high international and domestic expectations to prove its solidarity with the US. German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder therefore pledged "unconditional solidarity" with the US and volunteered nearly 4,000 troops for America's "war on terror." This study thus labels Germany's initial policy a "high risk"-approach, implemented in response to international and domestic expectations.

Section 4 explains Germany's limited and risk-averse engagement in Afghanistan from 2002 to 2006. German policy in this phase is labeled as a defensive "risk-minimization"-approach: Berlin mobilized very modest civilian and military resources for the mission. Germany was also keen to avoid risks for its personnel and resisted calls to expand its presence beyond the comparatively-secure northern part of Afghanistan. This approach is explicable in terms of the "two-level game" argument: At the international level, the German government followed NATO's initial approach of keeping its military presence in Afghanistan to a minimum. At the domestic level, officials

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<sup>1</sup> The term two-level game was coined by Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988): 427-60.

tried to maintain the German public's benign neglect for the operation by reducing potential sources of German and Afghan casualties.

Section 5 explores Germany's gradual move towards a more visible engagement in Afghanistan. From mid-2006 onward, the government had to navigate heavy criticism from NATO countries such as the US, Britain, and Canada, about insufficient "risk-sharing" in the operation, while it faced growing opposition against the military engagement at home. As a result, Berlin adopted an offensive "risk-minimization"-approach: The Bundeswehr conducted largely symbolic military operations to demonstrate commitment and relied on US air strikes to pre-empt insurgent attacks. In addition, Germany raised the budget for development projects to (re)create a benign environment for its personnel in the North. Domestically, political leaders engaged in a public debate to justify Afghan engagement.

Section 6 analyzes Germany's decision to withdraw its combat troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2014. Germany's withdrawal will end German (military) personnel's exposure to threats in Afghanistan and can be labeled a "zero risk" approach. Berlin's decision followed US President Obama's 2009 announcement to withdraw America's troops, which diminished international expectations for further German commitment. Additionally, the lack of domestic support reduced Berlin's incentives to continue Germany's engagement in Afghanistan beyond NATO's presence.

A final section summarizes the findings and outlines implications for policy-makers and future research.

## 2. The "two-level" argument

Policy-oriented scholars have produced a considerable body of empirical research on Germany's Afghanistan policy, but the majority of these studies lack theoretical guidance. Existing theory-driven studies can be divided in two groups.

One group of scholars claims that a multilateral and antimilitarist "culture of restraint" or "reticence" (*Kultur der Zurückhaltung*) drives Germany's Afghanistan policy.<sup>2</sup> Cultural theorists argue that decision-makers' set of beliefs, norms and values "defines the instruments and tactics that are judged acceptable, appropriate, or legitimate within the broader set of those [instruments] that are imaginable."<sup>3</sup> This foreign policy or strategic culture is presumably deeply-rooted and will resist changes in the international environment: "[D]ecision makers may persist in defining problems in traditional ways, or they may continue to favor familiar approaches in trying to address new concerns."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See for example James D. Bindenagel, "Afghanistan: The German Factor," *Prism* 1, no. 4 (2010): 95-112; Akan Malici, "Germans as Venetians: The Culture of German Foreign Policy Behavior," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 2, no. 1 (2006): 37-62; Franz-Josef Meiers, "Von der Scheckbuchdiplomatie zur Verteidigung am Hindukusch. Die Rolle der Bundeswehr bei multinationalen Auslandseinsätzen 1990-2009," *ZFAS* 3, no. 2 (2010): 201-22.

<sup>3</sup> John S. Duffield, "Political Culture and State Behavior: Why Germany Confounds Neorealism," *International Organization* 53, no. 4 (1999): 765-803, 771-2; Thomas F. Banchoff, *The German Problem Transformed: Institutions, Politics, and Foreign Policy, 1945-1995* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999); Thomas U. Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, *Germany, Pacifism and Peace Enforcement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); John S. Duffield, *World Power Forsaken: Political Culture, International Institutions, and German Security Policy after Unification* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Kerry Anne Longhurst, *Germany and the Use of Force* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Duffield, "Political Culture and State Behavior: Why Germany Confounds Neorealism," 772.

In the case of Germany, Hanns Maull has coined the term “civilian power” to describe Berlin’s foreign policy.<sup>5</sup> According to John Duffield, one fundamental belief of Germany’s post-World War II political elites is a preference for peaceful conflict resolution:

“[A]s a result of the antimilitarist attitudes that have taken root in Germany since World War II, German leaders from across the political spectrum have insisted that attempts to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts must be given absolute priority and that military means should be employed only as a last resort, if at all. Likewise, they have generally been skeptical about the utility of military force and equally optimistic about the possibility of resolving conflicts through peaceful means.”<sup>6</sup>

In the case of operations such as in Afghanistan, Duffield assumes that Germany would try to “strike a careful balance between the contending demands of multilateralism and antimilitarism.”<sup>7</sup> Yet as mentioned above, Germany’s military engagement in Afghanistan challenges the policy predictions of culture theories.

A second group of scholars argues that Germany has adapted its policy to the operational environment in Afghanistan. This “military adaptation”-approach assumes that the changing operational reality in Afghanistan led “to a quiet, but significant, evolution of the German approach to the use of force.”<sup>8</sup> According to this approach, political elites had no significant influence on policy evolution because they were either unaware of or unable to understand developments on the ground. However, as will be demonstrated below, German decision-makers in fact strategically shaped Germany’s approach to Afghanistan but their decisions were usually not meant to address operational necessities.

This study argues that the German engagement was driven by a combination of international demands and domestic constraints, rather than by events in Afghanistan. This “two-level” analysis builds, firstly, on the institutionalist theory of international relations (IR). Representatives of this school of thought argue that Germany’s embeddedness in security institutions, such as NATO, UN, and the EU, shapes German foreign and security policy.<sup>9</sup> During the Cold War, Germany depended on NATO’s ability to deter a Soviet attack. Today, changed strategic realities in Europe have made Germany less dependent on the alliance for safeguarding its national security. Yet, it faces a challenge familiar to most second-tier powers: While Berlin can play a consequential role in Europe, it requires allied support to exert some degree of influence on global affairs, and therefore has to invest in partnerships and alliances.<sup>10</sup> The “shadow of the future” thus constrains policy-makers’ behavior in the present.<sup>11</sup> As a result, Germany followed strong, univocal US and NATO demands for engagement.

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<sup>5</sup> Sebastian Harnisch and Hanns Maull, *Germany as a Civilian Power? The Foreign Policy of the Berlin Republic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Duffield, “Political Culture and State Behavior: Why Germany Confounds Neorealism,” 788.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 790.

<sup>8</sup> Timo Noetzel and Benjamin Schreer, “All the Way? The Evolution of German Military Power,” *International Affairs* 84, no. 2 (2008): 211-21, 212. For a similar argument with regard to the British approach to Afghanistan see Theo Farrell, “Improving in War: Military Adaptation and the British in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 2006-2009,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 4 (2010): 567-94.

<sup>9</sup> Helga Haftendorn, Robert O. Keohane, and Celeste A. Wallander, eds., *Imperfect Unions: Security Institutions Over Time and Space* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1958); Markus Kaim, “Deutsche Auslandseinsätze in der Multilateralismusfalle?,” in *Auslandseinsätze der Bundeswehr: Leitfragen, Entscheidungsspielräume und Lehren*, ed. Stefan Mair (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2007): 43-49, 47-48.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).



Secondly, the two-level argument is grounded in the now well-established liberal theorem that domestic politics influence foreign policy.<sup>12</sup> Domestic politics are not the primary determinant of German foreign policy, and foreign policy usually does not decisively influence the outcome of German elections.<sup>13</sup> However, significant casualties – whether amongst German personnel or the host population – are political minefields in Germany. These incidents can end careers, in particular if the public is not convinced about an operation's purpose. For example, in the case of the 2009 Kunduz airstrike, public outrage about civilian deaths and officials' attempts to cover them up forced the eventual resignation of the German Labor and former Defense Minister Franz Josef Jung, the German Chief of Staff General Wolfgang Schneiderhan, and the longstanding State Secretary of Defense Peter Wichert. Thus, if military engagement is unpopular, political leaders will try to minimize the risk of causing casualties, for example through restrictive rules of engagement.<sup>14</sup>

Figure 1: A typology of Germany's approach to the operation in Afghanistan

Allied expectations \ Domestic support	Present	Absent
	High	Offensive, risk-taking engagement (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution: Visible and significant</li> <li>• "High risk" approach for military personnel</li> <li>• E.g. post 9/11 support for US</li> </ul>
Low-to-zero	Defensive engagement (3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution: symbolic, with strong caveats</li> <li>• "Risk-minimization" approach: minimum exposure for personnel</li> <li>• Minimal public debate</li> <li>• E.g. "Peace-building" phase (2002-06)</li> </ul>	Termination of engagement / Refusal to engage (4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Zero-risk" approach</li> <li>• E.g. decision to withdraw by 2014</li> </ul>

The government's two-level game leads to a balancing act between international and domestic considerations: The degree of German commitment will be determined by the level of

<sup>12</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics," *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (1997): 513-53. This approach differs from the traditional realist assumption that a state's foreign policy is completely determined by systemic pressures (Kenneth Neal Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1979).)

<sup>13</sup> Analyses of the 2009 federal elections illustrate the insignificance of the Afghanistan issue for the electoral outcome (Manfred Schwarzmeier, "Der Afghanistan-Einsatz der Bundeswehr: Kein Thema im Wahlkampf 2009," in *Einsatz für den Frieden: Sicherheit und Entwicklung in Räumen begrenzter Staatlichkeit* ed. Josef Braml, Thomas Risse, and Eberhard Sandscheider (München: Oldenbourg, 2010): 391-97; Harald Schoen, "Ein Bericht von der Heimatfront. Bürger, Politiker und der Afghanistaneinsatz der Bundeswehr," *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 51, no. 3 (2010): 395-408.). A partial exception was the 2002 campaign where Chancellor Schröder benefited from his opposition against US plans to attack Iraq.

<sup>14</sup> Schoen, "Ein Bericht von der Heimatfront. Bürger, Politiker und der Afghanistaneinsatz der Bundeswehr," 405.

expectations from Germany's allies (high/low) and support from a majority of the German population (present/absent) for an operation. Allied expectations will be high if two conditions hold: the issue at hand is of great strategic interest to Germany's major partners, in particular the US, France and Britain, and if these countries perceive that Germany does not adequately share burdens and risks within the alliance.

Figure I illustrates the logic behind the four resulting approaches to engagement in Afghanistan: (1) if both the level of international expectations and public support are high, German leaders will opt for offensive, risk-taking engagement; (2) if the level of international expectations is high but a majority of German opposes a mission, decision-makers will choose an offensive, risk-minimizing engagement; (3) if the level of international expectations is low but public support exists, Germany will conduct defensive engagement; (4) if both the level of international expectations and public support are low, Germany will either not engage or terminate participation in a given mission.

### 3. The decision to intervene

German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder responded to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks by pledging “unconditional solidarity” with the United States. Berlin supported NATO's decision to invoke Article V of the Washington Treaty on 12 September 2001 for the first time in the organization's history.<sup>15</sup> In November 2001, Berlin also volunteered a force of up to 3,900 troops for America's counter-terrorism operation “Enduring Freedom” (OEF), including special forces, air transport and naval forces to protect shipping lanes.<sup>16</sup> The US included about 100 German Special Forces in the campaign against the Taliban regime.<sup>17</sup> This engagement was very significant, given Germany's track record of military restraint since the end of World War II. The deployment of forces created high risks for German soldiers. In fact, Schröder was forced to hold a vote of confidence for the plan to deploy OEF troops to overcome resistance from MPs in his Red-Green coalition. Schröder narrowly averted the collapse of his government.

What motivated the German government to participate in the military operation in Afghanistan? Proponents of a cultural approach struggle to explain Germany's readiness to use force in this situation. They argue that the post-9/11 period was an extraordinary situation which induced German leaders to take exceptional measures. Moreover, cultural scholars emphasize that Germany's central role in this phase was political, while Berlin's military contribution remained modest.<sup>18</sup> It is certainly true that Germany made particularly strong efforts to contribute to a political solution of the conflict in Afghanistan. In late November 2001, Germany hosted a UN conference at the Petersberg near Bonn which brought together a range of Afghan groups and representatives of major international and regional stakeholders. On December 5, 2001, the participants signed the “Bonn Agreement” which set out a political roadmap for post-Taliban

<sup>15</sup> NATO. “Statement by the North Atlantic Council.” Press Release (2001)124, Brussels, September 12, 2001, [www.nato.int/docu/pr/2001/p01-124e.htm](http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2001/p01-124e.htm). The US nevertheless declined to integrate NATO in its campaign plan and none of the alliance's collective assets were deployed to Afghanistan. NATO's only concrete assistance to the US was the deployment of AWACS surveillance aircraft to patrol American airspace.

<sup>16</sup> Deutscher Bundestag. “Drucksache 14/7296.” November 07, 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Deutscher Bundestag. “Drucksache 14/8990.” May 08, 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Malici, “Germans as Venutians: The Culture of German Foreign Policy Behavior,” 51-3; Hanns Maull, “Die deutsche Außenpolitik und der 11. September 2001,” *Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* 13, no. 3 (2003): 1271–98.

Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup> Yet, assuming that a culture of restraint informs German foreign policy, it is surprising that Berlin did not limit its assistance to providing this sort of diplomatic support.

One explanation for Germany's military intervention was its perception of a terrorist threat that emanated from Afghanistan. German policy-makers may have felt obliged to intervene in Afghanistan to protect German citizens from attacks. In fact, Minister of Defense Peter Struck claimed that Germany's security was being defended in the Hindu Kush.<sup>20</sup> However, there is little evidence that German policy-makers actually perceived a direct threat as emanating from Afghanistan. Schröder announced in October 2001 that the government was not aware of any planned terrorist attacks against Germany. He justified military action against the Taliban regime as a response to its non-compliance with UN demands, rather than as a measure to counter international terrorism.<sup>21</sup> Germany's military engagement in Afghanistan was not primarily aimed at addressing a terrorist threat to its national security. Instead, Berlin focused on measures of law enforcement and increased intelligence exchange to prevent terrorist attacks.<sup>22</sup>

Germany's contribution to the US-led military intervention in Afghanistan is best understood as an effort to meet international and domestic demands. In the first weeks following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the German government was confronted with huge international and domestic expectations that it prove its solidarity with the US. Studies suggest that German and international TV broadcasting of the 9/11 attacks shaped the German public's support for a military response in Afghanistan.<sup>23</sup> According to opinion polls in October and November 2001, over 60 percent of Germans believed their government should provide military support to the US to fight terrorism and considered America's military intervention in Afghanistan justified.<sup>24</sup>

At the international level, UN and NATO support for the intervention put strong pressure on Germany to participate. The UN Security Council unanimously condemned the attacks and recognized that the United States had the "inherent right of individual or collective self-defence in accordance with the [UN] Charter."<sup>25</sup>

In October 2001, Chancellor Schröder explained his decision to opt for what was, by German post-WWII standards, an offensive, high risk engagement:

"There are certainly many reasons why in the current situation Germany must demonstrate its ... active solidarity with our friends in the United States and in the international alliance against terrorism: Historical and contemporary reasons, but also reasons which relate to

<sup>19</sup> The Bonn Agreement called for the establishment of a "broad-based, gender sensitive, multiethnic and fully representative government" in Afghanistan. It created an Afghan Interim Authority led by Hamid Karzai with a six-month mandate to prepare the political transition. An emergency *Loya Jirga* (a traditional grand council assembling the elected or appointed representatives of Afghan communities) was to be convened until the end of this transition period to decide on the composition of a Transitional Authority. Finally, another *Loya Jirga* was to adopt a new constitution, paving the way for the election of a fully representative government. A UN mission and international forces would support the process politically and militarily.

<sup>20</sup> Peter Struck. "Regierungserklärung von Verteidigungsminister Dr. Peter Struck." Berlin: Deutscher Bundestag, March 11, 2004, 8601.

<sup>21</sup> Gerhard Schröder. "Regierungserklärung von Bundeskanzler Schröder zur aktuellen Lage nach Beginn der Operation gegen den internationalen Terrorismus in Afghanistan." October 11, 2001, <http://archiv.bundesregierung.de/bpaexport/regierungserklaerung/25/59425/multi.htm>.

<sup>22</sup> Dorle Hellmuth. "German and U.S. Domestic Counterterrorism Responses: Only Half a World Apart." Washington, DC: American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, June, 2009; Guido Steinberg. "Counter-Terrorism and German-American Relations: A German Perspective." Washington, DC: American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, October, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> Christoph Weller. "Massenmediale Konstruktionen im außenpolitischen Entscheidungsprozess," in *Konstruktivistische Analysen der internationalen Politik*, ed. Cornelia Ulbert and Christoph Weller (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2005): 313-46, 315.

<sup>24</sup> Infratest dimap. "ARD-Deutschlandtrend Oktober 2001." 2001, <http://www.infratest-dimap.de/uploads/media/dt0110.pdf>; Infratest dimap. "ARD-Deutschlandtrend November 2001." 2001, <http://www.infratest-dimap.de/uploads/media/dt0111.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> UN Security Council, "Resolution 1368," (2001); UN Security Council, "Resolution 1373," (2001).

Germany's positioning in the future ... Taking on international responsibility while avoiding any direct risk, can and must not be the guiding principle of German foreign and security policy ... Germany's willingness to create security also with military means is an important commitment to our alliances and partnership."<sup>26</sup>

In sum, Germany's "high risk"-approach in the aftermath of 9/11 was a response to international and domestic expectations that the country demonstrates its solidarity with the US. This approach was not altruistic, despite the absence of imminent concerns about national security. German leaders were willing to engage in Afghanistan in order to sustain their influence on global affairs.

#### 4. Tiptoeing through Afghanistan

In contrast to Germany's diplomatic and military support for the US in the weeks after 9/11, Germany's contribution to what was billed as Afghan peace-building remained very limited in the 2002-06 period. Berlin took over the responsibility for rebuilding the Afghan police but mobilized only few police trainers and resources for this daunting task. German development assistance to Afghanistan also remained very modest. Finally, Berlin was keen to avoid risking its soldiers' lives. It restricted German engagement first to Kabul and then to the comparatively peaceful North of Afghanistan and placed numerous caveats on the use of Germany's forces in combat operations.

How can we explain Germany's defensive engagement in Afghanistan from 2002-2006? Cultural approaches suggest that Germany's strategic culture of restraint caused Germany to adopt a defensive force posture and a reluctance to use lethal force.<sup>27</sup> However, this argument cannot convincingly account for the shift towards a counter-insurgency approach from 2007 onwards. The notion of a strategic culture assumes a deep-rooted disposition that should resist rapid change. Yet the post 2007 approach which includes offensive military operations against insurgents seems fundamentally incompatible with antimilitarist beliefs or a culture of restraint. As will be discussed in the next section, military adaptation to the Afghan environment provides a possible explanation for this change in military tactics. However, adaptation does not explain Germany's initially defensive and geographically-restricted force posture, which was ill-suited for ending the rule of warlords and expanding the Afghan government's authority beyond Kabul.

Germany's defensive "risk-minimization" approach during the phase from 2002-06 is explicable in terms of this study's "two-level game" argument: At the international level, the German government followed the West's initially "small footprint"-approach to state-building in Afghanistan. Germany's engagement was primarily based on a desire to show solidarity with and loyalty to the US (and later NATO), rather than the ambition to rebuild Afghanistan in order to prevent a potential terrorist threat. This translated into "half-hearted commitment, with mere presence [being] more important than the impact of engagement."<sup>28</sup> At the domestic level, officials tried to maintain the German public's benign neglect regarding the operation. The government emphasized the mission's civilian aspect and reduced potential sources of German and Afghan casualties. The following analysis of German Afghanistan policy in the areas of state-building, security and development illustrates the underlying "two-level game"-logic of Germany's engagement.

<sup>26</sup> Schröder. "Regierungserklärung von Bundeskanzler Schröder zur aktuellen Lage nach Beginn der Operation gegen den internationalen Terrorismus in Afghanistan." [Author's translation.]

<sup>27</sup> Bindenagel, "Afghanistan: The German Factor."

<sup>28</sup> International Crisis Group. "Afghanistan: The Need for International Resolve." Asia Report no. 145, February 6, 2008, 12.

## 4.1. State-building

The first years of international engagement in Afghanistan were dominated by efforts to implement the Bonn agreement's political roadmap. The international engagement in Afghanistan was based on the assertion that Afghans, not the internationals, should lead the political process of consolidating peace. The international community emphasized Afghan ownership's value and promised to operate with what the UN called a "light footprint."<sup>29</sup> In reality, the "light footprint"-approach was an excuse for minimal financial and military engagement in the country. Many analysts derided the approach as "nation building on the cheap" and "tiptoeing through Afghanistan."<sup>30</sup> Specifically the US increasingly diverted its attention and resources on the war against Iraq.

At the same time, the Afghan government's sovereignty remained extremely limited, as it was heavily dependent on support from Western powers. The big donor countries, in particular the US, interfered at critical junctions of the political process and promoted a highly centralized and personalized political system centred around Hamid Karzai.<sup>31</sup>

The assumption of Germany and other Western governments was that Karzai's leadership would create a clear point of contact for international donors and guarantee a pro-Western stance of the Afghan government. The establishment of a strong, central government would allow Germany to withdraw its troops after a short period of time. Former Minister of Defence Struck admitted that in 2001 most German decision-makers assumed that Germany would be able to end its (military) engagement in Afghanistan after "two, three years."<sup>32</sup>

Germany's most important contribution to the state-building process was its "lead nation" role in the area of police reform. In spring 2002, Germany became responsible for orchestrating efforts to essentially rebuild a national police in Afghanistan.<sup>33</sup> Over twenty years of violent conflict had left the police infrastructure in shambles. Most of Afghanistan's "police officers" had neither ever been officially appointed, nor had they ever received any formal training.<sup>34</sup> Germany adopted a top-down approach to police reform which focused on the training of middle and high-level officers at a newly created police academy in Kabul. After completing their 2-to-5-year training, these officers, rather than Germany, were supposed to professionalize the police in the provinces.

This approach to police-building assumed that a small number of senior police officers could transform entire provinces from the rule of warlords to the rule of law. It also did not meet the immediate demand for police presence, training and infrastructure in the provinces. After ISAF's expansion beyond Kabul, Germany eventually established four small outposts for training in safe regions of the country. However from 2002 to 2007, Germany provided just 12 million Euro annually for police-building and deployed only around forty officers to Afghanistan.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Brahimi in UN Security Council, "4469th meeting," (2002), 6.

<sup>30</sup> Simon Chesterman, "Walking Softly in Afghanistan: The Future of UN State-Building," *Survival* 44, no. 3 (2002): 37-46, 180; Milian Vaishnav, "Afghanistan: The Chimera of the 'Light Footprint'," in *Winning the peace*, ed. Robert C. Orr (Washington, DC: CSIS Press, 2004): 244-62, 245.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Ruttig, "The Other Side: Dimensions of the Afghan Insurgency: Causes, Actors an[d] Approaches to 'Talks'," Afghanistan Analysts Network, July, 2009, 7.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Struck, "Interview: 'Ein Sozi von echtem Schrot und Korn'," *Deutschlandfunk*, February 24, 2011.

<sup>33</sup> Mark Sedra, "Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan: The Slide Towards Expediency," *International Peacekeeping* 13, no. 1 (2006): 94-110.

<sup>34</sup> Rainald Steck, "Die Reform des Sicherheitssektors – *Conditio sine qua non* für den Wiederaufbau Afghanistans," in *Unterwegs in die Zukunft. Afghanistan – drei Jahre nach dem Aufbruch vom Petersberg*, ed. Claudia Gomm-Ernsting and Annett Günther (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2005): 362-80, 365.

<sup>35</sup> Ronja Kempin, "Appendix 3: Memorandum by Dr Ronja Kempin, Head of EU External Relations, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP)," in *The EU's Afghan Police Mission: Report with Evidence* (London: House of Lords, European Union Committee, 2011): 41-47, 41.

Thus, Germany's approach to police-building and, more generally to state-building was not designed to meet the demands in Afghanistan. Rather, Germany attempted to demonstrate commitment, while minimizing risks for German personnel's safety.

## 4.2. Military engagement

Germany's military engagement was largely symbolic and defensive in the period from 2002 to 2006. In late December 2001, the German parliament authorized the deployment of 1200 troops to Afghanistan as part of the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).<sup>36</sup> The UN Security Council Resolution 1386 mandated ISAF to assist Afghan authorities in the maintenance of security in Kabul and surrounding areas so that Afghan officials as well as international personnel could operate in a secure environment.<sup>37</sup>

Both ISAF's force level of 5000 soldiers and Germany's troop contribution were very modest. Prior peacekeeping experiences indicated that ISAF represented an insufficient force-to-population ratio. According to a RAND study, the US and its allies deployed just about one soldier per thousand local inhabitants to Afghanistan in 2004. In contrast, NATO had initially deployed 20 soldiers per thousand inhabitants to Kosovo who struggled to transform this small province from war to peace.<sup>38</sup>

Germany had the capacity to send further troops to Afghanistan. As noted previously, the German parliament had authorized 3,900 troops for Operation Enduring Freedom. Instead, just 1,250 German soldiers were deployed to counter-terrorist operations in Afghanistan, Kuwait and off the Horn of Africa.<sup>39</sup> The German government rejected a larger troop deployment to ISAF and initially opposed an extension of the force's mandate to other parts of the country. Schröder explained Germany's limited engagement by arguing that Germany had met international expectations with its participation in OEF, ISAF and its existing peacekeeping presence on the Balkans: "I don't think that one expects more from Germany."<sup>40</sup>

Germany began to make a more visible military contribution to ISAF in late 2002 to compensate for its refusal to support the US in Iraq. Berlin volunteered to take over the ISAF command jointly with the Netherlands from February to August 2003.<sup>41</sup> It doubled the number of its ISAF troops from about 1,200 to 2,500.<sup>42</sup> Germany also became the first ISAF nation to create a so-called Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), a small civil-military unit to promote security and

<sup>36</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, "Drucksache 14/7930." December 21, 2001.

<sup>37</sup> UN Security Council, "Resolution 1386," (2001), para. 1.

<sup>38</sup> James Dobbins et al., *The UN's Role in Nation-Building: From the Congo to Iraq* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2005), xxii.

<sup>39</sup> Deutsche Welle, "Another Year of 'Enduring Freedom' for German Troops," November 07, 2002.

<sup>40</sup> Schröder quoted in Deutsche Welle, "Germany Passes on Afghan Leadership Role," January 31, 2002.

<sup>41</sup> Before ISAF's transfer to NATO's command in August 2003, the force remained a "coalition of the willing" under the rotating command of lead nations. The UK was the first country to take command of ISAF in December 2001, followed by Turkey in June 2002.

<sup>42</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, "Drucksache 15/128." December 3, 2002.

reconstruction outside Kabul.<sup>43</sup> Germany established the first PRT in Kunduz in September 2003. In 2004, it created a second PRT in Fayzabad.<sup>44</sup>

The official rationale for ISAF's expansion claimed it was necessary to increase the Afghan government's authority beyond the capital. Yet, ISAF's slow-moving expansion through small PRTs was hardly suited for establishing effective government control over the provinces. Thus, adaptation based on operational necessities in Afghanistan cannot explain Germany's support for ISAF expansion.

Instead, at a time of crisis in transatlantic relations, serious concerns about Germany's standing with the US drove policy decisions.<sup>45</sup> Political leaders' will to reanimate NATO prevailed over domestic considerations. According to an August 2003 poll, 55 percent of Germans were opposed to an expansion of the Bundeswehr engagement beyond Kabul.<sup>46</sup>

Despite ISAF's expansion, the period from 2002-06 was characterized overall by limited German engagement in Afghanistan. In order to maintain fragile domestic support, Berlin did not change its "minimal risk"-approach in Afghanistan. One important instrument to reduce the risks for German troops was the use of operational restrictions, so-called caveats. From late 2006 onward, it is important to note that most of these caveats were relaxed or became less relevant due to changed operational realities. For example, the distinction between OEF and ISAF became less important when in 2007 a US general took over the ISAF command. Yet, in the initial phase of the mission, four German caveats stood out.

First, the Bundestag mandate geographically restricted the German engagement to Kabul and NATO's Regional Command North (RC-North).<sup>47</sup> This prevented German troops and army trainers from permanent deployments to the more dangerous South and East of the country. Second, the German government insisted on a strict separation between the OEF and the ISAF mission. The Bundestag mandate prohibited German ISAF troops' participation in OEF counter-terrorist operations because they were more risky and controversial than ISAF's "peacekeeping" mission. Third, the German soldiers' official field instructions on the use of force (*Taschenkarte*) were long-winded and restrictive. They prohibited German troops' use of lethal force unless an attack was in process or imminent. These restrictions also implied that German soldiers were not allowed to fire on retreating attackers. Finally, Germany restricted its forces' mobility by deploying only few well-armoured helicopters to Afghanistan. Without a sufficient number of helicopters, Germany's strict rules for soldiers' access to emergency medical evacuation could rarely be fulfilled. Thus, caveats made it unlikely that German soldiers faced "any risks of being harmed or of harming others."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> The literature on PRTs is extensive, e.g. Markus Gauster. "Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: An Innovative Instrument of International Crisis Management Being Put to the Test." Garmisch-Partenkirchen: Marshall Center, 2008; Carter Malkasian and Gerald Meyerle. "Provincial Reconstruction Teams: How Do We Know They Work?," Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009, [www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB911.pdf](http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB911.pdf); Robert M. Perito. "Provincial Reconstruction Teams: Lessons and Recommendations." Princeton: Princeton University, 2008, [http://www.princeton.edu/research/pwreports\\_f07/www591b.pdf](http://www.princeton.edu/research/pwreports_f07/www591b.pdf); Peter Runge, "The Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Role Model for Civil-Military Relations?," Occasional Paper IV (Bonn: Bonn International Center for Conversion, 2009); Michael Schmunk, "Die deutschen Provincial Reconstruction Teams: Ein neues Instrument zum Nation-Building." (Berlin: SWP, 2005); Barbara J. Stapleton, "A Means to What End? Why PRTs Are Peripheral to the Bigger Political Challenges in Afghanistan," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 10, no. 1 (2007).

<sup>44</sup> Schmunk, "Schmunk 2005 – Die deutschen Provincial Reconstruction Teams."

<sup>45</sup> Elizabeth Pond, *Friendly Fire: The Near-Death of the Transatlantic Alliance* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004); John R. Schmidt, "Last Alliance Standing? Nato After 9/11," *The Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2006): 93-106, 98.

<sup>46</sup> Spiegel Online, "Widerstand gegen Ausweitung wächst," August 17, 2003.

<sup>47</sup> Deutscher Bundestag. "Drucksache 15/5996." September 21, 2005, para. 7.

<sup>48</sup> David P. Auerswald and Stephen M. Saideman. "NATO at War: Understanding the Challenges of Caveats in Afghanistan." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Toronto, September 2-5, 2009, 21.

Similarly, the Germany's PRT concept reflected two objectives: first, minimizing risks for German personnel and second, emphasizing the civilian dimension of the Bundeswehr's engagement. As mentioned before, Germany's PRTs were established in northern Afghanistan. In contrast, American PRTs were often based in insecure parts of the country and served as forward operating bases for military operations. German PRTs also included a comparatively large number of personnel for force protection, medical care and logistical tasks. For example, in 2006 the Kunduz PRT was comprised of around 470 soldiers; yet only around 90 of them were infantry soldiers responsible for promoting security in an area of the size of Slovenia with about 1.8 million inhabitants.<sup>49</sup>

To highlight the PRTs' political-civilian dimension, Germany's PRTs were jointly led by a military commander and a diplomat. They were equal partners, at least on paper. Additionally, the Ministry of the Interior (BMI) and the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) had a representative in the PRT. Initially, the German government publically promoted PRTs as a "civilian reconstruction team with a military protection element."<sup>50</sup> The government frequently used pictures and stories of Civil-Military Co-operation (CIMIC) projects to illustrate the civilian character of the Bundeswehr operation.<sup>51</sup>

However, a ratio of about 5-15 civilians to several hundred soldiers in each PRT provided the military with far greater resources and influence than civilians had over the PRTs' actions. A military logic of creating and safeguarding a benign operational environment dominated the PRTs' operations.<sup>52</sup> In practice, PRT commanders were much less interested in – and arguably, capable of – promoting effective and inclusive structures of local governance than the public rhetoric suggested. In sum, PRT operations were driven by a risk-minimizing military logic, accompanied by an official discourse portraying soldiers as uniformed development workers.<sup>53</sup>

### 4.3. Reconstruction and development

Similar to German military engagement, Germany's development aid to Afghanistan was initially very modest (see Figure II). Germany's Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Afghanistan, which comprises the financial contributions of all German government agencies to promote economic development and welfare, even declined between 2002 and 2004. In 2004, Germany contributed only 13 percent of the EU countries' development assistance to Afghanistan. From 2005 on, German aid to Afghanistan slowly increased. Yet, in 2006 German ODA to oil-rich Iraq was still three times higher than that to Afghanistan. Even the rising power, China received more than twice as much assistance as did underdeveloped Afghanistan.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Gauster. "Gauster 2008 – Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan." 25.

<sup>50</sup> Schmunk, "Schmunk 2005 – Die deutschen Provincial Reconstruction Teams," 16.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Paul. "CIMIC am Beispiel des ISAF-Einsatzes: Konzeption, Umsetzung und Weiterentwicklung zivil-militärischer Interaktion im Auslandseinsatz", Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, November, 2008.

<sup>52</sup> Sven Bernhard Gareis, "Schlüssiges Konzept oder Schlagwort? Zu Anspruch und Praxis "Vernetzter Sicherheit" in Afghanistan," *Sicherheit und Frieden* 28, no. 4 (2010): 239-46, 242-3.

<sup>53</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Viking, 2008), 351; Struck, "Interview: 'Ein Sozi von echtem Schrot und Korn'."

<sup>54</sup> Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung. "Bi- und multilaterale Netto-ODA nach Ländern 2005-2009." 2011, [http://www.bmz.de/de/ministerium/zahlen\\_fakten/Bi-\\_und\\_multilaterale\\_Netto-ODA\\_nach\\_Laendern\\_2005-2009.pdf](http://www.bmz.de/de/ministerium/zahlen_fakten/Bi-_und_multilaterale_Netto-ODA_nach_Laendern_2005-2009.pdf). Germany ended its technical and financial development cooperation with China in 2008/09.



Figure II: Germany's Official Development Assistance to Afghanistan (Net disbursements, \$US millions)<sup>55</sup>

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
GER	44	93	82	75	99	118	217	294	337 <sup>56</sup>	570 <sup>57</sup>	570 <sup>58</sup>
EU total	246	462	413	576	585	641	864	1,132	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
German share of EU ODA	18%	20%	20%	13%	17%	18%	25%	26%	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
US	8	368	486	778	1,318	1,404	1,514	2,112	2,980 <sup>59</sup>	n.a.	n.a.

Germany's aid policy to Afghanistan resembled that of other donor countries. International contributions in the first years of the Afghanistan operation were considerably smaller than in other post-conflict regions such as the Balkans. Financial contributions were especially low relative to the desperately-high need for development of Afghanistan's rudimentary infrastructure, which had been much more severely devastated than the Balkans'.<sup>60</sup>

Some officials argue that Afghan capacity to absorb large amounts of aid was limited and that lower aid levels reflected sound principles of development cooperation. Yet, this argument of aid adaptation to local conditions struggles to explain why building Afghan capacity remained a low priority for most donors in the first years. The argument also cannot account for the steep increase in German aid from 2006 onward that outstripped the slow growth of Afghan planning and implementation capacity. Rather, Germany's aid contributions matched international expectations for financial commitment, despite the clear inadequacy of initially scant and subsequently excessively high aid levels in the Afghan context.

German assistance focused on improving public access to drinking water and energy supply as well as on promoting good governance and sustainable economic development. Although the German development agencies conducted a number of useful projects, development aid was clearly subordinate to political-military considerations. For example, Germany initially planned to focus development projects on Herat in western Afghanistan. However, the focus of German assistance immediately shifted towards the North after it had established PRTs in Kunduz and Faizabad.<sup>61</sup> The German government's development assistance focused on the North to create and maintain a benign operational environment for the military. Additionally, Berlin used development and CIMIC projects to highlight the civilian/humanitarian character of the mission in order to maintain public support. Thus, Germany's risk minimizing approach also was evident in the area of development.

<sup>55</sup> Rounded figures, source: Die Bundesregierung. "Fortschrittsbericht Afghanistan." December, 2010, [http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/\\_Anlagen/2010/2010-12-13-fortschrittsbericht-afghanistan,property=publicationFile.pdf](http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/_Anlagen/2010/2010-12-13-fortschrittsbericht-afghanistan,property=publicationFile.pdf), 102.

<sup>56</sup> Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung. "Bi- und multilaterale Netto-ODA nach Ländern 2005-2009." Converted to Dollar according to DAC 2009 conversion rate.

<sup>57</sup> Dirk Niebel. "Abgabe einer Regierungserklärung durch den Bundesminister für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung zum zivilen Wiederaufbau in Afghanistan." January 21, 2011. Preliminary numbers, converted to Dollar according to DAC 2010 conversion rate.

<sup>58</sup> Pledged.

<sup>59</sup> USAID, "U.S. Official Development Assistance Database " <http://usoda.eads.usaidallnet.gov/>.

<sup>60</sup> Julianne Smith and Michael Williams. "What Lies Beneath: The Future of NATO Through the ISAF Prism." Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 31, 2008, [www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/080331\\_nato.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/080331_nato.pdf), 6.

<sup>61</sup> Rainer Glassner and Conrad Schetter, "Der deutsche Beitrag zum Wiederaufbau Afghanistans seit 2001: Bundeswehreininsatz und ziviles Engagement," in *Friedensgutachten 07*, ed. Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung (Münster: LIT, 2007): 63-74, 72.

In conclusion, Germany's defensive engagement was a response to low expectations amongst its allies and a domestic effort to prevent critical debate on the purpose of German engagement. As a result, Germany's diplomatic, military and development engagement in Afghanistan remained limited from 2002-06. At home, the German government portrayed the mission as a largely risk-free humanitarian and reconstruction operation. Leaders painstakingly avoided any mention of the potential risks German soldiers and personnel faced on their "humanitarian" missions.

## 5. From stabilization to counter-insurgency

In a third phase from 2007 onward, Berlin gradually moved towards a more visible engagement to meet NATO allies' demands. Germany began to conduct counter-insurgency operations in northern Afghanistan and the Ministry of Defence removed some of the caveats it had placed on the engagement. Germany also increased training efforts for the Afghan army and police. Finally, the German government significantly raised the budget for development projects.

How can we explain this policy change towards a broader, more offensive engagement? Some analysts with a strategic studies perspective, such as Timo Noetzel, claim that the deteriorating security situation in parts of northern Afghanistan triggered "a protracted process of military adaptation and learning."<sup>62</sup> As a result, German forces were increasingly prepared "to embrace the COIN challenge that manifested itself in theatre from summer 2007."<sup>63</sup> In this process, "German political elite largely remained ignorant of the implications of the shift from a low-risk stabilization to an unclear COIN scenario."<sup>64</sup>

An adaptation to the operational environment can account for some of the military's tactical adjustments. However, this focus on the operational level underestimates the influence of strategic decisions made at the national level. On-the-ground adaptation cannot explain military-strategic decisions that changed Germany's engagement in Afghanistan during 2006 and early 2007. For example, the government adopted the concept of "networked security"<sup>65</sup> and deployed Tornado aircrafts to Afghanistan. These decisions depended on the formal consent from decision-makers who supposedly were largely unaware of the German approach in Afghanistan.

The more visible engagement reflects the German government's two-level game: Berlin had to navigate heavy criticism from NATO countries such as the US, Britain, and Canada, about insufficient "risk-sharing" in operations. In addition, it faced growing domestic opposition to military engagement. As a result, Berlin adopted a more offensive "risk-minimization" approach to demonstrate commitment. Domestically, it increased efforts to justify Afghan engagement. The rest of this section illustrates the offensive "risk-minimization"-approach in the areas of state-building, security and development.

### 5.1. State-building

In mid-2006, a consensus began to emerge within NATO that the light footprint approach to Afghan state-building had failed. The designated Deputy Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, US General Karl Eikenberry, expressed the international community's growing

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<sup>62</sup> Timo Noetzel, "The German Politics of War: Kunduz and the War in Afghanistan," *International Affairs* 87, no. 2 (2011): 397-417, 398.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 401.

<sup>65</sup> For a detailed discussion of "networked security" see the subsection on "reconstruction and development".

frustration with the quality of governance in the country. Eikenberry warned that a “point could be reached at which the Government of Afghanistan becomes irrelevant to its people, and the goal of establishing a democratic, moderate, self-sustaining state could be forever lost.”<sup>66</sup> By 2008, the international community had significantly adjusted their state-building goals from establishing a Western-style democracy to promoting sufficiently effective state.<sup>67</sup>

Germany also revised its nationally-defined aims for state-building in Afghanistan. As of 2003, Berlin’s strategic plan for the mission, the “Afghanistan Concept” called for the establishment of “self-supporting stability with a visible and progressing democratization of the country.”<sup>68</sup> The revised Afghanistan Concept of September 2006 no longer mentions democratization as a goal. Instead, the strategy aims at a “speedy establishment of sustainable Afghan governmental institutions.”<sup>69</sup> In late 2006, Eckart von Klaeden, the speaker for foreign policy of Chancellor Merkel’s Christian-democratic parliamentary group, stated it was necessary to “adjust our goals to reality and significantly increase our efforts, so that we can achieve these goals.”<sup>70</sup> Less ambitious goals were partly due to a sober stocktaking in Berlin. However, the substance and timing of this policy revision primarily reflected the fact that Germany had few ambitions in Afghanistan that went beyond demonstrating solidarity. Berlin reduced its policy objectives to ensure it could claim abroad and at home that Germany was successfully contributing to state-building in Afghanistan.

The international community began to focus on the need to improve the quality and quantity of Afghanistan’s security forces in order to stabilize the Afghan government. From late 2006 and onward, Germany faced growing criticism to the effect that its main contribution to state-building – police reform – had failed. In February 2007, the influential American security expert Anthony Cordesman critically stated that the “German effort to create a police force was a disaster that wasted years ... on trying to create a conventional police force rather than the mix of paramilitary and local police forces Afghanistan really needs.”<sup>71</sup>

Berlin responded to international criticism by transferring the responsibility for police reform to the EU. In May 2007, Brussels decided to establish an EU police mission (EUPOL) to Afghanistan.<sup>72</sup> German officials argued that this transfer was the logical step to expand and intensify Germany’s police reform efforts. An EU mission, so the argument went, would be able to mobilize the needed resources. From this point of view, Germany’s hand-over to the EU was an adaptation to strong on-the-ground demands for police training and expertise.

However, this explanation is not fully adequate. While the transfer to the EU slightly increased the resources for police reform, the number of personnel has constantly lagged behind self-defined goals. When the mandate was drafted, the EU special representative to Afghanistan Francesc Vendrell estimated a need for about 2000 EU advisers and trainers in Afghanistan. Yet it took

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<sup>66</sup> Karl W. Eikenberry, “An Assessment of Security and Stability in Afghanistan: Statement before the House Armed Services Committee on Defense.” Washington, DC, February 13, 2007, 5. See also Barnett R. Rubin, “Saving Afghanistan,” *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 1 (2007): 57-78.

<sup>67</sup> This is reflected by the sobering language of the so-called “Paris declaration” of June 2008, see: President of the French Republic, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and Secretary-General of the United Nations. “Declaration of the International Conference in Support of Afghanistan.” Paris, December 6, 2008, [www.unama-afg.org/\\_latestnews/2008/Paris-con-Declaration-june12.pdf](http://www.unama-afg.org/_latestnews/2008/Paris-con-Declaration-june12.pdf).

<sup>68</sup> Auswärtiges Amt et al. “Das Afghanistan-Konzept der Bundesregierung.” Berlin, September 1, 2003, 4.

<sup>69</sup> Auswärtiges Amt et al. “Das Afghanistan-Konzept der Bundesregierung.” Berlin, September 12, 2006, 9.

<sup>70</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, “Plenarprotokoll 16/54,” (2006). [Author’s translation.]

<sup>71</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman. “Winning in Afghanistan: Challenges and Response. Testimony to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.” Washington, DC, February 15, 2007, <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/cor021507.htm>.

<sup>72</sup> Council of the European Union. “Council Joint Action 2007/369/CFSP of 30 May 2007 on Establishment of the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL AFGANISTAN).” Brussels, 2007, [http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research\\_papers/2009\\_RP14\\_ass\\_kmp\\_ks.pdf](http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2009_RP14_ass_kmp_ks.pdf).

almost two year to achieve the initial goal of 195 police experts, and EU members have never met the current goal of around 400 personnel. EUPOL's efforts remained "a drop in the ocean."<sup>73</sup>

Germany increased its bilateral training efforts for the Afghan police in 2010/11 and deployed up to 200 police trainers to Afghanistan. Yet, German police training remained restricted to German PRTs and did not extend mentorship to police officers stationed in the field. Additionally, the German-Afghan training was not well-coordinated with other nations.<sup>74</sup> These restrictions made the training program less effective. At the same time, they minimized the exposure of German police to attacks and reduced the risk of casualties. These restrictions were added mainly because decision-makers feared they would not be able to publically justify the killing of German police by Afghan insurgents.

Thus, German police reform activities post-2007 did not reflect the colossal need for closely coordinated in-the-field-training and police expertise in Afghanistan. Rather, Berlin responded to rising international demands by shifting responsibility for inadequate resources to the EU. Germany modestly increased its national police training program but reduced the program's effectiveness by minimizing the exposure of its personnel. Overall, Germany's engagement in state-building grew from 2007 onward, but remained driven by a risk-minimizing approach.

## 5.2. Military engagement

Germany's post-2007 engagement in Afghanistan changed most visibly in the military realm. As of 2007, Germany began to conduct large-scale, offensive operations in northern Afghanistan. It created a task force which combined Special Forces and military intelligence in order to "employ more aggressive means against identified leaders and members of the insurgency."<sup>75</sup> In August 2008, Germany took over a mobile "Quick Reaction Force" from Norway whose task was to defend and prevent attacks against NATO troops. Additionally, the German Ministry of Defence re-interpreted the forces' rules of engagement less restrictively. As of 2009, the Ministry revised the German soldiers' field instructions to facilitate the use of force.<sup>76</sup> How can we explain these significant changes that reoriented Germany's military approach in a more offensive direction?

The "two-level game" argument suggests that Germany did not simply adapt to operational challenges but responded to international pressures to increase Germany's burden- and risk-sharing. ISAF expanded its operations to the volatile South of Afghanistan in summer 2006.<sup>77</sup> As a result, NATO conducted for the first time ground operation outside Europe. Forces from the US, Britain, Canada, the Netherlands and Denmark faced fierce resistance in the southern provinces and suffered significant casualties.<sup>78</sup>

These nations called on Germany to remove its forces' restriction to the North and to participate in fighting in southern Afghanistan. The US ambassador to Afghanistan warned in an interview with Germany's leading news magazine that some countries "obviously resist the idea that you have an army in order to fight. And I have very little patience for that ... I think every nation that

<sup>73</sup> Ronja Kempin and Stefan Steinicke, "EUPOL Afghanistan: The Credibility-Test for Europe's Civilian Engagement," in *The EU as a Strategic Actor in the Realm of Security and Defence?*, ed. Muriel Asseburg and Ronja Kempin (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2009): 136-47, 145.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with former senior German official, Berlin, August 2011.

<sup>75</sup> Noetzel, "The German Politics of War: Kunduz and the War in Afghanistan," 405.

<sup>76</sup> Matthias Gebauer, "Bundeswehr darf jetzt schneller schießen," *Spiegel Online*, July 27, 2009.

<sup>77</sup> ISAF expanded its presence to the north of Afghanistan in December 2003, to the west of the country in May 2006, to the south in July 2006, and to the east in October that same year.

<sup>78</sup> David Richards, "RUSI Interview with General David Richards," *The RUSI Journal* 152, no. 2 (2007): 24-33, 24.

does not want to do all it can does not fulfil its commitment, and will at some point have to look at what the impact of their failure is on NATO.”<sup>79</sup> In the same vein, US Under Secretary for Political Affairs Burns called the removal of operational caveats “an existential issue for NATO.”<sup>80</sup>

In response, Germany adopted a more offensive military posture as described above. However, Germany’s military adjustments remained limited. They were an attempt to visibly demonstrate commitment while minimizing risks for German forces. For example, at the November 2006 NATO summit in Riga, Germany resisted demands for a permanent deployment beyond the relatively-safe North Afghanistan. Chancellor Merkel promised that Germany would consider sending troops to other parts of Afghanistan, but solely as an emergency stopgap measure.

Another example of Germany’s risk-minimization approach was the deployment of six Tornado surveillance jets to Afghanistan in spring 2007. From an operational point of view, the aircrafts’ surveillance images were not very helpful in the fight against a largely-invisible and fast-moving insurgency. Yet, German Foreign Minister Steinmeier explained that “the deployment of the Tornado aircrafts is a sign of our support for ISAF and NATO in Afghanistan in difficult times ... From my perspective we owe this solidarity to the alliance.”<sup>81</sup> Germany ended the Tornado deployment in 2010 after the ISAF Commander, American General Petraeus, wrote the German government that it would be more useful to send trainers for the Afghan army rather than sustaining the aircrafts’ presence in Afghanistan.

A final example of Germany’s risk-minimization was its approach to counter-insurgency operations. From fall 2007 onward, the Bundeswehr framed its military operations in northern Afghanistan as part of ISAF’s counter-insurgency approach. This COIN strategy was three-phased: “clear” an area from insurgents, “hold” it, and then (re-)“build” it to win the “hearts and minds” of the Afghan people.<sup>82</sup> ISAF’s vague and abstract guidelines for COIN operations provided the Bundeswehr with the freedom to conduct visible yet largely symbolic operations.<sup>83</sup> These operations usually included the establishment of Forward Operating Bases and the deployment of heavily armoured vehicles. As a result, they often resembled the movement of big military caravans from one planned destination to another. Some operations were even officially announced in the local media. By the time the Bundeswehr arrived in assumed insurgency strongholds, the insurgents had either escaped to another area or remained indistinguishable from the local population. The insurgents usually quickly returned after the German troops had left.<sup>84</sup> Thus, Germany’s COIN operations were clearly not designed to “clear” and “hold” an area. These operations were an effort to demonstrate military commitment while minimizing risks for German soldiers.

Germany’s post-2007 risk-minimization approach also included offensive operations to prevent attacks against the Bundeswehr. In the case of the 2009 Kunduz incident, the German

<sup>79</sup> Ronald Neumann, "Interview: "We Are Not Going to Evacuate. We Are Not Going Anywhere"," *Spiegel Online*, September 26, 2006.

<sup>80</sup> US Department of State. "On-the-Record Briefing on Afghanistan - Under Secretary for Political Affairs R. Nicholas Burns and Director of the Office of Afghanistan Affairs John Fox." Washington, DC, January 26, 2007, [http://kabul.usembassy.gov/under\\_secretary\\_burns\\_012607.html](http://kabul.usembassy.gov/under_secretary_burns_012607.html).

<sup>81</sup> Deutscher Bundestag. "Plenarprotokoll 16/81." February, 2007, 8128. [Author’s translation.]

<sup>82</sup> US Army and US Marine Corps. "Counterinsurgency Field Manual." Washington, DC, December, 2006, [http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/coin/repository/FM\\_3-24.pdf](http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/coin/repository/FM_3-24.pdf), 5-18-23.

<sup>83</sup> To date, the Bundeswehr has not completed a national strategy for implementing COIN, see Philipp Münch, "'Counterinsurgency' in der Bundeswehr: Konzeption, Interpretation und Praxis," *Sicherheit und Frieden* 28, no. 4 (2010): 210-16, 213; Hans-Georg Ehrhart and Roland Kästner. "Aufstandsbekämpfung: Konzept für deutsche Sicherheitspolitik? Lehren aus Afghanistan." Hamburg: Institut für Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik, 2010, 12.

<sup>84</sup> Even if the forces won smaller combats against insurgents, the German troops and the Afghan national army did not have the necessary resources to “hold”, or even “rebuild” an area, see Münch, "'Counterinsurgency' in der Bundeswehr: Konzeption, Interpretation und Praxis," 213-15.

commander ordered a US air strike against the stolen trucks because he was concerned that the Taliban could use them for a suicide attack against a Bundeswehr camp. ISAF commander US General Stanley McChrystal publically criticized the strike because it violated the spirit of a recent tactical directive aimed at preventing civilian casualties.<sup>85</sup> Following the Kunduz air strike, Germany became more cautious in using air power against insurgents. However, the use of offensive tactics distinguishes the post-2007 phase from the period from 2002 to 2006, in which Germany mainly focused on defensive risk-minimization strategies, such as restricting its soldiers' operational freedom.

Domestically, 2007 marked a turning point in German public opinion about the Afghan mission. Since 2007, a majority of Germans have been opposed to Germany's military presence in Afghanistan.<sup>86</sup> Notably, Germans did not oppose foreign deployments or the institution Bundeswehr in general. Rather, the growing opposition reflected "war fatigue" and increasing doubts about the Afghan mission's purpose and its relevance for Germany's national security.<sup>87</sup> Still, in striking defiance of public opinion, more than 70% of members of parliament have supported the extension of German participation in ISAF post- 2007.<sup>88</sup> The fact that Berlin increased its engagement in the face of growing public opposition suggests that decision-makers were primarily concerned about Germany's standing in NATO and its relationship with the Washington.

The growing public scepticism led the German government to use a more offensive communication strategy in promoting its Afghanistan policy at home. Extensive media coverage of the Kunduz air strike discredited the government's description of the German mission in Afghanistan as a largely peaceful "stabilization operation". In addition, the frequency of German casualties increased: While only twenty German soldiers died in the first five and a half years of the Afghan mission, seventeen died between May 2007 and October 2009.<sup>89</sup> This forced German decision-makers to revise their communication strategy. In November 2009, the new Minister of Defence Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg began to call the situation in Afghanistan a "war", arguably to pre-empt shock and scandalization of future German and Afghan casualties.

In sum, Germany adopted a more offensive but generally symbolic military posture in Afghanistan. At home, decision-makers opted for a more offensive communication strategy to pre-empt public criticism scepticism of Germany's engagement.

### 5.3. Reconstruction and development

German development assistance followed the military engagement pattern of increasing commitment post-2007. Development assistance almost doubled from 2006 to 2007 and has continued to rise sharply since then (see Figure II). In January 2010, the German government announced that it would further increase funding for civilian reconstruction and promised up to 430 million Euros (approx. 570 million US\$) annually for the period from 2010 to 2013. As a result, in this period Germany's annual disbursements for civilian reconstruction will be higher than for the entire amount spent between 2001 and 2006.

<sup>85</sup> Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "Sole Informant Guided Decision on Afghan Strike," *Washington Post*, September 6, 2009.

<sup>86</sup> Infratest dimap. "ARD-Deutschlandtrend Januar 2010." 2010, [http://www.infratest-dimap.de/uploads/media/dt1001\\_bericht\\_02.pdf](http://www.infratest-dimap.de/uploads/media/dt1001_bericht_02.pdf), 7-8.

<sup>87</sup> Auerswald and Saideman. "NATO at War: Understanding the Challenges of Caveats in Afghanistan."

<sup>88</sup> Schoen, "Ein Bericht von der Heimatfront. Bürger, Politiker und der Afghanistaneinsatz der Bundeswehr," 396-7.

<sup>89</sup> iCasualties, "Coalition Deaths by Nationality: Germany," <http://icasualties.org/oef/Nationality.aspx?hndQry=Germany>.

German officials claimed that these increases reflected the Afghan population's desperate needs. Yet, this argument does not explain why the demand for aid increased rather than decreased post-2001, when hundreds of governmental and non-governmental aid agencies began to focus on Afghanistan. Rather, the dramatic increase in Germany's development aid can best be explained as a response to two levels of pressures, international and domestic.

Internationally, the increase was an effort to make up for limited military risk-sharing. For example, shortly before the 2006 NATO Summit in Riga, the German government tasked the German development agency GTZ to build a road in the southern province of Kandahar. Analysts considered this to be a political gesture to appease NATO allies deployed in this insecure region, rather than a project driven by concerns about sustainable development in the South of Afghanistan.<sup>90</sup> From 2006 onwards, Germany's share of the EU's ODA significantly increased (see Figure II). Again, in 2010, Germany significantly raised its development assistance in response to the US surge. This policy, announced in December 2009, had a military as well as a large civilian component.

Domestically, increases in aid were important to communicate that Germany's role in Afghanistan remained a primarily civilian one. This was crucial as the German public did not support the expansion of Germany's military engagement. To highlight Germany's civilian approach, a 2006 defence white paper made the concept of "networked security" a cornerstone of German foreign and security policy. The concept of networked security built around the promise of stronger unity of effort between civilian agencies and the military.<sup>91</sup> Decision-makers cited the German engagement in northern Afghanistan as a prime example of this approach. However, "networked security" relied on horizontal, voluntary coordination, rather than the transfer of authority to a higher entity.<sup>92</sup> As a result, the approach "never resulted in large-scale problem-oriented policy-making, for example decisive enhancement of interagency cooperation on the ground."<sup>93</sup> Thus, the increase in aid and the emphasis on a comprehensive approach to security were both part of a strategy to highlight Germany's civilian focus in Afghanistan.

In sum, Germany has pursued an offensive "risk minimization" approach to security, state-building and development since 2007. This was a response to increasing international demands from allies to increase German risk-sharing and decreasing domestic support for engagement in Afghanistan.

## 6. The decision to withdraw

In January 2010, Chancellor Merkel outlined Germany's future Afghan strategy. Most notably, she announced that Germany planned to begin withdrawing its forces in late 2011.<sup>94</sup> German leaders have pledged that all combat troops will leave Afghanistan by 2014. What caused Germany's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan?

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<sup>90</sup> Glassner and Schetter, "Der deutsche Beitrag zum Wiederaufbau Afghanistans seit 2001: Bundeswehreininsatz und ziviles Engagement," 73.

<sup>91</sup> Federal Ministry of Defense. "White Paper 2006 on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr." Berlin, October, 2006, 22-23.

<sup>92</sup> Gareis, "Schlüssiges Konzept oder Schlagwort? Zu Anspruch und Praxis "Vernetzter Sicherheit" in Afghanistan," 241.

<sup>93</sup> Noetzel, "The German Politics of War: Kunduz and the War in Afghanistan," 403.

<sup>94</sup> Angela Merkel. "Regierungserklärung zum Afghanistan-Konzept der Bundesregierung von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel ", January 28, 2010, <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Regierungserklaerung/2010/2010-01-28-merkel-erklaerung-afghanistan.html>.

Germany's decision has arguably not been determined by the accomplishment of its mission objectives, such as establishing a secure environment in which the Afghan authorities can operate, or the promotion of a government that "fulfills the fundamental requirements of political legitimacy."<sup>95</sup> Even the German government's official 2010 "Afghanistan Progress Report" admitted that the security situation in the country had steadily deteriorated since 2006. The report drew a bleak picture of corruption and dysfunctional governance in Afghanistan.<sup>96</sup> Berlin's decision for withdrawal also predated the US special force's killing of Osama bin Laden in May 2011, whose sheltering by the Taliban had been the reason for the 2001 intervention in Afghanistan. Rather, Germany's decision followed US President Obama's December 2009 announcement to begin the withdrawal of American troops by mid-2011.<sup>97</sup>

Thus, Germany's withdrawal and its timing are explicable in terms of the "two level" argument: At the domestic level, a lack of public support for the military engagement reduced the incentives of political leaders' to engage in Afghanistan. Among Germany's allies, Obama's decision dramatically diminished expectations for (and the military sustainability of) German commitment post-2011. Chancellor Merkel argued that it was crucial for Germany's international reputation to be part of a coordinated withdrawal from Afghanistan, rather than to "cut and run":

"An attitude true to the motto 'shall others, the Americans, the British, pull the chestnuts out of the fire' is irresponsible for me as Chancellor of Germany and the government as a whole ... We have jointly decided to begin this operation – at the UN, at NATO – and we will jointly continue this operation with a revised strategy ... A unilateral retreat of the Bundeswehr would not be a contribution to a transfer of responsibility [to Afghan authorities] but an example for an irresponsible abandonment."<sup>98</sup>

The withdrawal of the Bundeswehr from Afghanistan by 2014 does not necessarily mean the end of German engagement in Afghanistan. Foreign minister Westerwelle and other top officials have pledged to support the Afghan government with military training and development assistance beyond 2014, arguing that otherwise "the Taliban would immediately regain the upper hand."<sup>99</sup> Yet, it remains to be seen to what extent Germany will keep this promise once other NATO countries withdraw their troops from Afghanistan.

## 7. Conclusions: Cooperation with a risk-minimizing Germany

This study suggests that Germany's Afghanistan policy was neither primarily shaped by a deeply rooted "culture of restraint", nor by the strategic environment in Afghanistan. Rather, Germany's Afghanistan policy is the result of a two-level game: the German government develops policy to reconcile international expectations with domestic restraints.

This insight is important for understanding Germany's policy towards Afghanistan. The scope and risk-averseness of German engagement is not culturally-determined. German leaders are likely to adjust their approach in response to strong demands from its main allies for more

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<sup>95</sup> Die Bundesregierung. "Das Afghanistan-Konzept der Bundesregierung." Berlin, September, 2008, 9. [Author's translation.]

<sup>96</sup> Bundesregierung. "Fortschrittsbericht Afghanistan."

<sup>97</sup> Barack Obama. "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan." West Point, December 1, 2009, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>.

<sup>98</sup> Merkel. "Regierungserklärung zum Afghanistan-Konzept der Bundesregierung von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel ". [Author's translation.]

<sup>99</sup> Guido Westerwelle. "Speech by Federal Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle in the German Bundestag on the Occasion of the First Reading of the Draft Mandate for Extending Germany's Participation in Isaf in Afghanistan." Berlin, January 21, 2011.



burden- and risk-sharing. Yet public opposition to the Afghan mission has limited the extent to which Berlin accepts risks for German military and civilian personnel. Other NATO countries should therefore focus on cooperating with Germany in areas that are compatible with Germany's overarching priority to minimize risks. This could include joint development projects in relatively secure districts of northern Afghanistan and harmonizing bilateral training efforts for the Afghan police.

This study's model has promise to be useful for explaining German foreign policy choices beyond Afghanistan. As a middle power, German decision-makers regard Germany's national interest as partly based upon meeting allies' expectations. Germany's political elites generally assume that Berlin's readiness and ability to support its allies in the present will determine Germany's status and influence on world affairs in the future. This means that Germany is very likely to participate in a military intervention if key allies, specifically the US, request support. Yet there are exceptions to this rule. If NATO allies are divided or undecided, demands on Germany may be diffuse or even contradictory. If in such cases the German public is opposed to the endeavor, then the German government is likely to refuse to requests for engagement. The most prominent examples for this scenario are the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the UN-mandated military operation in Libya in 2011. In both cases diverse international expectations combined with domestic opposition resulted in German non-engagement.

In conclusion, this study suggests that German foreign policy-makers play a difficult two-level game of balancing international and domestic interests. At the beginning of the twenty-first century it seems that Germany's foreign policy is no longer trapped in the chains of its history.

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# The Reluctant Warrior

## The German Engagement in Afghanistan

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Germany's engagement in Afghanistan post-9/11 is a milestone in German foreign policy. It is historically significant, as it marks the first deployment of German combat troops outside Europe since World War II. It has also heavily influenced public and scholarly debates about German foreign policy. In particular, the operation has called into question the popular notion that reunified Germany is exclusively a "civilian power", whose foreign policy culture inhibits the offensive use of force. This notion was dramatically challenged in September 2009, when a German com-

mander called in an US airstrike against Taliban insurgents near Kunduz that killed up to 142 people, most of them civilians.

This paper is part of a series that examines the strategies of four NATO members in Afghanistan: The US, the UK, Germany and Norway. Each case study first contextualises their Afghanistan engagement in light of the broader foreign policy concerns of the country concerned, and then focuses on the development and adjustment of military strategy in relation to other components of the engagement. In this respect, special attention is given to the importance of realities on the ground in Afghanistan, organisational (NATO) interests, and domestic factors.