

# Germany's Small War in Afghanistan: Military Learning amid Politico-Strategic Inertia

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In recent years the German politico-strategic debate about the war in Afghanistan has been shaped by efforts to maintain a particular national German perspective on the nature of the campaign. This particular view on the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operation derives from a national security policy discourse that has been strongly enforcing a narrative that Germany is contributing to a multinational post-conflict stabilisation and reconstruction effort in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup>

This particular German perspective on the war in Afghanistan is rooted in German strategic history. During the 1990s, the character of the German armed forces changed from a force designed for large-scale, conventional warfare at its own borders into an armed reconstruction-assistant which was to form a constitutive element of civilian-led stabilization efforts far abroad.<sup>2</sup> These new tasks stood in sharp contrast to the Cold War era, when out-of-area operations were not part of the Bundeswehr's legally codified operational spectrum and not reflected in its structure, equipment or doctrine. Respective institutions and capabilities were built up only slowly after the end of the Cold War.

The political framework for post-Cold War German strategic thinking, which was marked above all by a strategic 'culture of restraint'<sup>3</sup>, seemed to be confirmed by various operational scenarios since the end of the Cold War:<sup>4</sup> with the exception of Germany's participation in NATO air strikes in the Kosovo operation *Allied Force* in 1999,<sup>5</sup> involvement of German troops in combat operations had been avoided. Deployed in Africa (Somalia and Congo), in the Balkans (Bosnia), and in the context of the naval presence off the Lebanese coast, the German army usually served as an impartial buffer to stabilize and provide humanitarian help.<sup>6</sup> The operational scheme and conduct was shaped towards deterrent military presence to end atrocities, separate fighting factions and facilitate political and humanitarian solutions; it was supposed to be a blueprint of operations to come.

German operational conduct in Afghanistan, in particular the defensively-minded interpretation of the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) concept and German difficulties to adapt to a growing insurgency, can only be fully understood against the background of the Balkan experiences and the deriving German strategic and operational paradigm of its forces being deployed in impartial supervisory roles. Lessons learned of operations mentioned above stressed passive, deterrent presence and de-escalation principles. However, they disregarded one distinctive feature of every post-Cold War operation with German involvement: the absence of an organized resistance against German troops was fundamental to the respective operational posture. Up until well into the Afghanistan operation, German operational

deployments could afford to be both *de jure* impartial and *de facto* supported by the overwhelming part of the population in its areas of responsibility in the individual operational theatre. In other words, German forces were only deployed after international and domestic actors had started to address the underlying conflict politically. German forces thus were considered 'peacekeepers' rather than 'peacemakers'.<sup>7</sup> The post-Cold War rationale behind German participation in multinational military operations was that military presence could be a stabilizing factor; that is, it was to have a political impact by providing a secure environment for political processes of conflict resolution.

Accordingly, the scope of military operations involved above all the separation of conflicting parties and the facilitation of reconstruction work in the stabilization phase of military operations.<sup>8</sup> The framework of deployments used to be built around impartial military presences;<sup>9</sup> German forces were to act as 'buffers' between conflicting parties. Military operations were to be focused on military support and subsidiary aid, and operational rules explicitly were designed to support the implementation of mandates. Civil and military instruments were to be coordinated, but explicitly not integrated.<sup>10</sup>

However, due to operational theatre developments in Afghanistan, this politico-strategic mindset regarding the German participation in military operations has been slowly undermined.<sup>11</sup> The impartiality principle, which has been at the core of the post-Cold War German conduct of military operations, has been eroding in operational practice in Afghanistan. For the first time since the end of the Cold War the Bundeswehr is not merely deployed as a peacekeeping force, but rather acts as a party to the conflict. On a daily basis at an operational level German commanders in Afghanistan face the challenge of integrating combat operations with reconstruction efforts whilst at a tactical level simultaneously having to conduct offensive operations.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the operational spectrum has widened significantly. So far, military and political leaders at the politico-strategic level have accepted these changes only reluctantly.

The recently initiated debate on whether Germany is engaged in a 'war' in Afghanistan reflects both this reluctance and the existing constraints of German strategic discourse. Until 2008, 'stabilization operation' (*Stabilisierungseinsatz*) was the dominant term used to describe Germany's role in Afghanistan. After being criticized for minimizing a soldier's sacrifice by announcing in case of fatalities that soldiers 'lost their lives' during operations, then-Defence Minister Franz Josef Jung began to use the term 'fallen' (*gefallen*), a wording reserved for soldiers who have died in combat.<sup>13</sup> It was up to Jung's successor Karl Theodor zu Guttenberg, who took office in the fall of 2009, to acknowledge 'that in colloquial language one may actually speak of war-like circumstances in parts of Afghanistan'.<sup>14</sup> Finally, in February 2010, Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, speaking explicitly as a representative of the government as a whole, announced before the Bundestag that Germany now considered the conflict in all of Afghanistan, and thus including the northern part of the country, an 'armed conflict in terms of international humanitarian law'.<sup>15</sup> More than eight years after the establishment of ISAF, the pertinent factions of the German government had reluctantly come to agree that Germany was taking part in a war in Afghanistan. This war, of course, is a quintessential 'small war'.<sup>16</sup>

However, the state of German strategic and operational thinking does not yet match this newfound clarity in political language. In the context of the Afghanistan operation, static politico-strategic assumptions about the role of the German army as an impartial stabilization force have had the effect of alienating German strategic thinking from operational realities on the ground. During the early stages of the Afghan operation, a framework of operational thinking that was built on operational experiences in the Balkans suited both political and strategic needs. On the one hand, it ensured domestic support for a role conception of the Bundeswehr that would not regularly take part in ongoing conflicts. On the other hand, it was also adequate to meet the immediate needs on the ground: initially, Germany had pledged to support the diplomatic Bonn process and decided to participate in ISAF for this purpose. At first restricted to Kabul and surrounding areas, Germany then pledged to go beyond the capital and take lead responsibility for northern Afghanistan. It took over one PRT in Kunduz, and erected another one in Feyzabad, as well as the Forward Support Base (FSB) in Mazar-e Sharif.

The choice of Regional Command North (RC North) as the area of German responsibility epitomizes Germany's ambiguity in its Afghanistan policy. While the expansion of the German engagement reflected an honest commitment to assume more responsibility, the north had been by far the most stable region of the country, which would allow Germany to keep a relatively low profile. German political leaders wanted to contribute more at the international stage, yet without the risk of a large number of casualties and without making too many headlines at home.

Once in charge in RC North, the Bundeswehr then implemented its habitual Balkan-centric framework for operations, with the PRTs developing into veritable garrisons, while operating troops had to rely on sporadic 'presence patrols' to provide protection for political and civilian actors. In hindsight, however, over time relatively passive operational conduct allowed the insurgency in the North to take roots in northern Afghanistan, especially in the Pashtun pockets around Kunduz, until insurgents began to take control of the population in a range of critical districts within RC North. This facilitated the outbreak of the northern insurgency in 2007.

It is the argument in this article that in the context of ISAF since 2007 and in direct reaction to the emergence of the northern insurgency the Balkan-centric framework guiding German strategic and operational thought has slowly been undermined. As a result, institutional learning processes have begun to affect both the institutional and operational army. Protractedly, but in direct reaction to pressure on the ground at institutional, doctrinal, and operative levels, changes have been implemented, and commanders returning from Afghanistan have been pressing political and military elites to adapt the army to the challenges of unconventional warfare. Efforts are being made to rewrite doctrine and to increase institutional and force capability for counterinsurgency operations.

Thus, German counterinsurgency doctrine is generated from the bottom up, while an overarching framework for reform to be implemented from top-down is lacking. Under these circumstances, structural change remains a very long-winded process. However, at least operational challenges have provided the ground for conceptual debate within the German defence establishment about the military conflicts

Germany needs to prepare for.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, in the politico-strategic debate within the political and defence establishment Afghanistan is still seen as an exception or an aberration when it comes to the question for which kind of conflicts the armed forces need to be prepared in the future.<sup>18</sup> Or, as Klaus Naumann put it, Berlin 'so far has not come to terms with the transition from being a territorial defence force towards becoming a security provider'<sup>19</sup> as the key tasks for the Bundeswehr of the future.

The argument of this article is developed in four steps. First, the German army's Afghanistan engagement will be contextualized through a review of the German political discourse, decision-making processes, and the resulting politico-strategic narrative regarding the Afghanistan operation. Then, the strategic and operational impact of these aspects on the conduct of the war in Afghanistan will be analysed. Two dimensions of constraint that result from a Balkan-centric operational framework are identified in this context: a lack of effective civil-military co-operation, and a defensive operational mindset that is shaping German operational conduct. In a third step, the article assesses the deteriorating security situation in northern Afghanistan and military efforts to counter this development in two case studies. The first is Operation Harekate Yolo II in autumn 2007, which was the first army-led large-scale operational effort to counter the Afghan insurgency. The second is based around the deterioration of the security situation in the Kunduz region of northern Afghanistan. By analyzing how operational experiences drive bottom-up innovation within the institutional army, the third part develops the core argument, first by analysing the levels of doctrine, force structure and institutions and second in the case of the ongoing operation in Kunduz province. In a final step, the article discusses the potential for institutional learning and innovation under these circumstances.

### **The Politico-Strategic Dynamics of the Afghan Operation**

Over the last few years consensus amongst the politico-strategic elite on the Bundeswehr's engagement in Afghanistan has remained fragile, and debate has been shaped by evident avoidance mechanisms.<sup>20</sup> Public support for the ISAF operation has declined significantly. In May 2010, only 22 per cent of Germans supported a future German participation in ISAF; 65 per cent were opposed. Moreover, only 15 per cent said they believed the Bundeswehr engagement in Afghanistan contributed to German security; 69 per cent said it did not.<sup>21</sup> Obviously, lawmakers and politicians are aware of the German public's uneasiness. As a result, political debate about the conflict remains nervous and inflexible. In addition, for the last eight years the dominant viewpoint in Berlin has been that the Afghanistan conflict constitutes an exception and that this operational scenario should not be seen as a representative model for future conflict engagements.<sup>22</sup> For these reasons, institutional learning processes regarding the Afghanistan operation have been protracted at best and definitely not driven from the top down, that is, not due to strategic decisions made by policy-makers and the political establishment of the ministry of defence or other pertinent institutions.

The German insistence on ISAF being a stabilisation and post-conflict reconstruction effort can partly also be explained with the fact that for a long time the security

situation in northern Afghanistan remained relatively stable compared to other parts of the country. While in the south of the country US, British, Dutch or Canadian troops have been engaged in heavy fighting with insurgent forces, the Bundeswehr operated in a low-conflict situation, although it had been deployed in the same Afghan conflict theatre. Consequently, at first sight, the operational framework adopted in the Balkans seemed to be suitable in Afghanistan as well. Indeed, time and again decision-makers stressed that combat operations against Taliban and other enemy forces would be conducted by other allied forces only.<sup>23</sup>

What is more, sometimes German leaders have criticized their allies for what they perceived to be an overly aggressive approach, especially in the south of Afghanistan, while pointing at the seeming success of the civilian-guided German approach in the north. It was not uncommon in German domestic political debate to separate, at least rhetorically, German engagement in the north from the American-led 'war on terror approach' in the rest of the country.<sup>24</sup>

As an astute observer has argued, for Germany there continue to be two Afghanistan wars.<sup>25</sup> The 'first war' is prevalent in political discourse in Berlin and is supported and renewed yearly by all political parties in the Bundestag except for the leftist Linkspartei. It focuses on the civilian-led effort Germany is contributing in the north, while suppressing most of the recent deterioration and ignoring potentially unsavoury or troubling realities about counterinsurgency. Then there is a 'second war', the one that actually reflects recent developments in northern Afghanistan. In this war, there is the need to confront the uncomfortable necessities of counterinsurgency, which include offensive operational conduct against the leadership of the Afghan insurgency and the need to accept the added risk posed to one's own soldiers by being much more present in Afghan communities.

As will be shown below, political and strategic reasoning in Berlin, remained distanced from operational realities in Afghanistan, and has been inhibiting operational conduct after the insurgency began to take hold in the north in 2007. It did not enable effective civil-military co-operation and contributed towards a defensive operational mindset, which proved operationally counterproductive in Afghanistan. Both the absence of an integrated use of civilian and military means and a defensive operational posture had been shaping parameters of German operational conduct in the Balkans in the 1990s.

## **A Balkan-Centric Operational Framework**

### *Networked Security*

Under the label of 'networked security' (*Vernetzte Sicherheit*), civil-military cooperation is flagged by German policy-makers as key to the success of the Afghanistan mission and constitutes the German version of the comprehensive approach.<sup>26</sup> However, in operational practice and for the purpose of stabilisation operations non-kinetic capabilities, i.e., all means other than the use of force aimed at creating an operation environment which is inhospitable to enemy forces but conducive to overall operational aims, are critically underdeveloped in the German army, and

most civilian ministries are reluctant to get involved both with strategic issues and operational conduct in Afghanistan. Thus, while political debate in Germany stresses the civilian aspect of the Afghanistan mission, the German contribution to the ISAF operation is de facto overwhelmingly conducted by the German military. In the wake of increasingly intense operations since 2007 the gap between political rhetoric and operational conduct on the ground regarding civil-military co-operation has become more and more apparent.

Institutional integration and coordination of civilian and military capabilities remains critically underdeveloped. This missing integration of civilian and military means over time has been conflicting increasingly with the general approach within the context of the ongoing counterinsurgency operation. Although German political elites recognize the need for a comprehensive approach, they have consistently insisted on applying it only to a comprehensive approach to post-conflict reconstruction. This terminological difference between post-conflict and counterinsurgency is critical, since the German version obstructs an effective contribution to NATO's counterinsurgency operation in Afghanistan: the reference to a 'post-conflict' scenario demonstrates the German credo that civilian instruments will not be applied during ongoing military operations.<sup>27</sup>

Missing integration of civilian and military thinking on strategic and operational conduct is not an entirely new phenomenon in German defence and security policy. In contrast to the Afghanistan mission, however, this has been rather unproblematic due to the lack of operational pressure in previous deployments of the Bundeswehr. Throughout the Balkans operations the military concentrated on the provision of security in support of reconstruction efforts conducted by civilian ministries. However, in the face of an insurgency movement on the ground gaining in relevance, reconstruction efforts in northern Afghanistan have remained difficult, since civilian governmental actors lack capabilities and personnel capable of operating in the fragile security environment.

### *Force Posture*

In all previous post-Cold War deployments, there have been only few German fatalities – overwhelmingly as a result of accidents – allowing both the political elite and the public to grow accustomed to the perception that stabilization and reconstruction missions are of low risk to deployed soldiers.<sup>28</sup> So far, politicians and decision-makers have neither prepared themselves nor the public adequately for the increased risk of Bundeswehr deployments in counterinsurgency environments such as in Afghanistan. In the past, encounters with insurgent forces have been nervously observed by parliament, government, and the wider public. Risk-averseness remains dominant within German public discourse. This focus on risk-averseness, however, hampers the flexibility of German forces, as the practically existent doctrine of force protection restricts operational presence beyond bases.

The 'doctrine of force protection' is also heavily shaping force deployment concepts. The German interpretation of the PRT-concept concentrated forces and resources around bases, thus providing for force presence around bases in concentric circles. However, even in the low-threat-environment of Afghanistan before 2007,

force posture was not extended to reach beyond the proximity of bases, mainly due to security concerns. From a military point of view, the problem in assisting the spread of stability and governmental control was exacerbated by the lack of tactical means to support deployed force elements – mainly artillery, tactical air support as well as medical and logistical capabilities. Since force commanders had no manoeuvre elements available that they could deploy for operational purposes other than the immediate protection of base camps and civilian workers, a coherent campaign plan was difficult to put into practice.

Finally, the operational mindset heavily impacts on force posture. To achieve effective protection of the population in the context of counterinsurgency operations requires a constant presence, a proactive operational scheme, and aggressive patrolling. A defensive mindset of the counterinsurgent risks alienating the counterinsurgent from the population, since the focus on force protection undermines the capability to protect the civilian population. A successful counterinsurgency operation would have to follow a population-centric approach guided by a highly discriminating management of violence that also allowed for targeted offensive action against identified leaders and members of the insurgency. In Germany, the operational spectrum of Special Operations Forces, Long Range Reconnaissance elements and supporting paratrooper units of the airborne force would be suitable to carry out such tasks. However, the experiences made in several post-Cold War deployments of the Bundeswehr have reinforced a defensive force posture focused on force protection. Whilst throughout the Balkan wars the defensive presence of a neutral, multinational force alone effectively contributed to ameliorate security, the discriminate use of force is crucial in the context of counterinsurgency.

Realizing the requirements for preemptive action against insurgents, German field commanders have pushed for change. While until July 2009, German soldiers in Afghanistan were allowed to use lethal force only very restrictively – essentially only in direct self-defence – the Rules of Engagement since then have been adjusted to operational realities, largely in direct reaction to the emergence of the northern insurgency.<sup>29</sup> Under the new rules, handed out to each soldier in the four-page *Taschenkarte* ('pocket map'), German troops are now allowed to use force less restrictively in order to prevent attacks on them: 'Attacks can be prevented by proceeding against persons who plan, prepare, or support attacks or show hostile behaviour of any other kind'.<sup>30</sup> This includes using force against insurgents who are fleeing after aborting or interrupting an attack, for instance – something German troops were not permitted to do before.

Next to the politico-strategic imperative to keep troop numbers low and rather immobile, thus reducing the risk for deployed soldiers, force posture is also constrained by the requirement to provide high-quality medical care in accordance with doctrinal requirements.<sup>31</sup> According to these, during deployments abroad the army has to provide for medical treatment on par with the qualitative standard in Germany.<sup>32</sup> Strict requirements for the treatment and transport of wounded soldiers, combined with a severe shortage of medical evacuation helicopters (CH-53), de facto limit the operational range of the German armed forces severely in a theatre as geographically challenging as Afghanistan.

### Reactions to the Northern Insurgency

As has been argued before, throughout the first few years of the operation, the tasks of the German ISAF contingent were mostly limited to patrols close to bases, which were carried out with minimal troop strength and focused on intelligence gathering and the security of garrisons. Since northern Afghanistan in comparison to the southern and eastern provinces was deemed relatively calm, this operational pattern remained sufficient and civilian development and reconstruction programs were able to progress.

In 2007, however, the security situation in northern Afghanistan began to deteriorate significantly.<sup>33</sup> A suicide attack in the city of Kunduz in May 2007 left three German soldiers dead. Since then the number of attacks on Bundeswehr bases and units has increased continuously. The well-organized northern insurgency, with close links to Pakistan as well as Uzbekistan, is trying to force a German withdrawal from the region. Insurgents carry out suicide attacks and ambushes on ISAF troops and Afghan security forces. They have used small arms, remotely triggered improvised explosive devices (IED), and sophisticated rocket-propelled grenades to ambush patrols as well as improvised rockets to attack bases.<sup>34</sup> This wide array of tactical approaches increasingly forced German troops to adapt their operational approach.

A key case that made evident that the German army was forced to fundamentally adapt its operational pattern of conduct was Operation Harekate Yolo II in autumn 2007. Taliban-related insurgents had massed and gained strength in the north-western provinces of Faryab and Badghis, pushing out Afghan government representatives and creating a Taliban shadow regime through threats and open violence, thereby also blocking parts of the so-called ringroad, the main connection between Afghanistan's major cities and thus its economic lifeline. Consequently, the German-led ISAF command had to counteract these developments with a series of offensive operations. In the face of criminal groups either cooperating with the Taliban or steered by them gaining more and more presence in a range of areas of northern Afghanistan, Brigadier General Dieter Warnecke, German ISAF Regional Commander North, launched the operation.<sup>35</sup> In the short term, Harekate Yolo II aimed at regaining military control over the disputed areas of Faryab and Badghis in order to prove to the local population that the Afghan government and ISAF could provide for security. The long-term goal was to establish regional stability through the protection of civilian reconstruction programs and Afghan governance structures.<sup>36</sup>

As the first large-scale ground offensive under German command since the end of World War II, operation Harekate Yolo II stands for a significant change of ISAF's pattern of operational conduct in northern Afghanistan: counterinsurgency 'shape, clear, hold and build' operations widened the operational spectrum significantly from a pattern of operational conduct build previously around patrols for intelligence gathering and the enhancement of ISAF bases' security. Applying military and non-military means simultaneously, the operation was conceived to be conducted over several months and was carried out by Norwegian and American combat units (the United States contributed 'Embedded Training Teams', ETT, for the Afghan



National Army), troops from the Afghan army as well as German support forces. Germany also contributed force enablers such as logistics, reconnaissance, and medical evacuation units. With the Norwegian Quick Reaction Force (QRF) as its main combat element, the operation was intended to defeat and disperse insurgents and to re-establish government control. Carried out quickly and effectively, the operation succeeded in doing so, and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) assessed the security situation afterwards positively. This allowed both governmental and non-governmental organizations to take up their activities in the region.<sup>37</sup>

Despite these early successes, the operation ultimately failed to launch a civilian-led long-term reconstruction and development process in the region. The implementation of so-called quick impact projects intended to follow the application of military power in fact never took place. One of the main reasons for this was that projects depended almost entirely on voluntary cooperation by civilian organizations, since the Bundeswehr itself did not have sufficient reconstruction means at its disposal. The intended integration of civilian and military instruments into a shared operational plan failed. Thus, while the military intervention of ISAF troops and Afghan security forces significantly weakened insurgents in the provinces of Faryab and Badghis, the implementation of the operation's civilian dimension turned out to be much more problematic and ultimately remained a patchwork affair. The operational approach to 'shape-clear-hold-build' was effective only for the first two of these four phases. By early 2010, the situation in Faryab and Badghis provinces had deteriorated significantly.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, out of political fear that its strategic and operational dimensions could become too large to handle, Harekate Yolo II was cut short by the political and military leadership in Berlin. Although the operation's commander set out his intention to defeat insurgents so that civilian reconstruction programmes could take place, forces were withdrawn from the region, allowing insurgents to reassert control in the area. Moreover, throughout the operation interagency coordination at the strategic level remained poor, since parts of the government bureaucracy and the political leadership at the strategic level were reluctant to recognize the changing nature of conflict in northern Afghanistan. As a consequence of these failures, and because forces were withdrawn from north-western Afghanistan with the end of combat operations in 2007, insurgents were able to reassert control in the long run.<sup>39</sup>

Political nervousness about the reception of Harekate Yolo II caused German political leaders to downplay the significance of their original goals as much as possible. In almost complete neglect of the importance of strategic communication, the German government did not explain its goals and resulting operational success but passed over the operation in near silence.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, since German elites explicitly downplayed the dimension of the operation and argued that German involvement operation Harekate Yolo II did not represent the beginning of a new chapter in the Bundeswehr's Afghanistan engagement, German domestic debate about the changing character of the German mission was to start only very slowly.

Nevertheless, operations such as Harekate Yolo II and the smaller, preceding Operation Kuistani in the Badakhshahn area marked the starting point of a new

phase of Germany's involvement with ISAF. The German armed forces today are taking part in operations against guerrilla forces in northern Afghanistan: enemy forces focus on an approach that relies on IED of varying sophistication and suicide attacks. Gradually, they have also begun to engage in more conventional battles and coordinated ambushes. Furthermore, they wage information operations aimed at local and German populations, respectively. Since 2007, the Taliban leadership in the north has demonstrated a remarkable sophistication in establishing significant pockets of dominance and influence, most notably in districts around Kunduz. Analysts have detected a "grand design" to destabilise the north<sup>41</sup> in the Taliban's strategy.

This destabilisation in the north and the resulting pressure on German commanders on the ground directly contributed to the so-called 'Kunduz affair' in the night of 4 September 2009.<sup>42</sup> Up to 142 people were killed when the German PRT commander in Kunduz ordered an air strike on two stuck tanker trucks that had been stolen by insurgents several hours before. The bombing and its aftermath eventually led to the resignation of former defence minister Jung (who had become labour minister since then) and the forced resignation of the Bundeswehr Chief of Staff Wolfgang Schneiderhan and Secretary of State Peter Wichert.

Lack of unambiguous strategic guidance and thinly stretched operational reserves on the ground contributed to the German commander's decision to call the air strike. The PRT had been confronted with warnings for weeks of a potential theft of similar nature and the fear was indeed that trucks could be used in attacks against the German PRT or Afghan security forces.<sup>43</sup>

Obviously, the Kunduz affair has driven German debate significantly. For instance, the declaration by Foreign Minister Westerwelle in early 2010 that Germany was participating in a war in Afghanistan stemmed in no small part from the need to guarantee German soldiers the legal protection they are afforded for actions in a war. In addition, it has inevitably greatly increased media attention on Afghanistan and fostered debate on the proper role of the German army in the conflict.

Nonetheless, while the immediate impact of the Kunduz affair was certainly very significant, the affair has not so much shifted or altered the debate but rather accelerated the implementation of measures that Germany had initiated already as a result of the deteriorating security situation in northern Afghanistan since 2007; it eventually may also have a catalyst effect on the making of German strategy. Initially, direct bottom-up driven adaptation in the areas of doctrine, force structure, and institutions can be registered in at least some respects.

## **Innovations within the Institutional Army**

### *Doctrine*

Over the last few years the continuously growing insurgency movement in northern Afghanistan has forced German political and military leaders to reconsider their strategy in the context of ISAF. Until recently, the mission was politically legitimized

in Germany by emphasising that an indirect approach, which significantly undervalued the use of force, in the long run was contributing towards the prevention of the emergence of an insurgency movement.

However, against the background of a significantly deteriorating security situation in the Kunduz region, German political reasoning in Berlin and Brussels became more and more inconsistent with daily operational realities on the ground.<sup>44</sup> Despite the fact that media reports about violence in northern Afghanistan and increasing German casualties undermined the German public consensus on the mission,<sup>45</sup> the official portrayal of the German contribution to ISAF changed only very slowly. After all, acknowledging an increase in the level of violence in the German area would have amounted to an admission that Germany's post-conflict stabilization strategy for northern Afghanistan had failed. Effectively, this situation worked to strategically impair the politico-strategic centre of decision-making in Berlin.

As a result, the task to formulate, explain, and find support for a new German strategic approach for northern Afghanistan has become an increasingly difficult endeavour. Inevitably, any strategic approach dealing with the requirements of counterinsurgency would go along with a reversal away from the traditional prioritisation of force protection in favour of an approach that would further expose troops on the ground.

Thus, just at the time when Germany is losing more soldiers in combat in Afghanistan than ever before and when public support for the Afghanistan operation has reached an all-time low, Berlin would not only have to essentially admit that its civilian-guided strategy and rhetoric has failed and even been counterproductive, but it would also have to seek to domestically legitimise a strategy that would expose its forces towards more risks. This situation makes consistent strategy-making even more difficult and further contributes to the bottom-up-development of counterinsurgency doctrine, capabilities, institutions, and modus of operandi. Under these circumstances, change was to be initiated from the operational level.

In the wake of the outbreak of the insurgency in northern Afghanistan, commanders returning from service in Afghanistan emphasised the new challenges posed by the insurgency movement and, protractedly, work was begun towards an initial field manual for counterinsurgency within the ministry of defence. There was an evident need to do so because existing core documents on German doctrine for the Afghanistan operation are to a large extent ill-suited to assure a coherent and effective approach on counterinsurgency in Afghanistan and beyond. For instance, doctrine does not prepare military commanders for situations likely to occur in counterinsurgency environments. As a consequence, it is de facto impossible for military commanders to formulate a commander's intent on the basis of guiding doctrine, although this would be of critical importance on the ground. Crucial elements of the capability to conduct irregular warfare are featured in some documents and in specific contexts, but are not integrated into a comprehensive strategy. The most important Bundeswehr documents on the German Afghanistan operation are the Army Field Manual *Truppenführung von Landstreitkräften* and the December 2005 document *'Einsatzkonzept Operationen gegen Irreguläre Kräfte'*. Both documents

have to be seen as deriving out of the less complex context of stabilization missions. Therefore, neither sufficiently addresses counterinsurgency measures.<sup>46</sup> The document '*Einsatzkonzept Operationen gegen Irreguläre Kräfte*' focuses on the kinetic part, i.e., aspects concentrating on the use of force for military operations, assigning measures against irregular forces exclusively to paratrooper brigades specialized on irregular warfare. Non-kinetic dimensions of military conduct, which are essential in the context of counterinsurgency, are disregarded.<sup>47</sup> The document deals with operations against irregular forces and claims that it constitutes an equivalent to the Anglo-Saxon counterinsurgency doctrine, despite a heavy focus primarily on the kinetic part of military operations against irregular forces.

As a result, according to doctrine, German concepts focus heavily on those means intended to neutralise enemy forces, whilst 'non-kinetic' means are paradoxically undervalued. Thus, German doctrinal thinking differs fundamentally from the comprehensive counterinsurgency doctrines of allies such as the United States or Britain. The respective doctrinal documents of these countries stress the importance of population security, the training of local forces, the political nature of local operations, and other non-kinetic aspects and they assume that all force elements engaged in the theatre of operations should operate under the framework of a strategic approach guided by counterinsurgency principles. Such an approach stands in sharp contrast to current German army thinking.

The Field Manual *Truppenführung von Landstreitkräften* does not refer to counterinsurgency explicitly, since it is rooted in operational scenarios from the Balkan wars. Consequently, it does not offer a comprehensive view on counterinsurgency. Instead, it merely confirms the political position that the core mission of the army's stabilisation forces is to conduct defensive, stability, and reconstruction operations. The text covers some aspects of small wars: it states that commanders need to be able to address sudden changes in conflict intensity and the concomitance of symmetric and asymmetric threats; it calls for the adaptation of modern military paradigms such as the 'Three Block War' concept<sup>48</sup>; and it stresses the importance for armed forces to cooperate with civilian government and nongovernmental organizations.<sup>49</sup> Despite these references, the document does not adequately prepare commanders for the operational challenges in Afghanistan. Depending on the context, different operational procedures (offence, defence, delay, stabilization) are proposed without considering their consequences in a counterinsurgency environment. Furthermore, the document is restricted to stabilization scenarios and the discussion of tactical phenomena such as combat against irregular forces. Thus, considering the relative stability and the complete lack of an insurgency in the Balkan theatre, the Field Manual fails to prepare German forces for the challenges and dangers of the Afghanistan operation.

As a consequence of operational realities in Afghanistan, a debate on the necessary capabilities for operational counterinsurgency measures has at least begun. The resulting draft document '*Konzeptionelle Grundvorstellungen zur Wahrnehmung militärischer Aufgaben im Rahmen von Counterinsurgency*' is currently being discussed by relevant ministries. In contrast to previous documents, it acknowledges for the first time that counterinsurgency will be a crucial future task for the

Bundeswehr. Closely following the respective NATO doctrine,<sup>50</sup> the document places the population at the centre of all strategic, operational, and tactical efforts.<sup>51</sup>

Obviously, the objective is to offer military commanders some guidance in counterinsurgency operations. Based on the evaluation of dynamics, characteristics, and functions of known insurgencies, the document introduces four different options for military leaders: building a secure environment; neutralizing a threat; enforcing an operational aim; and supporting efforts. For the latter – previously the single most important aspect of German doctrine – crucial factors are military intelligence, information engineering, and civil-military cooperation. Within the four options, commanders need to be able to take defensive, offensive, and supportive action.

If approved, the document will reduce the gap between German doctrine and those of its allies, especially within the context of NATO. While the latter are guided by counterinsurgency principles that direct operations on the ground, German doctrine so far remains situated within the narrow framework of stabilization missions and lacks a comprehensive assessment of the potential spectrum of warfare that can be expected in theatres like Afghanistan. Thus, the draft document has the potential to advance the German army's understanding of counterinsurgency scenarios, since it for the first time introduces important terms to the discourse on doctrine and conceptual approach. Moreover, it aims to identify the capabilities needed to engage in effective counterinsurgency operations.

### *Force Structure*

As argued above, a distinct weakness of Germany's military policy in the context of ISAF results from the fact that, in a paradoxical reversal of German political reasoning that emphasizes civilian reconstruction in Afghanistan, current Bundeswehr counterinsurgency doctrine focuses very strongly on kinetic capabilities, neglecting non-kinetic issues to a large extent. This focus on kinetic capabilities has greatly impacted on force structure. Force structure and doctrine of the Bundeswehr identify specific units within the army as designated to combat insurgents or comparable irregular threats. Next to the Army Special Operations Forces (*Kommando Spezialkräfte*, KSK), the most important unit for operations against irregular forces is Airborne Brigade 31, which almost entirely consists of professional paratroopers. As a lightly armoured and highly mobile unit, the Brigade is able to cover a wide range of tasks in operations, and is trained and equipped to support special operations forces.<sup>52</sup> In a sharp contrast to German political discourse, however, the Brigade's operational focus is the use of force against insurgents.

This lack of a comprehensive spectrum of available capabilities is the result of an incomplete transformation process of the German armed forces, which to a large extent has neglected the development of non-kinetic capabilities for counterinsurgency as well as kinetic capabilities for non-conventional, irregular operations. In northern Afghanistan, it becomes apparent that the Bundeswehr is critically short of crucial counterinsurgency capabilities such as tactical air mobility, unmanned surveillance capabilities, and close-air support assets.<sup>53</sup> In addition, during the 1990s the number of highly trained combat infantry in the army was reduced to only 18 operational light and mechanized infantry battalions.<sup>54</sup>

Moreover, the German army lacks capabilities for critical counterinsurgency areas like Foreign Internal Defense (FID) and Military Assistance (MA), both at the Special Operations Force (SOF) level and below.<sup>55</sup> In the absence of designated capabilities, security force assistance units are raised from other, often armoured or artillery units on an ad-hoc basis. In addition, commanders often are not provided with sufficient political and cultural advice since those capabilities have not been implemented structurally. Moreover, compulsory conscription critically affects the military's force structure, since most of the regular draftees cannot be sent to out-of-area missions.

In the context of ISAF, these deficits in force structure and capabilities have led to a significant discrepancy between ends and means in the Bundeswehr mission: while the goal is to increase the share of Afghan military and security forces in the overall war effort, German defence planning and operational conduct continue to overwhelmingly rely on force protection and fortified bases and thus remain tied to the narrow framework of low-intensity stabilization operations.

### *Institutions*

Institutional capability to conduct operations can be divided into two dimensions. The first dimension includes military command and control capabilities as well as training capabilities, while the second refers to the government's capacity to execute a 'whole of government' approach. In the context of the Afghanistan operation, the latter is especially important, since civilian means are a crucial element of an effective comprehensive approach.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the integration of military and non-military government bureaucracies is paramount.<sup>57</sup>

Concerning institutional command and control capabilities, as a force designed for territorial defence purposes only, the Cold War Bundeswehr did not possess proper national command and control capabilities at strategic and operational levels.<sup>58</sup> In the case of an attack by the Warsaw Pact, operational control would have been transferred to the integrated command and control structures of NATO.<sup>59</sup> In the wake of the participation in multinational military operations after the end of the Cold War, the German army built its own decentralized command structure to command the individual services of army, navy, and air force in deployments. As a consequence of this, until today the military command structure is fragmented, which fuels institutional rivalries between services.<sup>60</sup>

Fragmentation and rivalry is manifested on the ministerial level as well, which results in ill-coordinated cooperation between civilian and military planning. While there does exist a small, regularly assembled inter-ministerial group with senior members from the concerned ministries,<sup>61</sup> overall the development of an inter-ministerial 'whole of government' approach, highlighted by German political leaders, remains an illusion. Rather, the German government lacks the capability for integrated civil-military decision-making and strategy formulation.

In 2008, an attempt by the main government party, the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), to reform the institutional structures of German security policy made headlines.<sup>62</sup> The centre-right party proposed to institutionalise a National Security Council as 'the political centre for analysis, coordination, and

decision-making' in the field of security, equipped with a wide array of competences. Theoretically, Germany does already have a Security Council (*Bundessicherheitsrat*), whose members include the chancellor and the pertinent ministers, yet it is essentially an institution that decides on arms exports and is barely used for any other purposes. While the CDU/CSU's proposal was short on specifics and only in passing addressed the difficulty of integrating both Länder and ministerial structures into a single new institution, it could have served as a starting point for a debate on the deficient institutional state of German security policy. However, public and political reaction was overwhelmingly negative, and the concept was soon pushed aside. One reason for this was of the CDU/CSU's own making: the concept paper also prominently argued for the availability of armed forces domestically in circumstances other than territorial defence – a very sensitive constitutional and political issue in Germany. This idea has been brought up by the conservatives for years, yet opposed strongly by all other parties in the Bundestag. Thus, debate about the build-up of institutions to integrate civil and military institutions for the making of German strategy was derailed.<sup>63</sup> At the same time, however, the distinctly negative public reaction towards the proposal also reflected some larger issues about the German discourse on security issue. The creation of a centre of decision-making sounded like it could militarize, or even worse, 'Americanize' German security policy practice, and the proposal was not even given the chance to be debated calmly.<sup>64</sup> In sum – and regardless whether a National Security Council, in whichever form, would be a useful solution or not – the making of German strategy remains organised in a diffuse and ineffective manner.

However, due to operational pressure in Afghanistan there have at least been some institutional reforms regarding the institutional structure of the German ministry of defence (M.D). In 2008, the Joint Operations Staff (*Einsatzführungsstab*)<sup>65</sup> was established, which turned the Chief of Staff, Bundeswehr (*Generalinspekteur*) into a centralized command and control institution regarding military operations.<sup>66</sup> The staff unit comprises virtually all operationally relevant units within the MoD. It thus addresses the fragmentation of ministerial strategy-making and can be seen as a direct institutional reform effort to address the German institutional capabilities gap that had been obvious for the kind of missions like ISAF. With this reform the MoD aimed at improving inter-agency processes between all ministries involved in the Afghanistan operation and decision-making processes for Bundeswehr operations. As the Joint Operations Staff combines at least some civil elements with the military operations section, the goal was to incrementally overcome the boundaries of authority among the different ministries. Since the reform constitutes a crucial and highly contested reorganization, it is an important step towards the development of adequate capabilities for operations with a wide operational spectrum such as counterinsurgency.

In sum, this review of the dimensions of doctrine, force structure and institutions has made evident that protracted reform processes have begun in the institutional army in the past three years as a result of pressure generated from the operational level. When analysing the reorientation of German force posture in the Kunduz

region since 2007, it becomes evident that the operational army has undergone profound learning processes.

### **Operational Reorientation: Kunduz**

Since 2007, more and more attacks from small villages surrounding the city of Kunduz on the German-led Provincial Reconstruction Team and forces patrolling the province have caused an increasing number of ISAF casualties in the area. The disproportionate increase of attacks in the Kunduz region is causally related to the specific settlements structure in the area. Unlike in the rest of northern Afghanistan, the Pashtuns, the main tribes supporting the insurgency in northern Afghanistan, live in small villages at the fringes of the city. These villages have a long tradition of being Taliban strongholds. Until today they provide bases for assaults on ISAF troops.<sup>67</sup>

The Bundeswehr reacted to this specific challenge by enhancing capabilities of the Kunduz garrison. The main objective of the reorientation of force posture in the Kunduz region was to increase capabilities comprehensively. Aside from strengthening reconnaissance and combat capacities, mostly by inserting Army Special Operations Forces (KSK) and specialized paratrooper units into the area,<sup>68</sup> German military leaders also proposed a range of structural measures intended to support momentum well beyond garrisons. Most importantly, a new force presence concept was introduced, which focused on building up Afghan security forces and relied on a range of non-kinetic instruments.

A central element of the concept was to enhance presence amongst the Afghan population. To do so, German military leaders introduced Provincial Advisory Teams (PAT) and temporary command outposts,<sup>69</sup> which were to supplement the PRT by extending the political and military reach of the German ISAF contingent. While the advisory teams, much like the PRTs, were intended to advise provincial governors and support local efforts to increase support for the national Afghan government, the combat outposts aimed at facilitating a more reliant conduct of patrols even in districts threatened or controlled by insurgents.<sup>70</sup> The first German PAT was set up in the province of Takhar on 23 February 2008. The team was significantly smaller than the PRT, whose troop strength peaked close to 800. The PAT was set to a maximum strength of 40, with a military share of 35 soldiers, while combat outposts consisted of around 20 soldiers.<sup>71</sup> The key remained to raise enough civilian personnel.<sup>72</sup>

The PAT demonstrated the priority of increasing presence among the population since military commanders shifted resources originally intended for force protection and medical as well as logistical standards of military bases to those of the advisory teams. By conducting night patrols in districts threatened by the insurgency, commanders demonstrated that infantry units were there to protect Afghans against insurgency activities. Moreover, the German force impact was enhanced by the deployment of long-term military patrols into various provinces, which, against the background of difficult geographical realities, served to underline the reorientation of German force posture. This willingness to reduce force protection in order to increase force presence among the population constitutes an additional crucial



change away from traditional German force posture, which until then had left little room for the deployment of smaller units among the population, as it prioritised force protection and logistical support for army units.

Another important aspect of the new force presence concept was to ameliorate the integration of military and development efforts. For the first time, troops were charged with identifying potential development projects in Afghanistan. This was made possible only by widening the scope of regular operations into areas well beyond the vicinity of bases. Both developments can thus be seen as critical developments of the German strategic approach in the framework of ISAF. Information on development projects gathered by patrols mainly served for investment into so called Provincial Development Funds (PDF). PDFs are joint civilian and military funds for on-site projects. As an effort by the German government to harmonize military and civilian aspects of the ISAF mission, they are part of the reorientation process of force posture in northern Afghanistan. Controlled jointly by numerous ministries such as foreign affairs, defence, interior, and development, they are efficient operational and tactical means of civil-military co-operation.<sup>73</sup>

A more effective communication and the exchange of information between civilian and military representatives, on the one hand, and key regional and local leaders on the other, constituted a further element of the reorientation of German force posture. Through regular meetings, important local leaders were kept engaged in military and civilian planning. By doing so, military leaders now could inform the population about pending military operations and to shape relevant Afghan opinion.<sup>74</sup> 'Key leader engagement' was a result of an increased value put on non-kinetic issues.

Another key piece of the reorientation process concerned training of and assistance to the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP). In fact, the introduction of Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLT) supporting the ANA was an essential element in implementing counterinsurgency measures in the Kunduz area. By subsequently adopting the 'partnering' approach, thus conducting joint operations and patrols, German ISAF forces have aimed to gain more presence beyond bases, get more in contact with the Afghan population, and, of course, improve and accelerate the training of Afghan security forces in the field. However, as has been argued above, the German army has neither experience in nor specifically designed capabilities for security force assistance.

Nonetheless, the German government's Afghanistan concept, as outlined by Chancellor Angela Merkel in a Bundestag speech in January 2010, significantly expanded German efforts in this area.<sup>75</sup> In line with the so-called 'partnering' concept, NATO and ANSF units would pair off as 'sister formations' of comparable size, which means in consequence that they will train, plan, deploy and fight together. The number of soldiers participating in the training of Afghan forces was to be increased from 280 to 1,400. Partnering initiatives were to be expanded, both in numbers and geographically. Until then, most of the training had taken place inside the camps; now, along with the significant US enforcement of up to 5,000 soldiers, German soldiers would significantly increase their participation in operations with ANA forces in the field. In August of 2010, in a significant step in this direction,

parts of the PRT Kunduz were added to the newly created joint Ausbildungs- und Schutzbataillon (ASB) Kunduz (training and protection battalion), which is supposed to operate in the entire RC North. More forces and capabilities were to be added during the remainder of the year.<sup>76</sup>

Moreover, Merkel announced an expansion in police training personnel from 123 to 200. For instance, Germany leads 9 POMLT (Police Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams), which were created in 2009 to improve police training.<sup>77</sup> According to the extensive April 2010 report provided by the US Defense Department to Congress, initial indicators of the success of these police training measures in RC North are positive.<sup>78</sup> Not surprisingly, the new focus on partnering leads to greatly increased risks for German soldiers,<sup>79</sup> even though the government originally downplayed this danger.<sup>80</sup>

In sum, even though there have been some changes to Germany's strategic approach, operational dynamics on the ground are driving developments and are generating bottom-up innovation and learning processes, also from international partners within the institutional army. De facto, it has been operations, and not – as should be the case – the politico-strategic level, that has guided the reorientation of German strategy in northern Afghanistan in general, and doctrine, institutions, and force structure in particular.<sup>81</sup>

While noteworthy, this reorientation has had only very modest effects. Germany is still far from having sufficient capabilities to operate according to counterinsurgency 'shape, clear, hold and build' sequences. As a report by the US Defense Department from April 2010 puts it, '[i]mprovements in RC North have only occurred in those provinces where international partners and ANSF retain the capability to effectively conduct hold operations'.<sup>82</sup> As a result of shortcomings in doctrines, institutions, and capabilities, the Bundeswehr has to operate under critical operational limitations.

## Conclusion

This article has analysed the relationship between the making of German strategy for the Afghanistan operation and operational conduct on the ground. The starting observation has been that the German contribution to ISAF is characterized by a severe mismatch between politico-strategic thinking in Berlin and operational conduct on the ground. Adaptation is driven by operational demands on the ground. It is often haphazard, protracted, and lacking in strategic direction. The focus of the article has been on the impact the northern insurgency has had on the German Afghanistan engagement at both strategic and operational levels. Until 2007 the course of the German contribution to the Afghanistan operation has been shaped by experiences deriving from German operational conduct in the Balkans. This has resulted in a defensive operational approach based on 'mutual avoidance', comparatively low risk tolerance on the side of commanders and the lack of effective civil-military integration.<sup>83</sup> However, due to ever growing theatre challenges, German politico-strategic insistence that in Afghanistan it is conducting a stability operation has eroded. In the wake of the deterioration of the security situation on the ground

counterinsurgency doctrine, capabilities, institutions and *modus operandi* have been developed from bottom up. The institutional army has been forced to gradually develop counterinsurgency doctrine, capabilities, institutions and *modus operandi* for the conduct of military operations. Processes have been slow, and are far from being advanced. As a result, to this day German counterinsurgency capabilities remain rudimentary. Insufficiencies notwithstanding, German dogmatic insistence on the stabilization character of the ISAF operation is eroding, and politicians and decision-makers are increasingly accepting the need to adapt the Bundeswehr to unconventional warfare.

In retrospect, political limitations based on fear of casualties, military risk avoidance, lack of operational experience, and doctrinal confusion about the place of counterinsurgency in relation to stabilisation have resulted in a German contribution to ISAF that has under performed severely and is shaped by strategic inertia. Over time this has contributed to severely weakening Germany's strategic influence within NATO overall. While NATO members such as the United States, the Netherlands, the UK, and Canada have embraced the Afghan challenge, and have politically accepted the resulting challenges and risks, Germany has only protractedly accepted the challenges presented to the operational army by the theatre of operations. Inevitably, such differences have severely weakened strategic cohesion within NATO, which has resulted in an 'Americanization' of the war and, subsequently, may result in a long-term weakening of NATO. The existing mismatch between politico-strategic thinking in Berlin and operational challenges in Afghanistan has affected the operational and in turn also the institutional army, and resulted in strategic diffusion. In the future, it may also effectively hinder a significant German contribution to a comprehensive review of NATO policies regarding its difficulties in achieving operational success in small wars. Frequent German criticism of US operational conduct has also left its mark within theatre, as the then-ISAF Commander General McChrystal's reactions to the Kunduz affair have shown. Overall, dissent over the conduct of the Afghan operation has had a catalyst function for a widening gap concerning strategic and operational thinking within NATO, which has made it evidently harder to agree on a common strategy, much less to execute it. Problems presented to NATO members by the Afghan theatre also represent larger issues within the Western security community, and essentially go back to different answers NATO members give to some of the most fundamental questions: what is security, how can it be achieved, and what are countries willing and able to contribute in order to achieve it? The vastly differing approaches to Afghanistan over the past few years will likely have the effect of exacerbating NATO's lack of strategic consensus in the context of operational challenges to come.

Finally, there is the issue of operational learning: Canada, for instance, may be leaving Afghanistan in 2011. However, as a result of operational learning in the south of Afghanistan and of consequently substantially enhanced capabilities, Canadian commanders insist that they have learned significantly lessons for future engagements of similar character.<sup>84</sup> German politico-strategic reluctance to identify similar strategic and operational 'lessons learned' is threatening to prevent the same effects in Germany.

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## NOTES

1. See 'Germany To Add Troops to Afghan War', *The New York Times*, 26 January 2010, p. A11.
2. See Franz-Josef Meiers, 'Von der Scheckbuchdiplomatie zur Verteidigung am Hindukusch. Die Rolle der Bundeswehr bei multinationalen Auslandseinsätzen 1990-2009', *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (April 2010), pp. 201–22.
3. This term has been widely used to describe Germany's strategic culture after the end of the cold war. See, for example, Kerry Longhurst, *Germany and the Use of Force. The Evolution of German Security Policy 1990-2003* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 130.
4. See Timo Noetzel and Martin Zapfe, 'NATO and Counterinsurgency: The Case of Germany', in Christopher M. Schnaubelt (ed.), *Counterinsurgency: The Challenge for NATO Strategy and Operations* (Rome: NATO Defense College, 2009), pp. 129–51, pp. 130–1.
5. See John E. Peters *et al.*, *European Contributions to Operation Allied Force. Implications for Transatlantic Cooperation* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2001), p. 21.
6. See Richard Connaughton, *Military Intervention and Peacekeeping. The Reality* (Hampshire/Burlington: Ashgate, 2001), p.117.
7. E. Gujer, 'Der neue Egoismus', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 24–25 July 2010, p. 1.
8. See Regina Karp, 'Germany: A "Normal" Global Actor?', *German Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (March 2009), pp.12-35.
9. See Rolf Clement, 'Auslandseinsätze und Transformation der Bundeswehr', in Thomas Jäger, Alexander Höse, and Kai Oppermann (eds), *Deutsche Außenpolitik. Sicherheit, Wohlfahrt, Institutionen und Normen* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007), pp. 123–40, pp. 126–30.
10. See Timo Noetzel and Martin Zapfe, 'Aufstandsbekämpfung als Auftrag. Instrumente und Planungsstrukturen für den ISAF-Einsatz', Study of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, May 2008, p. 8.
11. For a summary of the changing character of public legitimization regarding Bundeswehr deployments see Christian Freuding, *Streitkräfte als Instrument deutscher Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik seit Mitte der neunziger Jahre* (Hamburg: Helmut-Schmidt Universität, 2007), pp. 41–103.
12. See Sippi Azerbaijani Moghaddam, 'Northern Exposure for the Taliban', in Antonio Giustozzi (ed.), *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2009), pp. 247–68.
13. S. Löwenstein and H. Bacia, 'Bundeswehrverband: Krieg in Afghanistan', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 4 September 2008, p. 2 and D. Brössler, 'Annäherung an den Krieg', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 4 November 2009, p. 5.
14. Interview with Karl Theodor zu Guttenberg, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 4 April 2010, available at: <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/afghanistan-guttenberg-spricht-von-krieg-1.6058>. Already in November 2009, Guttenberg had spoken of 'war-like situations' in parts of Afghanistan. See Brössler, 'Annäherung an den Krieg' (note 13).
15. Westerwelle's speech from 10 February 2010 can be found here: <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/de/Infoservice/Presse/Reden/2010/100210-BM-BT-Afghanistan.html> (accessed 4 August 2010). The original sentence, quoted more extensively, is: 'Die Intensität der mit Waffengewalt ausgetragenen Auseinandersetzung mit Aufständischen und deren militärischer Organisation führen uns zu der Bewertung, die Einsatzsituation von ISAF auch im Norden Afghanistans als bewaffneten Konflikt im Sinne des humanitären Völkerrechts zu qualifizieren.'
16. The *Small Wars Journal*, for instance, offers the following approximation to the term, which reflects the difficulties of defining it: 'Small Wars is an imperfect term used to describe a broad spectrum of spirited continuation of politics by other means, falling somewhere in the middle bit of the continuum between feisty diplomatic words and global thermonuclear war. [...] Just as friendly fire isn't, there isn't necessarily anything small about a Small War. The term "Small War" either encompasses or overlaps with a number of familiar terms such as counterinsurgency, foreign internal defense, support and stability operations, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and many flavors of intervention. Operations such as noncombatant evacuation, disaster relief, and humanitarian assistance will often either be a part of a Small War, or have a Small Wars feel to them. Small Wars involve a wide spectrum of specialized

- tactical, technical, social, and cultural skills and expertise, requiring great ingenuity from their practitioners.’ See <http://smallwarsjournal.com/site/about/> (accessed 15 August 2010).
17. The German Defence White Book of 2006 states that ‘missions to prevent conflicts and to cope with crises’ are to be the primary tasks of the Bundeswehr. In its entire vagueness this ‘definition’, however, leaves enough room for conceptual developments, see German Ministry of Defence, *Weißbuch 2006 zur Sicherheit Deutschlands und zur Zukunft der Bundeswehr* (Berlin: Federal Ministry of Defence, 2006), p. 12.
  18. Timo Noetzel and Thomas Rid, ‘Germany’s Options in Afghanistan’, *Survival*, Vol. 51, No. 5 (October/November 2009), pp. 71–90.
  19. Klaus Naumann, ‘Scheitern an der ganzen Front. Das Versagen deutscher Politik torpediert die Auslandseinsätze der Bundeswehr’, *Internationale Politik*, Vol. 63, No. 9 (September 2008), pp.82–9, p. 89. Naumann elaborated his argument in *Einsatz ohne Ziel? Die Politikbedürftigkeit des Militärischen* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2008).
  20. Until this day, the German contribution to ISAF has been basically supported by both major parties, the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats, and two of the three smaller parties (Greens and free Democrats) represented in parliament. Only the leftist Linkspartei was opposed. With the end of the grand coalition by both major parties in 2009, this key policy consensus over foreign policy has become more and more fragile.
  21. In the first few years of the engagement, public support was usually well above 50 per cent. For those figures, see T. Petersen, ‘Wird Deutschland am Hindukusch verteidigt?’, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26 May 2010, p. 5. In addition, a very useful reference for public opinion with respect to security policy is the thorough annual survey by the Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der Bundeswehr. The most recent one, which already reflects the growing public uneasiness with Afghanistan, is Thomas Bulmahn *et al.*, *Sicherheits- und verteidigungspolitisches Meinungsklima in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Ergebnisse der Bevölkerungsbefragung 2008 des Sozialwissenschaftlichen Instituts der Bundeswehr* (Strausberg 2009).
  22. See Franz-Josef Meiers, ‘The German Predicament: The Red Lines of the Security and Defense Policy of the Berlin Republic’, *International Politics*, Vol. 44, No. 5 (September 2007), pp. 623–44.
  23. See The German Federal Government, *Das Afghanistan-Konzept der Bundesregierung* (Berlin: Bundesregierung, September 2008), p. 9.
  24. See Stefan Kornelius, *Der unerklärte Krieg. Deutschlands Selbstbetrug in Afghanistan* (Hamburg: edition Körber-Stiftung, 2009), pp. 36–42.
  25. See G. Appenzeller, ‘Der eine und der andere Krieg’, *Der Tagesspiegel*, 3 August 2010, p. 1.
  26. Bundeswehr Chief of Staff General Volker Wierer, ‘Von afghanischem Boden darf keine Gefahr mehr ausgehen’, *Die Welt* online, 16 Feb. 2010, available at: <http://www.welt.de/die-welt/debatte/article6414780/Von-afghanischem-Boden-darf-keine-Gefahr-mehr-ausgehen.html> (accessed 15 August 2010).
  27. See Timo Noetzel and Benjamin Schreer, ‘Missing Links: The Evolution of German Counter-Insurgency Thinking’, *The RUSI Journal*, Vol. 154, No. 1 (February 2009), pp. 16–22, pp.17f.
  28. An overview of the soldiers who have died while deployed abroad can be found here: [http://www.bundeswehr.de/portal/a/bwde/kcxml/04\\_Sj9SPYkssy0xPLMnMz0vM0Y\\_QjzKLd443cTQCSYGYxgEh-pEwsaCUVH1fj\\_zcVH1v\\_QD9gtyIckdHRUUATi3qcq!!/delta/base64xml/L2dJQSEvUUt3QS80SVVFLzZfQ180QTI!/?yw\\_contentURL=%2FC1256EF4002AED30%2FW27Q3DTU9411NFODE%2Fcontent.jsp](http://www.bundeswehr.de/portal/a/bwde/kcxml/04_Sj9SPYkssy0xPLMnMz0vM0Y_QjzKLd443cTQCSYGYxgEh-pEwsaCUVH1fj_zcVH1v_QD9gtyIckdHRUUATi3qcq!!/delta/base64xml/L2dJQSEvUUt3QS80SVVFLzZfQ180QTI!/?yw_contentURL=%2FC1256EF4002AED30%2FW27Q3DTU9411NFODE%2Fcontent.jsp) (accessed 3 August 2010).
  29. M. Schmidt, ‘Bundeswehr erhält neue Einsatzregeln’, *Der Tagesspiegel*, 27 July 2009, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/deutschland/bundeswehr-erhaelt-neue-einsatzregeln/1566274.html> (accessed 2 August 2010).
  30. J. Bittner, ‘Grundkurs Krieg’, *Die Zeit*, 6 August 2009. Bittner quotes a few sentences from the *Taschenkarte*.
  31. See Ministry of Defence, *HDv 100/100 Truppenführung von Landstreitkräften*, Bonn 2006, No. 33014-33017
  32. For an example of the Bundeswehr’s presentation of its medical care in the PRT Kunduz, see [http://www.bundeswehr.de/portal/a/bwde/einsaetze/?yw\\_contentURL=/C1256EF4002AED30/W2764ED4348INFODE/content.jsp](http://www.bundeswehr.de/portal/a/bwde/einsaetze/?yw_contentURL=/C1256EF4002AED30/W2764ED4348INFODE/content.jsp) (accessed 6 August 2010). The need to provide for a very high standard of care for all soldiers contributed to the comparatively large size of the PRT in Kunduz.
  33. For a good survey of the origins and the evolution of the northern insurgency, see Antonio Giustozzi and Christoph Reuter, ‘The Northern Front. The Afghan Insurgency Spreading Beyond the Pashtuns’, Afghan Analysts Network, AAN Briefing Paper 03/2010.

34. See, for example, M. Feldenkirchen, M. Gebauer, and S. Najafizada, 'Angriff auf Bundeswehr war militärisch geplant', *Spiegel Online*, 30 April 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,622125,00.html> (accessed 25 June 2010).
35. For Warnecke's perspective on Harekate Yolo II and an analysis of the insurgents' strategy in Badghis and Faryab, see Dieter Warnecke, 'Harekate Yolo II – Sicherheit für Afghanistan. Mit militärischen Mitteln den Wiederaufbau möglich machen', *Europäische Sicherheit*, Vol. 57, No. 5 (May 2008), pp. 16–20.
36. See A. Szandar and Y. Musharbash, 'Bundeswehr an Gefechten in West-Afghanistan beteiligt', *Spiegel Online*, 11 November 2007, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,516455,00.html> (accessed 3 June 2010).
37. On the composition of the operation and its temporary success in facilitating aid delivery see Warnecke, *Harekate Yolo II* (note 35) pp. 19–20.
38. Giustozzi and Reuter, *The Northern Front*, p. 3 (note 33).
39. With data on both provinces: Matthew C. DuPée, 'Badghis Province: Examining the Taliban's North-western Campaign', *The Culture & Conflict Review*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (December 2008), [http://www.nps.edu/programs/ccs/journal/December/202008/Badghis\\_Final\\_Draft.pdf](http://www.nps.edu/programs/ccs/journal/December/202008/Badghis_Final_Draft.pdf) (accessed 14 October 2010).
40. See R. Birnbaum and H. Monath, 'Bundeswehr operiert an der Mandatsgrenze', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 8 November 2007.
41. Giustozzi and Reuter, *The Northern Front*, pp. 3–4 (note 33).
42. The fullest media account on that night and its aftermath is: U. Demmer *et al.*, 'Ein deutsches Verbrechen', *Der Spiegel*, 1 February 2010, pp. 34–57.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
44. US Department of Defense, 'Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghanistan National Security Forces', Report to Congress, April 2010, pp. 31–2.
45. See Petersen, 'Wird Deutschland am Hindukusch verteidigt?' (note 21), p. 5.
46. See Noetzel and Zapfe, 'NATO and Counterinsurgency' (note 4), pp. 138–40.
47. See Ministry of Defence, *Einsatzkonzept Operationen gegen Irreguläre Kräfte*, Bonn 2005, p. 6.
48. Charles C. Krulak, 'The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War', *Marines Magazine*, January 1999, [http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/strategic\\_corporal.htm](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/strategic_corporal.htm) (accessed 10 August 2010).
49. See Ministry of Defense, *HDv 100/100 Truppenführung von Landstreitkräften*, Bonn 2006, No. 3012, No. 5010, No. 5011.
50. See *Allied Joint Publication for Counterinsurgency 3.4.4*, 13 November 2008, p. 6.
51. See Ministry of Defence, *Konzeptionelle Grundvorstellungen zur Wahrnehmung militärischer Aufgaben im Rahmen von Counterinsurgency* (DRAFT, 19 May 2009), p. 15.
52. In addition to the army's KSK, German Special Operations Forces include the navy's *Kampfschwimmer*.
53. For its roughly 5,000 troops, Germany has deployed only 6–8 heavy transport helicopters CH-53 GS, some of which are reserved for MEDEVAC purposes. Furthermore, tactical air support is exclusively provided by allied forces.
54. These include mechanized infantry (*Panzergrenadiere*), motorized infantry (*Jäger*), specialized mountain infantry (*Gebirgsjäger*) as well as paratroopers (*Fallschirmjäger*).
55. See Timo Noetzel and Benjamin Schreer, 'Spezialkräfte der Bundeswehr. Strukturerefordernisse für den Auslandseinsatz', Study of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, September 2007, p. 23.
56. Civilian actors have been, for example, a crucial component of the British strategy in Helmand since 2008. See Theo Farrell and Stuart Gordon, 'COIN Machine. The British Military in Afghanistan', *The RUSI Journal*, Vol. 154, No. 3 (June 2009), pp. 18–25, p. 20.
57. See Paul Cornish, 'The United States and Counterinsurgency: "Political First, Political Last, Political Always"', *International Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 1 (2009), pp. 61–79, pp. 71–5.
58. See Noetzel and Zapfe, 'NATO and Counterinsurgency' (note 4), p. 130.
59. See Bruno Thoß, 'Einleitung', in Helmut R. Hammerich *et al.* (eds), *Das Heer 1950-1970. Konzeption, Organisation, Aufstellung* (München: Oldenburg, 2006), pp. 1–15, pp. 5–6.
60. Each of the four services has its own service headquarters with a fifth 'Operational Headquarters' (*Einsatzführungskommando*) supposed to lead the joint deployments. In practice, the responsibility of national operational leadership is not adequately unified in one joint headquarters, which leads to redundancies and rivalries.
61. Kornelius, *Der unerklärte Krieg* (note 24), p. 89.

62. 'Eine Sicherheitsstrategie für Deutschland. Beschluss der CDU/CSU-Bundestagsfraktion vom 6. Mai 2008', <http://www.cdu.de/doc/pdfc/080506-beschluss-fraktion-sicherheitsstrategie.pdf> (accessed 4 August 2010), pp. 12–13.
63. Naumann, *Einsatz ohne Ziel?* (note 19), pp. 13–14.
64. For some of the reactions see S. Weiland, 'SPD und Opposition blasen zur Jagd auf einen Papiertiger', *Spiegel Online*, 7 May 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,552059,00.html> (accessed 5 August 2010). Newspapers from the left to the conservative side were quick to point out parallels to the US National Security Council and eventually most considered the proposal to be ill advised.
65. The term 'Joint Commitment Staff' is also used as a denomination.
66. See Timo Noetzel and Martin Zapfe, 'Der Einsatz im Fokus? Das Verteidigungsministerium und die Auslandseinsätze', in Robert Glawe (ed.), *Eine neue deutsche Sicherheitsarchitektur – Impulse für die nationale Strategiedebatte* (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2009), pp. 187–94.
67. See 'Operations Update by Major General Bill Mayville, US Army', <http://www.isaf.nato.int/en/the-afghan-hands-blog/commanders-blog/ops-update-the-state-of-the-insurgency.html> (accessed 3 June 2010).
68. Within the German Army, the KSK is supposed to be the 'Tier' 1 SOF, while the paratroopers, in parts, are intended to be the supporting 'Tier 2', comparable to the US Army Rangers under SOCOM.
69. These are the German equivalent to US combat outposts that were conceptualized during the predominantly urban 'surge' in 2007 and whose concept is increasingly transferred to Afghanistan's rural areas of operations. See Kimberly Kagan, 'Enforcing the Law: The Baghdad Security Plan Begins' (Washington DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2007), p. 10.
70. See Noetzel and Zapfe, 'Aufstandsbekämpfung als Auftrag' (note 10), pp. 17–18.
71. On the introduction of the PATs by Germany see German Federal Government, *Afghanistan-Konzept* (note 23), p. 41.
72. Interview with Bernhard Gertz, Chairman of the Bundeswehr Association, *Der Tagesspiegel*, 10 October 2008, p. 4.
73. [http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Aussenpolitik/RegionaleSchwerpunkte/AfghanistanZentralasien/Downloads/factsheet\\_\\_provinzentwicklungsfonds.pdf](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Aussenpolitik/RegionaleSchwerpunkte/AfghanistanZentralasien/Downloads/factsheet__provinzentwicklungsfonds.pdf) (accessed 6 August 2010).
74. Informing the civilian population of military operations that are about to be conducted has been a new, if criticized, feature of operations since General McChrystal took command of ISAF. See Frank Gardner, 'Afghan Operation Moshtarak Places Success Over Surprise', *BBC News*, 8 February 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8505179.stm> (accessed 3 June 2010).
75. Merkel's speech (28 January 2010) is available at: <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Regierungserklaerung/2010/2010-01-28-merkel-erklaerung-afghanistan.html> (accessed 4 August 2010).
76. [http://www.einsatz.bundeswehr.de/portal/a/einsatzbw/aktuelle\\_einsaetze/afghanistan?yw\\_content\\_URL=/C1256F1D0022A5C2/W287YEXH381INFODE/content.jsp.html](http://www.einsatz.bundeswehr.de/portal/a/einsatzbw/aktuelle_einsaetze/afghanistan?yw_content_URL=/C1256F1D0022A5C2/W287YEXH381INFODE/content.jsp.html) (accessed 5 August 2010).
77. <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/factsheets-april/Apr2010%20-%20ANP.pdf> (accessed 5 August 2010).
78. 'Report to Congress' (note 44), p. 121.
79. Four German members of the OMLT were killed in an attack close to Baghlan. See M. Gebauer, 'Ausbilder auf tödlicher Mission', *Spiegel Online*, 15 April 2010, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,689279,00.html> (accessed 5 August 2010).
80. Peter Blechschmidt, 'Mehr Geld, mehr Soldaten, mehr Risiko', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 27 January 2010, p. 6.
81. Timo Noetzel, 'Germany', in Thomas Rid and Thomas Keaney (eds), *Understanding Counterinsurgency Warfare. Doctrine, Operations, Challenges* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2010), pp. 46–58.
82. 'Report to Congress' (note 44), p.130.
83. Giustozzi and Reuter, *The Northern Front* (note 33) p.2.
84. B. Champion-Smith and A. Woods, 'Canadian Army Well-Prepared For Future Roles, Thanks To Afghan Mission, Top Commander Says', *thestar.com*, 15 June 2010, <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/afghanmission/article/824026-canadian-army-well-prepared-for-futureroles-thanks-to-afghan-mission-top-commander-says?bn=1> (accessed 7 August 2010).