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AICGS POLICY REPORT

CROSSING THE RED LINES? THE GRAND COALITION AND THE PARADOX OF GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY

Franz-Josef Meiers

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FOREWORD

As the U.S. presidental election in 2008 and the German parliamentary election in 2009 loom large on the horizon, the topic of Afghanistan and the joint ISAF mission in the country is in the public discourse on both sides of the Atlantic. The U.S. finds itself overstreched in resources—both military and economic—and engaged in two complex wars. While the unpopular Iraq War is the focus of much debate, the conflict in Afghanistan continues, with successes and setbacks, for the United States and its NATO partners.

Germany, too, finds itself constantly subjected to political agendas and struggling to reconcile its culture of restraint with the commitments to and demands from its NATO allies. As the ISAF mission in Afghanistan takes an increasing toll on all participating nations, Germany finds itself confronted with calls for help from its NATO allies—not only from the United States. Germany's position is such that not only is the success of the joint ISAF mission in jeopardy, critics claim, but the very concept of allied solidarity is being put in question.

In this Policy Report, Dr. Franz-Josef Meiers discusses the challenges of German foreign policy through the prism of three case studies: the transformation of the Bundeswehr into an expeditionary force able to engage in multinational operations; the potential for Germany's diplomacy efforts in easing conflicts, as could happen in Iran; and Germany's future role in NATO and its willingness to take on more burden-sharing in the NATO mission in Afghanistan.

Germany's political constraints on its foreign policy must be understood by its partners in order to develop realistic expectations of what Germany will be willing to contribute. Here, Dr. Meiers describes how to engage Germany in a multilateral commitment in Afghanistan and how to convince Germany that its security efforts are also part of a lasting development and stability effort. His recommendations consider the political climate on both sides of the Atlantic as the conflict in Afghanistan continues, despite changing administrations.

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Dr. Meiers worked as a junior clerk at Privatbank Sal. Oppenheim & Cie., Cologne, from June 1986 until December 1988. In January 1989 he became a Research Fellow at the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, Switzerland. In October 1993 he joined the research institute of the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) in Bonn and Berlin. In August 1999, he was appointed head of the Euro-Atlantic Relations research group within the Center of European Studies (ZEI) at the University of Bonn. Since April 2007, he has been a senior lecturer in International Relations at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg. In addition, Dr. Meiers has taught U.S. foreign policy at the University of Münster since October 1996.

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01

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This essay discusses the development of Germany's security and defense policy in the period after Chancellor Angela Merkel took power in November 2005. Three issues which are of central importance to the future direction of Germany's security and defense policy within the Euro-Atlantic framework of action will be the focus: the transformation of the Bundeswehr into an expeditionary force, Germany's role in international efforts to bring about a solution of Iran's nuclear issue, and the participation of German armed forces in international missions alongside allied partners.

The empirical analysis shall answer three interrelated questions: Will the "paradox of German foreign policy—of policy continuity in a changing world"[1] come to an end in the era of Chancellor Merkel? Is Merkel's election a seminal event which heralds significant modifications in German security and defense policy? Can the Grand Coalition meet the wide expectations of allied partners to take a bigger profile in the management of the most critical security issues in the twenty-first century?

Unlike the Cold War, united Germany no longer exists in a geopolitical cocoon, sheltered from having to deal with broader security issues dealt with by its major allies. As the country grows larger in geographic, demographic, and economic terms, the Berlin Republic is no longer the front-line consumer of security but is a potential co-producer of security in a wider Europe. The double change of a unified Germany in a fundamentally altered post-Cold War Europe means that German decision-makers have to define the country's international role and responsibilities in different terms from that of the past. As Timothy Garton Ash aptly put it, while "the state's external dependencies have been decisively reduced, the external demands on it have significantly increased."[2] The weight of the new realities of the post-9/11 world confronts the Berlin Republic with new responsibilities which the Bonn Republic did not have to take into account.

While the end of the Cold War transformed Germany and its external environment, the trajectory of German foreign policy has not changed. The country in the center of Europe remains defiantly aligned to the two core principles that guided the foreign policy of the Bonn Republic so successfully for more than four decades: a reflexive commitment to the imperatives of multilateral cooperation and a faithful adherence to the culture of restraint. The high degree of continuity in Germany's traditional grand strategy confronts German decision-makers with an unenviable question: How successful can the insistence of continuity be in view of the double new preconditions of united Germany in a transformed Europe and a world at large? In other words, can the Grand Coalition close the apparent gap[3] between Germany's institutional commitments and its readiness to deal with their practical consequences in a fundamentally changed world?

The question of continuity and change relates to another issue: Germany's relations to the United States. This relationship—Walter Leissler Kiep once

described as "our second basic law"—went through one of its worst crises since the end of World War II when the George W. Bush administration prepared for disarmament of Iraq through "regime change" in summer 2002. The public opposition against what then-Chancellor Gerhard Schröder stigmatized as "adventure" severely questioned Germany's long-standing tradition of Atlanticism and caused deep resentment in Washington.[4] Chancellor Merkel took office in November 2005 promising to re-establish a constructive and balanced relationship with Washington and to position Germany as a reliable U.S. ally after the years of turmoil under her predecessor.[5]

Merkel's strong commitment to a revitalized transatlantic relationship raised wide expectation in the United States that, under her chancellorship, Germany would return to its "accustomed friendliness"[6] vis-à-vis the United States. Henry Kissinger argued that the election of Angela Merkel marks a "seminal event." As a representative of the third post-war generation, she is less in thrall to the emotional pro-Americanism of the 1950s and 1960s but not shaped by the anti-American passions of the so-called "68 generation" of Schröder and Joschka Fischer. With her "systematic scientist's approach" she will return to a prudent middle way between the United States and France and help restrain the anti-American temptation in German politics stoked by her predecessor. Thus, "significant modifications" in German foreign policy might prove feasible.[7]

For the Bush administration, Merkel's ascendancy promised a unique opportunity to re-establish Germany's key position as the continental anchor of the Atlantic Alliance and to increase German-U.S. cooperation on the international stage. Merkel's apparent readiness to accept greater German responsibility for international security and peace raised expectations that Berlin would become a true partner in leadership and assume a bigger profile in the international arena commensurate with the country's resources and status as a leading power in Europe. President Bush offered Chancellor Merkel a partnership of problem-solvers in which Germany takes "a decisive role" in the War on Terror.[8] And he emphasized a crucial role in building coalitions to address international issues like Iran's nuclear program: "We definitely need Germany's help on issues like Iran so that we can […] solve the issues diplomatically."[9]

Some observers suggest that with the contribution of German naval forces to the UNIFIL II mission in Lebanon the Merkel government is "moving out of [Germany's] safe house of moral comfort and limited involvement."[10] Other voices conclude that Germany, more than sixty years after its defeat in World War II, appears to be "shedding an abiding legacy." The Berlin Republic is moving toward developing military forces that "reflect [the country's] global economic clout." German decision-makers are poised to further extend the reach and effectiveness of the Bundeswehr as reflected in the White Paper 2006.[11] The question is whether the Merkel government will meet allied expectations and take a bigger profile in international crisis management alongside its partners.

This essay takes up the argument of Peter Katzenstein who explained the different views taken by Germany, Japan, and the United States on counterterrorism policies after 9/11 through the prism of strategic culture. The different conceptions, interpretations, and processes of threat construction—and the resulting distinctive policy responses—are conceived by societal actors (government, parliament, public) based on their self-conception. Explaining Germany's contemporary role within the realm of security and defense policy through the prism of strategic culture suggests that

- the key determinants of German security and defense policy operate at the domestic level;
- ideational-cultural factors subsumed in the culture of restraint shape, to a high degree, the definition of national interests and the decision-makers' response to external demands;
- German foreign policy behavior differs from that of its allies and partners when confronted with the same security issues;
- Germany's response to changing external require-

ments evolves in a "maddeningly sluggish pace."[12]

Understanding the domestic context in which the federal government operates, is, therefore, indispensable for what to expect from German foreign policy under Merkel's chancellorship. This essay argues that the effects of Germany's distinctive culture of restraint are manifest in the country's behavior and actions in international crisis management, as illustrated in the three case studies. They help to explain the widening chasm between German and American approaches to international security issues after 9/11 which go well beyond the partisan composition of a federal government and a specific issue like the Iraq crisis in 2002-3. The findings shall illustrate the "unenviable predicament"[13] the Berlin Republic faces in the realm of security and defense policy in the post-9/11 world. The dilemma should give allied partners a clearer picture and a better understanding of the boundaries of Germany's contributions to common actions. Lastly, the analysis should provide allied partners points of reference how best to deal with the German predicament, particularly in regard to the burning issue of whether German forces should be sent to the turbulent south of Afghanistan.

The essay proceeds as follows: it begins with a brief review of Germany's vision of a liberal world order, discussing the two major principles which have guided German foreign and security policy since the founding of the Bonn Republic in May 1949: the country's reflexive commitment to multilateral cooperation (never alone) and the prevailing culture of restraint (never again). It then turns to three case studies. The first discusses the transformation of German armed forces into an expeditionary force that can participate in multinational operations anywhere in the world, at short notice, and across the entire mission spectrum down to high-intensity operations, as well as efforts of the German government to improve the operational readiness across the entire mission spectrum. Given the willingness of the Schröder government to assume a more visible German role on the world diplomatic stage, the second case study looks at how the Merkel government defines the conflict over Iran's nuclear program and how it should be resolved. In view of the NATO summit in Bucharest in early April 2008, the third case study focuses on Germany's role within the NATO-run International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, the reasons why the Merkel government, like her predecessor, abides by the national caveats imposed on Germany's ISAF contribution, and the widespread criticism they have caused within the Alliance. The essays concludes with a brief summary of the results and provides some policy options how best to deal with the German predicament.

02

COOPERATION AND RESTRAINT

COOPERATION AND RESTRAINT: THREE CASE STUDIES

Since the founding of the Bonn Republic on 23 May 1949, German foreign policy has been driven by an unequivocal commitment to multilateral cooperation, consultation and coordination, and a deep-rooted skepticism of the exercise of military power. German foreign policy is geared toward establishing a net of interdependencies in the international system which excludes a return to history—power politics, belligerent behavior, and war as policy by other means.

Germany's Liberal World Order Vision

Germany seeks to codify behavior in international relations (rulification/*Verrechtlichung*) and to civilize them on the basis of the rules and norms of Western democratic societies (judification/*Zivilisierung*). Germany's propensity for comprehensive multilateralism emphasizes cooperation and integration, the promotion of shared values and common interests, and the rule of international law and international institutions.14 Germany's predominant behavior of multilateral reflex is guided by a strong interest in assuring an expectation and a reputation as a reliable and predictable ally and partner. Helga Haftendorn aptly summarizes the clear preference to act as part of an international community as Germany's "self-confident self-integration in larger political contexts."15

The culture of restraint includes a pronounced preference within German society as a whole for institutionalizing and civilizing international relations; the promotion of cooperative efforts of multinational conflict resolution; a reluctant and restrictive attitude toward the appropriateness and usefulness of military force as a legitimate means of affecting policy outcomes; and a strong aversion to assuming a leadership role in international security affairs. Military force may be used as a last resort when all diplomatic negotiations and economic incentives have failed to prevent an imminent military conflict or to contain an aggressor. The use of force is restricted to clearly defined circumstances—territorial and alliance defense, prevention of a humanitarian catastrophe, peace-keeping, peace-support, and peace-enforcement missions—and permissible only on the basis of a sound legal mandate: a UN Security Council resolution. Lastly, the use of force is embedded in a comprehensive security approach which emphasizes political and diplomatic initiatives and economic development assistance, as well as constitutional, humanitarian, and social measures to address the economic, ethnic, political, and social root causes of a violent conflict.

Contrary to the predictions of the neorealist school of international relations—that Germany would undergo a pronounced change characterized by much greater autonomy and unilateralism—Germany's foreign and security policy has been marked by a high degree of continuity. The Berlin Republic remains wedded to the norms and principles of a liberal world order; embedded in a dense web of Euro-Atlantic institutions of action, the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); a

passionate advocate for the deepening and widening of these European and transatlantic institutions; and strongly committed to the rule of law and the promotion of international institutions and cooperative and multilateral conflict resolution.

The normative foundation of the foreign policy of the Berlin Republic is the *Grundgesetz* (Basic Law). The key principles for the country's foreign relations can be found in Articles 23 through 26.[16] They are the imperative for peace, Europeanization, and cooperative multilaterism. State authorities and all citizens are obliged to work for the preservation of peaceful relations between nations. Article 26 makes this imperative for peace emphatically clear: "Acts tending to and undertaken with the intent to disturb peaceful relations between nations, particularly preparations for aggressive war, are considered unconstitutional and are treated as an punishable offense." The revised Article 23 and the revised preamble to the Basic Law underline the importance of close ties between unified Germany and the EU and commits state authorities to the development of a united Europe. Article 24 commits German foreign policy to cooperative internationalism; to this end, the Basic Law explicitly supports the possible transfer of sovereign powers to intergovernmental institutions and allows the participation of German armed forces in multilateral undertakings to preserve peace and security premised on the principles of the United Nations (UN) Charter. The 2006 White Paper affirms the country's understanding of effective multilateralism based on institutionalized cooperation in multilateral forums, the recognition of the central role of the UN Security Council for peace and international security, the rule of law, and peaceful solutions of international conflicts.[17]

In sum, a multilateral and integrationist orientation within an ever-thicker web of international institutions, the establishment of long-term cooperative relationships based on the rule of law and institutional practices, and a reluctant and restrictive attitude toward the use of force continue to be the bedrock of Germany's foreign and security policy. Post-war legacies best explain the persistence of the multilateral reflex and the culture of restraint as the cornerstones of German foreign policy. The German case clearly demonstrates the logic of path dependency of the country's reflexive institutional commitments in the post-1989 world which "have become ingrained, even assumed"[18] as well as its ideational factors—norms, beliefs, values—as the defining and driving force of Germany's security and defense policy.

This high degree of continuity has settled the traditional German Question—Germany's imperial quest for (military) power and hegemony in a wider Europe—once and for all. The willingness of German decision-makers to follow the stable and predictable path of the Bonn Republic, however, raises the specter of the new German Question, stemming from the "paradox" (Maull) of the Berlin Republic's foreign policy: How does the Merkel government reconcile the country's foreign policy tradition as a liberal "civilian" power (Maull) with the new requirements of the post-9/11 world? The three case studies should show whether the Merkel government successfully addresses this "paradox." At the same time, they should provide some clues for how to decode the German puzzle Peter Katzenstein aptly termed "Sonderbare Sonderwege."

The German Paradox Case Studied

1. FROM A TRAINING ARMY TO AN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE: THE BUNDESWEHR'S TRANSFORMATION TESTED

Minister of Defense Franz Josef Jung's 2006 White Paper firmly rests on the premise of the "transformation" agenda of his predecessor.[19] It concludes that defense can no longer be narrowed down to the geographical boundaries but contributes to safeguarding Germany's security "wherever it is in jeopardy." It identifies the prevention of international conflicts and crisis management, including the fight against international terrorism, as "the most likely tasks" of German armed forces. At the center of the "transformation" is the ability to participate in multinational operations anywhere in the world, at short notice, and across the entire mission spectrum down to high-intensity operations.[20]

The strategy paper points out that the most likely tasks of international conflict prevention and crisis

management will determine the structure and capabilities of the Bundeswehr. To meet the operational requirements of the global mission spectrum and the ability of an "effective Bundeswehr" that can "actively shape its environment," German armed forces will be "thoroughly restructured into an expeditionary force." By the end of this decade, the Bundeswehr will consist of 35,000 Response Forces earmarked for high-intensity operations, of which 18,000 are assigned to the EU Rapid Reaction Force (EURRF)—including the EU Battle Groups—and 15,000 to the NATO Response Force (NRF); 70,000 Stabilization Forces employed with up to 14,000 troops in five stability operations of low and medium intensity simultaneously for a longer period of time; and 147,500 Support Forces earmarked for comprehensive joint and sustainable support of operations and the Bundeswehr's routine duty at home.[21]

The transformation process is aimed at improving the operational readiness across the entire mission spectrum. The Bundeswehr is, therefore, adopting a strictly deployment-oriented capability approach. Given the limited resources, the planning of the materiel and equipment is tailored to the needs of each individual force category. The response forces are given priority when fielding new modern equipment to allow them to conduct joint and multinational, high-intensity, networked-enabled operations. To strengthen the Bundeswehr's employability across the entire mission spectrum, the White Paper emphasizes the improvement of the Bundeswehr's capability profile, particularly command, control, communication, intelligence and reconnaissance, mobility, effective engagement, support and sustainability, and survivability and protection.[22]

The strategy paper strongly supports the retention of the general conscription system. With an assured augmentation capability, it is the guarantor of Germany's collective defense treaty obligations. In addition, it maintains the double bind between the army and society as well as between the citizen and the state. A citizen's army is a prudent hedge against military interventionism around the world. Compulsory military service remains indispensable to secure the Bundeswehr's readiness, efficiency, and economy. As the White Paper of 2006 concludes, "The general conscription has proven to be an unqualified success in varying security environments."[23] In order to create a fairer balance between fairness and equal treatment in the drafting process, Defense Minister Jung decided to increase the numbers of conscripts from 31,000 to 35,000 by the end of this year. In the long run, he plans to add 25,000 more conscription posts.[24] In addition, Jung approved the establishment of "more reliable and more visible regional structures for an efficient territorial defense even against new risks." By 2009, he envisages the build-up of sixteen liaison commands at the state level. The pioneer, ABC, and medical units assigned to them should support the states in their homeland defense policies, particularly against terror and asymmetrical threats.[25]

In view of the growing threat of terrorist attacks on German territory, the White Paper emphasizes the changing requirements of territorial defense: "The need for protection of the population and of the infrastructure has increased." Whenever a particular situation cannot be managed without its assistance, the Bundeswehr can make its capabilities available to state authorities responsible for internal security; the use of military force in such cases has been prohibited by the constitution thus far. The government favors an amendment that would allow the use of military means to forestall a terrorist attack by air or sea.[26]

The good news is that the Merkel government, like its predecessor, recognizes the necessity of reorienting the Bundeswehr toward an expeditionary force within a broad geographic and functional spectrum of tasks. The bad news is that it does not improve the employability and sustainability of the Bundeswehr in international missions in the short- and medium-term. The Bundeswehr, as a conscription-based army of 250,000 troops, can only deploy a fraction of its forces for missions abroad at any time. Even at the present moderate rate of deployment German forces are overstretched because of the dictates of force rotation. The engagement of some 7,500 personnel, or 3 percent of the total force, in four major stabilization operations around the world simultaneously[27] requires four equal-sized forces on standby or stand down for every force deployed for four months and re-

deployed only after two years. The Achilles heel of the force rotation system is the shortage of specialized forces, particularly in the areas of logistics, command, control and communication, and medical supply. Reinhold Robbe, the Ombudsman of the Bundeswehr (*Wehrbeauftragter*), concluded in his annual report of 2005 that the Bundeswehr "urgently needs a phase of consolidation and recovery" as the increase of multinational missions has "clearly exposed its manpower limits."[28]

Noting the strain put on German forces by a growing number of international missions, Defense Minister Jung raised the idea of an "exit strategy" from Bosnia and Herzegovina less than a week after the publication of the White Paper. Chancellor Merkel justified the absence of German ground forces in the UNIFIL II mission in Lebanon, saying that the involvement in various international missions has caused an overstretch of the Bundeswehr's personnel capacities.[29] Jung's and Merkel's arguments, however, contradict the central message of the strategy paper. It defines the "national level of ambition" to deploy up to 14,000 troops at any time for as many as five different areas of operations.[30] And it contradicts Germany's commitment to NATO's usability targets that 40 percent of each nation's land force should be structured, prepared, and equipped for deployed operations and 8 percent for sustained operations at any one time.[31]

An "effective" Bundeswehr critically depends on the availability of sufficient financial resources. As the strategy paper concedes, "the continuation of the consolidation of the federal budget gives a binding framework for defense planning."[32] Defense Minister Jung faces the same challenge as his predecessors: how to balance the tense relationship between rising military requirements and declining financial resources?

As in the past, defense spending remains caught in the budget trap. In fiscal year 2006, the defense budget increased from €23.88 billion to €24.4 billion.[33] The nominal rise of €480 million, in fact, meant a further decline of almost the same amount. While higher inflation of about 2 percent are covered, the costs of a 3 percent hike of the value added tax in 2007 (€300 million) as well as the additional expenditures for the UNIFIL II mission in Lebanon (€147 million) and the extended German contribution to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan (€35 million) have to be borne by the defense budget. The picture looks slightly better this year. The Merkel government agreed to raise defense expenditures by about €1 billion to €25.4 billion, a level it was supposed to have reached in 2005. The net increase is again melting away if measured in real terms: higher inflation of presently close to 3 percent translates into a loss of about €700 million; the remaining €300 million covers the higher expenditures for the out-of-area missions.[34] The augmentation, however, will only slightly improve the unbalanced equipment/personnel budget ratio. Personnel expenditures and maintenance costs should decrease from 75 percent in 2007 to 71 percent in 2009 while investment should increase to about 24 percent. The increase to €25.4 billion falls far short of the critical benchmark of 2 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) considered necessary by allied partners to put modernization efforts over the next years on a sound and sustainable financial basis. If the Merkel government were to follow allied guidelines, the German defense budget would have to increase more than 50 percent from €25.4 billion or 1.3 percent in 2008, to more than €36 billion over the next years.[35]

The budget consolidation course of the Merkel government clashes with the country's commitment to both NATO and the EU. With less than 1.4 percent of GDP dedicated to it in fiscal year 2008, the Merkel government signals that it feels comfortable with the very modest percentage of GDP that Germany is committing to defense. If present trends continue, Defense Minister Jung will be "confronted with an insoluble bow wave by 2008"—a dramatic increase of acquisition expenditures for new weapons systems like the Eurofighter or the long-range transport plan A-400M for which no budgetary precautions have been taken. With a further decline Jung will face the same unenviable choice his predecessors were confronted with: to defer, to stretch, and to cut major weapons systems, including many international projects to which the German government has made a legal commitment, as former Defense Minister Peter Struck had already warned in 2004.[36] The Bundeswehrplan

2007 written by the General Inspector of the Bundeswehr, General Wolfgang Schneiderhahn, concluded that both investment and maintenance are underfinanced. Procurement costs of €8.4 billion are not covered within the Finance Plan until 2014. Material maintenance expenditures fall €1.3 billion short between 2007-2011. Given the continued under-coverage, capabilities in many areas will be acquired "far beyond 2011" and not by 2010, as projected by Struck's transformation agenda.[37] In short, successive German governments have fallen victim to unrealistic ambitions that the Bundeswehr can be transformed into an expeditionary force on a tight budget. Given the reality of continuous defense budget cuts, more procurement decisions face delays, cuts or cancellation.

The underfunding of the defense budget is compounded by the fact that the "strict mission orientation" is not reflected in military acquisition. The highly constrained financial resources are spent at the expense of the soldiers in the field. While a disproportionate part of investment is earmarked for huge projects of the past—at €911.2 million, the Eurofighter consumed the lion's share of the military procurement budget of €4.3 billion in 2007—there is no money for equipment urgently needed in international missions. Particularly grave is the situation in the area of armored combat vehicles; at present less than one-fifth of all vehicles are protected against roadside bombs. In view of the financial constraints the critical shortage can be remedied "only in the long-term within the financial framework," concludes the Bundeswehrplan 2007. All 8,500 armored vehicles will be acquired far beyond 2015 conceded General Hans-Otto Budde, the Inspector of the Army.[38] To compound the problem, the Ombudsman's 2007 Annual Report points to serious logistical problems. The delivery of spare parts for the armored transport vehicles Duro and Dingo takes up to sixty days. The repair of the Wolf armored transport vehicle takes six months because the civilian maintenance personnel are not allowed by the manufacturing firm to travel to Afghanistan for security reasons; at present the Bundeswehr has no qualified maintenance personnel for the Wolf and drivers for the Dingo and the Fuchs are often poorly trained.[39]

The results of the transformation of the Bundeswehr since 2003 can be summarized as follows:

■ In its present structure the Bundeswehr is unusable for anything other than territorial defense and some limited peacekeeping and peace support missions. German armed forces are overstretched even at the current moderate rate of operational intensity and cannot sustain the higher demand of employable forces over the long run. German armed forces remain the least deployable, projectable, and sustainable of the leading allied powers.

■ The Achilles heel of the Bundeswehr's transformation remains the mismatch between ends and means. It still has a force structure that is either too large for adequate financial support or is being modernized too quickly.

The mismatch between ambitions and deeds displays the German paradox: while German governments from Kohl to Merkel have steadfastly supported NATO's and the EU's goal of building-up robust defense capabilities that meet the operational requirements of a post-9/11 world, they did not and do not have the same enthusiasm for dealing with the practical consequences of their institutional commitments.[40] Germany has been extremely slow to realign its spending priorities to reflect its commitment to the Alliance and the Union to acquire expeditionary defense capabilities. There is little to suggest that the Merkel government will embark upon a significant increase of the defense budget to the critical benchmark of 2 percent that would substantially improve the usability and interoperability of German armed forces in multilateral missions abroad. The strategy paper summarized the dire consequences of a continuously declining defense budget to the transformation of the Bundeswehr into an expeditionary force as follows: "The tense relationship between defense requirements and financial needs for other state tasks will continue in the future. […] Despite huge personnel cutbacks, there is no margin for any further reductions in spending for reasons of the Bundeswehr mission and ensuing structures, and of maintaining operational readiness."[41] There is no escaping the conclusion that the Merkel government has to make a decision between spending more or doing less.

2. IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM: A TEST FOR GERMANY'S GRAND STRATEGY OF COOPERATION, DIALOGUE, AND NEGOTIATIONS

German decision-makers do not harbor any illusion about Iran's nuclear program. "The truly dangerous thing is the combination of nuclear weapons and revolutionary foreign policy with the goal of changing the status quo in the region," said former Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, summarizing the German concern.[42] Chancellor Merkel is convinced that Teheran is using the peaceful use of nuclear energy to acquire "military options." Such a development would have "disastrous consequences" and "must be prevented." A nuclear-armed Iran would pose a serious "threat to peace and security," particularly for the state of Israel. The "historic responsibility" for Israel is part of Germany's "raison d'être." Israel's security is "a principle of state" for any German chancellor and therefore "non-negotiable." Germany would stand with Israel against any threat. "We have now reached a moment of truth when we need to show that we mean what we say." Thus, a nuclear-armed Iran would have "disastrous consequences" and "must be prevented." This is "a vital interest" of the international community. Germany wants "diplomatic solutions, together with its partners" and, if necessary, would plead for a stepping up of "sanctions."[43]

The Merkel government strongly supports a two pronged approach toward Iran within the framework of the United Nations Security Council, offering Iran incentives to suspend its nuclear enrichment program and to clarify all its nuclear activities over the past two decades. If Teheran does not comply with the international community's demands, including an unfettered access to all its nuclear facilities by inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and a suspension of all its nuclear enrichment activities until its undeclared nuclear research activities since the end of the 1980s have been cleared by the IAEA, Chancellor Merkel supports a referral of the Iranian case to the Security Council. Such a step would "not constitute a provocation to Iran." For her, the Security Council is the "legitimate place where international conflicts are discussed."[44]

Berlin makes the imposition of meaningful sanctions on Iran—diplomatic sanctions and targeted trade and economic sanctions—contingent upon a consensual process in the UN Security Council. Merkel's leitmotif is "Community produces efficiency. The efficiency of political measures is the result of community." For her, "a sharp single measure imposed unilaterally is in the end less efficient than a common approach of the international community" even if it does support only "a comparably mild measure." Only the international community's determination and unity can convince the Iranian leadership that it is in the country's best interest to comply with the demands of the Security Council.[45]

Given Iran's continued defiance, the Merkel government welcomed the unanimous approval of a third sanctions resolution by the UN Security Council on 3 March 2008. Resolution 1803 imposes limited sanctions on Iran, including a travel ban on five officials linked to nuclear proliferation, and a mandate to "exercise vigilance" about new export credits and transactions with Bank Meli and Bank Saderat.[46] Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier declared that the adoption of the resolution after difficult negotiations was "proof of the international community's resolve" and its determination to "adhere to its demands on Iran." The decision would leave the option of further negotiations with Tehran on the table. "We are willing to negotiate, and I can only again urgently appeal to Iran to seize this opportunity."[47]

The economic and trade sanctions decreed by the Security Council have resulted in stringent reviews of requests from German companies for export authorizations by the federal government. Most recent published data show a dramatic drop in export credit guarantees granted to German exporters doing business with Iran and a steady drop in exports to Iran since 2005. Export credit guarantees backing trade (Hermes Bürgschaft) with Iran dropped by more than half from €1.16 billion in 2006 to €503.4 million last year. German exports to Iran have fallen from €4.3 billion in 2005 to €3.2 billion until November 2007.[48]

Like her predecessor, Merkel is convinced that the nuclear standoff with Iran can only be solved through "diplomatic means." For her, the use of force is "no option in relations with Iran." Germany's historical

responsibility for the security of Israel does not include a military option to defend Israel's "nonnegotiable" security against the emergence of an Iranian nuclear bomb. Germany's double approach categorically denies the notion that all options, including the use of force, are on the table and opposes the use of force. The red line of Germany's historical commitment to the security of Israel became visible at a meeting of Chancellor Merkel with Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in Berlin on 12 February 2008. While Olmert did not rule out a military attack against Iran if the country obtained the ability to produce nuclear weapons, Merkel discarded a military option: "I have always said that I believe strongly in a solution via diplomatic channels, that I count on a diplomatic solution and nothing else." If European diplomacy and working with the IAEA does not succeed, then the United Nations would have to consider "more sanctions."[49]

Merkel sees dialogue and diplomacy as the best means of defusing Iran's nuclear ambitions. A policy of multi-pronged engagement should provide Teheran the incentives to link the country more closely to the West and the international community that would serve its national interest. Iran's inclusiveness rather than its isolation would be most beneficial for the Western world in the context of preventing Teheran acquiring a nuclear bomb capability. French[50] and U.S.[51] calls for tougher unilaterally imposed sanctions and a further isolation of Iran run counter to the German government's insistence that only a concerted policy under the auspices of the United Nations would be the most effective strategy for persuading Iran to change course.[52] They also militate against Germany's clear preference for a "long-term strategy based on stability through change." Sanctions and public pressure are considered "counterproductive." The venue of negotiations chosen by the EU3 countries—France, Germany, and Great Britain—has not yet brought results because they do not have all the important elements of a comprehensive diplomatic solution. The United States and Russia, Iran's greatest nuclear supplier, must join the negotiations. A solution would consist of a grand bargain which includes trade, political, and technological incentives, security guarantees, and a CSCE type regional security structure for the Middle East in which Iran, as an important regional power, can find its role as a "reliable and responsible partner." Required is a patient, long-term based policy of cooperative engagement with Iran. "Negotiations and dialogue" and not a sharp escalation in pressures on Iran are the means to achieve the desired ends—a nuclear-free Iran firmly integrated in and a reliable partner in the crisis-stricken Middle East.[53]

The conflict about Iran's nuclear program underlines the German predilection for consensual diplomatic solutions. While the Bush administration pursues a power-based approach which sees multilateralism as a call-up for robust action, including the use of force, to fight the injustices and the new threats in a globalized world in order to create a less anarchic, more ordered international community, the guiding principles of the Merkel government are:

- the solution of international conflicts through cooperation, confidence building, dialogue, non-aggression, and peaceful reconciliation;

- a profound commitment to negotiations on the basis of a double approach of incentives and sanctions under the auspices of the United Nations;

- an incremental approach emphasizing the need to proceed on the basis of the broadest international consensus in regard to the imposition of economic and trade sanctions;

- a categorical rejection of the use of military force as an appropriate and legitimate means in international crisis management.

Foreign Minister Steinmeier summed up Germany's preference to a "Venus" policy approach when he said at the UN General Assembly in New York on 22 September 2006, "Peace is brought about by political talks, economic ties, and giving people tangible hope for the future […] Political conflicts cannot be solved with military force or military victories."

The down-side of Germany's grand strategy based on cooperation, dialogue, and negotiations is it buys time for Iran to proceed with the military dimension of its nuclear program under the nose of IAEA inspec-

tors, undermines UN demands for a suspension of Iran's uranium enrichment program,[54] drives a wedge between the five permanent members of the Security Council as to how to respond to Iranian recalcitrance, and imposes "soft" sanctions on the basis of the lowest common denominator among the five permanent members of the Security Council—which are a far cry from "meaningful" sanctions advocated by the Bush administration as well as the new French government.

The German insistence on preserving unity in the international community threatens to undercut its preferred dual-track strategy—pressing simultaneously for renewed negotiations with Iran and additional sanctions against Iran in case of non-compliance. The central problem is what to do if the international community remains divided and how tough new sanctions should be if Tehran remains defiant. What comes first: unified international action or a bigger stick? Merkel's penchant for an incremental consensual policy approach raises questions of how far the German government is really committed to diplomacy with teeth or whether it not simply "appeasement"[55] in disguise. Berlin, on the other hand, is concerned that a timetable of steadily tougher sanctions would not only go at the expense of German commercial interests.[56] They might also become a pathway to military action the Merkel government so fiercely opposes. If President Bush should take military action against Iran before the end of this year, Germany will stay put as a loyal representative of the "old Europe." Like her predecessor five years ago, Chancellor Merkel will find fault with a "pre-emptive" military strike against Iran and will send the same unmistakable message to the White House that Foreign Minister Fischer tried to bring over to then U.S Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld at the Munich security conference on 8 February 2003: "Excuse me, I am not convinced."[57]

Lastly, Berlin's categorical rejection even of an optional use of military force to preempt an emerging Iranian nuclear threat raises questions about the reliability of Chancellor Merkel's unflinching German commitment to act decisively when Israel's "nonnegotiable" security is threatened. Germany's proclivity for non-military, consensual solutions of international conflicts might invite comparisons to the failed "appeasement" policy of the late 1930s. Instead of making good of its pledge, Germany as an "ultimate free rider" would trust the United States or Israel to take out Iran's nuclear installations from which it and the other European countries would profit.[58]

Merkel's unstinting commitment to a German "historical responsibility" to the security of Israel may face another credibility test. "Thousands of Israelis are living in angst and fear of the missile attacks and terror of Hamas," a situation, that "must stop," the Chancellor told the Knesset. The Chancellor raised the demand in "clear and unmistakable" terms without giving an answer how to bring about an end of these terror attacks.[59] Will the categorical imperative of Germany's "historical responsibility" induce Berlin to send German "peacekeepers" as part of a larger NATO force to the Israeli-Gaza border[60] to enforce a sustainable and endurable ceasefire suggested by Israeli Prime Minister Olmert? Such a tangible contribution could not only stop the Kassam attacks against Israeli civilians. It would, at the same time, establish a more permissive security environment that may allow Hamas, in addition to Fatah, to participate in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Again, Germany's grand strategy of cooperation, dialogue, and negotiations has to pass the reality test by concrete deeds.

3. THE ISAF MISSION: GERMANY'S INTERCONNECTED SECURITY APPROACH TESTED

No other issue illustrates better the competing pressures of Alliance solidarity and national reservations than Germany's contribution to NATO's ISAF mission in Afghanistan. In the run-up to NATO's Riga summit in late November 2006, a fierce debate began, centered around allied criticism of Germany's persistent refusal not to give up the national caveats imposed on the use of German troops in Afghanistan. Commanders on the ground, the political and military leadership of the Alliance, and some allies like Great Britain, Canada, and the United States complained that these national reservations would threaten the Alliance's political cohesion, its collective capacity for action, and undermine the principle of equal burden-sharing as some nations' troops are put at greater risk than others. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop

Scheffer termed the caveats as "poison." British Defense Minister Des Browne summarized the veiled allied criticism as follows, "It is increasingly clear that at present, when it comes to the most demanding tasks in the most challenging parts of Afghanistan, only a small number of key allies are prepared to step forward."[61]

At the Riga summit, Chancellor Merkel resisted allied pressure to lift the curbs on the use of German ISAF forces. She reiterated the central German position "that we are well lined up with our mandate and there is no reason to change this mandate." The only agreement reached was one of more flexible deployment in emergencies. The German emergency aid package, in full compliance with national legislation, includes air transport, telecommunication, and medical supply, not, however, ground combat troops.[62]

The Bundestag renewed the Bundeswehr's ISAF mandate by a 453:79 vote and 48 abstentions on October 12, 2007. The mandate leaves the restrictions on how, where, and when German forces can be employed unchanged.[63] These provisos are:

- The remit of the 3,500 German forces remains confined to the capital of Kabul and the northern region.

- A transfer of German forces is explicitly excluded. Only in exceptional cases can German forces provide temporary logistical and medical support to allied forces in other parts of the country, provided that these measures are imperative to the fulfillment of ISAF's overall mission.

- German troops can only be employed as an "assistance" force. Their principal task is the build-up of civilian political and societal structures in the country, not to engage insurgents in offensive operations. Germany's contribution to Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) of 100 Special Forces can engage in allied ground combat operations against the Taliban and al Qaeda around the country.[64]

- German troop contributions to OEF and ISAF since August 2006 under the unified NATO command remain strictly separated.

- German ISAF forces are still not allowed to participate in the poppy eradication campaign in the northern region. The task is left to Afghan and British security forces.[65]

In the run-up to the NATO summit meeting in Bucharest in early April 2008, the issue of the national caveats re-emerged as the bone of contention within the Alliance. The Bush administration has launched an intensive diplomatic campaign to convince the European allies to overcome the troop shortfalls facing the Alliance in fighting the Taliban insurgency and to increase their operational flexibility. The political and military officials in Washington are increasingly frustrated with what they see as a lack of commitment from some European NATO members, particularly Germany, to meet the demands specified in NATO's Combined Joint Statement of Requirements (CJSR). "The Afghanistan mission has exposed real limitations in the way the alliance is organized, operated, and equipped," Secretary of Defense Robert Gates told the House Armed Services Committee on 11 December 2007. He voiced frustration at "our allies not being able to step up to the plate." Gates also urged NATO allies to come up with a three to five year strategy for Afghanistan to make sure that they were not thinking about "the exit."[66] The deterioration in the security situation in the south would require an additional 3,500 combat troops and a similar number of security trainers, as well as twenty medium-lift helicopters, argued General Dan K. McNeill, Commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan.[67] The Bush administration seeks to "leverage" the one-time deployment of an additional 3,200 Marines to Afghanistan into winning similar commitments from other NATO allies. Victoria Nuland, U.S. Ambassador to NATO, reminded the German government, "to match [U.S. efforts] soldier by soldier, euro by dollar."[68]

The issue of burden-sharing in Afghanistan among NATO allies is becoming a key issue. A report from the Afghanistan Study Group, co-chaired by retired General James Jones and former UN Ambassador Thomas Pickering, observed that some nations were contributing more to the fighting than others. Defense Secretary Gates told the Senate Armed Services Committee on 6 February 2008, "I worry a great deal

about the alliance evolving into a two-tiered alliance in which you have some allies willing to fight and die to protect people's security, and others who are not."[69] Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper has warned that Canada will withdraw all its 2,500 troops from ISAF early next year if NATO partners do not provide an additional battle group of about 1,000 troops to southern Afghanistan. On 13 March 2008, the Canadian parliament, by a vote of 198 to 77, extended the deployment of Canadian forces in Afghanistan until 2011. However, the continuation of the mission remains dependent on allied reinforcements for Canada's contingent.[70] President Bush, when meeting Prime Minister Rasmussen of Denmark on his ranch in early March, asked the European allies to do more, in particular those with no troop commitment to the turbulent southern region. "My administration has made it abundantly clear, we expect people to carry their—to carry a heavy burden if they're going to be in Afghanistan," he said. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice urged NATO allies to step up troop contribution. Like Gates a month before, she warned that NATO, with the present division of labor, may evolve into a two-tiered alliance of "fighters" and "developers."[71]

German officials were caught by surprise when Gates, in a confidential letter to his German colleague, asked the German government to consider a new parliamentary mandate that would allow German forces to assist embattled Allied forces in southern Afghanistan, to drop the restrictions that limit the operations in which they can be used, and provide urgently needed helicopter units.[72] Gates' "stern" letter came as a surprise to Berlin because the Bush administration had repeatedly stated it was aware of the political sensitivities surrounding Germany's role in Afghanistan. President Bush, in a pre-visit interview with German reporters, said, "I'm not going to try to put Angela Merkel in a position that [neither] she nor the Bundestag is comfortable with."[73] When the chancellor visited Bush at his Texas ranch on 10 November 2007, she told him any change in Germany's noncombat role in Afghanistan would spell disaster for the Grand Coalition. Merkel came away with Bush's pledge "to praise Germany's efforts and stop criticizing."[74]

The Merkel government instantly rejected Gates' strongly worded request. "During all the meetings and talks we have had with the U.S. side in recent months, the engagement of the German military […] was expressly praised," Merkel's spokesman said. He added the terms of Germany's involvement in the ISAF mission were "not up for discussion."[75] Defense Minister Jung bluntly ruled out deploying any German soldiers to the south. "I have a clear mandate from the German parliament. It consists of 3,500 soldiers serving along the northern border and only helping out in the south for a limited period of time, as needed," he said.[76] In her most outspoken comments on allied demands, Chancellor Merkel said that she was "worried about the current debate in NATO." She sees no reason to change "this mandate" decided a "few years ago" by NATO allies and re-authorized by the German parliament only some months ago. The size of the deployment would remain unchanged "until this autumn," she added.[77] The deployment of German ground forces in the turbulent south "is not up for debate," she told the German weekly *Der Spiegel* in early March 2008.[78]

The Merkel government defends its core position to keep the division of responsibilities among NATO allies untouched, with the same arguments it had made in the run-up to the NATO summit meeting in Riga:

- The German military is fulfilling an important and dangerous task in the north, providing security for 40 percent of the Afghan population and backing reconstruction with more than 700 civilian projects which are deeply appreciated by the local population.

- A re-deployment to the south would amount to a zero-sum game. It would endanger all the civilian reconstruction efforts that have been achieved thus far in the northern region.

- A constant rush back and forth between different regions in Afghanistan would be difficult to manage for the Bundeswehr.

- Progress in the civilian area will do more to improve the overall situation in Afghanistan. Allied partners should, therefore, follow the German example in the

north and use the military stabilization as part of an interwoven security concept to move the political process in other regions of the country forward.

■ With up to 3,500 forces Germany has the third largest troop contingent in Afghanistan. The figure underscores the country's strong commitment to NATO's ISAF mission in Afghanistan and its willingness to expand its contribution in the domain of air transport from six to eight Transall military transport planes, to assume new responsibilities in all of Afghanistan with the dispatch of six reconnaissance jets, and to take over the lead of NATO's QRF in the northern sector.

■ It was a unanimous decision made by NATO allies only two years ago that Germany should take over the lead nation role in the northern sector. Countries like Canada, Great Britain, and the Netherlands, who began to complain about rising casualties of their own forces, agreed to this division of labor in full awareness of the greater risks in the southern region.

There are, however, clear indications that the Merkel government is prepared to enhance Germany's contribution to the ISAF mission. When the mandate expires in October of this year, the troop size may increase to 4,000 or 4,500 troops, with a ceiling of up to 5,000 troops, which would provide the government some flexibility to react quickly and expeditiously to unforeseen contingencies without going through the time consuming process of asking for parliamentarian approval in advance. The planned troop surge is not a response to allied pressure. General Inspector of the Bundeswehr, General Schneiderhahn, in testimony to the Bundestag's Defense Committee early this year, pointed out that the government's acceptance of additional tasks, like the command of NATO's QRF, and the triplication of Germany's contribution to the training of the Afghan National Army (ANA), together with a reinforcement of the large German field camp in Mazar-e Sharif, would make an increase of the existing mandate's upper limit of 3,500 troops inescapable.[79] Peter Struck, the head of the SPD parliamentarian group within the Bundestag, announced that he would support General Schneiderhahn's request for a troop increase in the northern sector and that a majority of the SPD deputies would approve it.[80]

In addition, the Merkel government plans to extend the re-authorization period by the Bundestag from twelve to eighteen months. That would provide the newly elected government with a sound legal foundation for the country's ever-bigger contribution to the ISAF mission and would keep the vote out of the hot phase of the next general election in October 2009. However, the expanded mandate will be exercised within the confines of the mandates authorized by the Bundestag.[81]

Berlin's refusal to cross the Rubicon from a primarily post-war stability and reconstruction mission in the rather calm north to high-intensity ground combat operations in the volatile south of Afghanistan is reinforced by Germany's penchant for a comprehensive security approach, a clear demarcation of the OEF and ISAF missions, severe restrictions on the proactive use of ground combat forces even within the accepted geographical remit of responsibility, widespread opposition within the public and parliament to lifting the curbs on German forces, and a critical shortage of sustainable forces and equipment.

Comprehensive Security Approach

The Merkel government, like its predecessor, sees the ISAF mission as part of a broader effort to provide Afghanistan a perspective of sustainable, peaceful development. The German discourse is centered on the concept of "interconnected security." Based on the "culture of prevention and dialogue" it emphasizes preventive strategies to forestall potential security issues before they emerge through political and diplomatic initiatives, economic development assistance, as well as constitutional, humanitarian, and social measures.[82] In response to the open differences among allies over strategy and troop levels in the run-up to NATO's Riga summit in late November 2006, the Merkel government began to plead for its "complementary civilian military comprehensive concept" as the proper foundation of NATO's future crisis management strategy. The litmus test of a successful crisis management policy is "progress in the development and reconstruction of the country," not "ever more troops" to defeat the growing insur-

gency in the south and the east," said Defense Minister Jung. Chancellor Merkel summarized the German position when she told military commanders that the comprehensive security approach, presented so well in the 2006 White Paper, is "the precondition for contemporary crisis prevention, for contemporary conflict resolution, and for a contemporary peace consolidation."[83] Thus, the German government conceives the military contribution as an enabling instrument within a broader political and humanitarian effort to rebuild Afghanistan and establish a robust civic society which respects basic human rights, adheres to good governance, and resists extremism and terrorism.

Strict Separation of ISAF and OEF

The gradual expansion of Germany's engagement in Afghanistan since early 2002 is premised on a "strict separation" between the U.S.-run OEF mission and the NATO-run ISAF mission. The German ISAF engagement presupposes a clear division of labor between counterterrorism operations which is the "responsibility of the Operation Enduring Freedom," and ISAF's security and reconstruction mission.[84] The clear division of labor between OEF and ISAF affects the mission of German forces. During the controversy over the dispatch of six Tornado reconnaissance jets to Mazar-e Sharif in March 2007, the Merkel government emphasized that the tasks of the German Recce jets are strictly limited to "reconnaissance and surveillance" in support of the ISAF mission. "Close air support" is explicitly excluded, and intelligence may be sent to OEF forces only under restrictive conditions as deemed necessary by the ISAF commander "for the successful execution of the ISAF operation or the security of ISAF troops."[85] Defense Minister Jung emphasized that the reconnaissance and surveillance mission would not cross the red line between fighting terrorism from ISAF's security cooperation as the Bundestag's resolutions stipulated. "Reconnaissance is not a combat mission. […] Better reconnaissance will lead to measured and proportional reactions from international forces and should help avoid collateral damage," he told the Bundestag in late February 2007.[86] The conditions attached to the dispatch of the six Tornado jets illustrate the government's efforts to obscure the sharp edges of an uncomfortable mission where providing "reconnaissance and surveillance" to NATO forces might cross the "clear demarcation of fighting terrorism from ISAF's security cooperation" stipulated in the Bundestag's mandate of March 2007.

Doing Social Work

The German government, parliament, and public conceive the Bundeswehr's role in out-of-area missions primarily as armed development work. The 2007 Afghanistan Concept emphasizes a two-pronged approach, resting on the pillars of reconstruction and development and security. The civilian reconstruction and development effort is perceived as key to the success of NATO's ISAF operation. The principal responsibility of the German troops is the protection of the two Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Kunduz, established in November 2003, and Feyzabad, established in September 2004. Within the PRT framework German troops should broker cooperation between the central authorities and local power structures; establish contacts with local authorities and liaise with non-governmental organizations (NGO); assist in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of militias; provide medical and logistic support to the population; assist in the training of the Afghan security forces; and conduct minor reconstruction projects such as digging of wells or renovation of police stations.[87] The primary role of the German ISAF mission is, thus, primarily conceived as a back-up for the economic, political, and social reconstruction process in the country and a confidence-building measure to enhance the population's "feeling of security through visibility."[88] Defense Minister Jung summarized the nature of these efforts, saying that German armed forces were in Afghanistan "to do good."[89] German politicians prefer to talk about peacekeeping as a social work task, never a "war" or "combat"[90] mission which means the "killing"[91] of the bad guys.

Restrictive Rules of Engagement

The decision of the Berlin government to provide 250 "well-trained and well equipped" combat troops as part of NATO's Quick Reaction Force (QRF) under-

lines its sensitivity to assume a more "pro-active" role in NATO's ISAF mission. The QRF's mandate includes direct combat missions in addition to security and protection functions for ISAF forces in the northern sector. The rules of engagement under which German forces operate emphasize, in addition to force protection,[92] the restricted use of lethal force only when German troops are attacked or when facing an imminent attack. Berlin has submitted a confidential "proviso" to NATO that imposes restrictive conditions on NATO commanders when using German troops. Under the conditions, German QRF forces are only allowed the use of lethal force in "concrete self-defense situations" or in case of an "imminent threat." They are not allowed to engage in offensive operations if Taliban fighters were not specifically attacking ISAF forces. The proviso, in effect, will exclude the use of the German QRF in such "pro-active" operations[93] as the Norwegian QRF waged against the Taliban fighters in fall 2007. German officers summed up the legal dilemma as follows, "If you did a good job and killed Talibans, the federal prosecutor may knock at your door."[94] Thus, the German caveat defies NATO's ISAF rules of engagement to actively track down and kill Taliban insurgents.

Domestic Constraints

The government's emphasis on doing good things in the Hindu Kush reflects the visceral aversion within the German public to the use of force, particularly in high intensity ground combat missions, and a penchant for the virtues of soft power. The support for out-of-area missions decreases as the risk of high intensity ground combat increases. Only 29 percent see a positive impact of the ISAF mission on the security situation in Germany, while 38 percent suspect a negative impact. A majority of 52 percent support the notion that Germany should not take greater responsibility in world affairs. The skepticism has steadily increased from 29 percent in 2002, while the support steadily declined from 41 percent in 2002 to 30 percent in 2007. And public skepticism of the success of Bundeswehr missions abroad and its fragile support for ever more engagements have increased. An extension of the German ISAF contribution is met with widespread public resistance. Almost four out of five Germans (77 percent) reject the dispatch of Recce jets to Afghanistan. Three out of four Germans oppose the takeover of NATO's QRF, six out of seven (86 percent) oppose a participation of German troops in combat missions in Afghanistan; and six out of ten (61 percent) favor the proposition to bring all German troops home.[95] As Germans are the least supportive of the notion to use military force to further political ends, the belief that peace and security can best be achieved and sustained without a German troop presence in Afghanistan becomes ever more popular. The major lesson the German public is drawing from the terror attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent NATO mission in Afghanistan is that the German national interests are best served by an isolationist, leave me alone posture.[96]

Another powerful domestic obstacle is the Bundestag. Like the public, the vast majority of the parliamentarians—with the exception of some lone voices like Hans-Ulrich Klose (SPD) and Ruprecht Polenz (CDU)[97]—categorically oppose the idea of sending German forces into ground combat battles in southern Afghanistan. The Bundestag's approval of the dispatch of six Recce Tornados to Afghanistan by 405:157 votes and eleven abstentions on 9 March 2007[98] was indicative of the troubles the Grand Coalition will face if the Merkel government agrees to curb the restrictions imposed on German ISAF forces: Before the vote on Operation Enduring Freedom on 16 November 2001, never have so many deputies voted against an international mission. There was considerable concern within the SPD parliamentarian group—sixty-nine deputies, or more than one-third—voted against the government motion. SPD deputies feared that the extension of the German ISAF contribution to air reconnaissance could become a slippery slope toward the dispatch of German ground forces to the turbulent south which could end in a "German Vietnam."[99] At the heart of the disillusionment is the perception, particularly among SPD deputies, that the Bush administration is pursuing military solutions at the expense of civilian ones. The final vote signaled to allied partners not to push the German government even further toward a decision on sending German forces into offensive combat operations in the south. SPD deputy Uwe

Stehr summarized the veiled message of the "moral" vote (Struck) as follows, "The no votes were not votes against the Tornados. They were a vote that, if you want to go further, if you want to send German forces to the south, we will not agree."[100] In other words, even the Grand Coalition is not big enough to muster a majority in the Bundestag for a broader mandate in Afghanistan.

Merkel's domestic dilemma is further compounded by electoral considerations. A decision in October to reinforce the German ISAF contribution will ensure that that the issue will remain at the center of the federal election campaign next year. While taking a public stance on issues like climate control offers Merkel electoral benefits, by taking a leadership position on the controversial ISAF issue she would invite her Social Democrat opponents to a re-run of the 2002 election, branding her as a pro-war chancellor. Given the broad public opposition to the ISAF mission and the electoral disincentives to provide leadership on the issue, Chancellor Merkel will continue to follow her preferred middle course by keeping German troops in Afghanistan, emphasizing their indispensable contribution to reconstruction and development efforts in the northern sector, playing down their direct military role, and not sending them to regions where they will face heavy fighting.[101]

Military Deficiencies

At present, the Bundeswehr is ill-prepared to deal with combat operations against the Taliban and al Qaeda insurgents. The former Chairman of NATO's Military Committee, General (ret.) Harald Kujat warned that serious deficits in modern and efficient command, control, and communication systems; ground surveillance and reconnaissance systems that provide information in real time to troops day and night; and long-range precision-guided munitions could negate their skills as soldiers. The Bundeswehr does not even have functioning devices with which they could communicate with their allies in Afghanistan.[102] German armed forces do not yet have a Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) capability, even though Berlin assumed the lead nation role for the project group "CSAR." In case of an emergency, German forces critically depend on the assistance of U.S. forces.[103] General Inspector of the Bundeswehr, General Schneiderhahn, conceded serious deficiencies in the area of medium airlift capability. The number of helicopters like the CH 53 falls far short of the basic needs. And those already there can only be used during daylight because they lack the technology to fly at night. Norwegian QRF forces complained that during Operation Hare Kate Yolo II in fall 2007, German helicopters were only available for the ferry of allied troops until 4.00 p.m.[104] The Ombudsman of the Bundeswehr warned that, in view of the ongoing out-of-area missions, further troop demands could not easily be absorbed. He pointed to a critical shortage of medics, pioneers, communication experts, and helicopter pilots.[105] Kujat concluded that in view of the serious deficiencies the German government would be ill-advised to accept allied demands. The shortcomings in both capabilities and manpower highlight the glaring gap between the ambitious goals set by the transformation agenda five years ago and the rather dismal results it has so far produced.

The offer of the French government to send a battalion of up to 1,000 troops to eastern Afghanistan[106]—a move that will free U.S. forces to move south—put the major point of contention on the backburner at the Bucharest summit. As the Merkel government did not budge on the troop issue, President Bush declared that in view of German domestic political concerns he would not insist on a German ground troop presence in southern Afghanistan. "I want decisions that our partners can live with," he said. "Naturally I can see that some countries aren't in a position right now to take on certain obligations." Asked if the German government would be faced with the request to send German troops to the embattled south, he answered, "No, this will not happen."[107]

The quarrel about Germany's appropriate contribution to NATO's ISAF mission in Afghanistan illustrates five German peculiarities: First, Germany still has a penchant for peacekeeping and post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction efforts. Second, the Grand Coalition—like the Red-Green government—remains extremely reluctant to engage German armed forces in high intensity ground combat operations. Third,

Germans see armed forces primarily as armed development aid workers who do good works for the people, but do not harm or get harmed. Fourth, it is the mission with a distinctively overwhelming humanitarian objective which determines Germany's contribution to a coalition. Fifth, national caveats take precedence over allied calls to provide additional troops for quenching the Taliban insurgency. In sum, the Merkel government is a faithful follower of Schröder's command that foreign policy "is decided in Berlin."

Prioritizing domestic needs over external demands, though, comes at a cost. Merkel's reluctance to accept a heavier footprint of "Bundesmacht"[108] on the Hindu Kush may be a clever move to preempt a repeat of the 2002 election campaign. But what is baffling is that her reluctance to openly campaign for the Afghanistan mission is out of line with her original promise to establish Germany as a reliable partner on the forefront of multilateral efforts to address global security threats. "We don't want to raise our finger voluntarily," a German NATO official succinctly put it.[109] Merkel's unwillingness to provide leadership on the issue and allied calls for a heavier German footprint in Afghanistan highlight the mismatch of allied and German expectations regarding Germany's proper role on the world stage. Finally, Merkel's unwillingness to use the bully pulpit to make the public case for lifting the national caveats not only threatens the Alliance's political cohesion, but also its collective capacity for action. It also feeds allied perception[110] of Germany evolving into both a war-averse free-rider and a NATO member á la carte.[111]

03

GERMANY'S FOREIGN POLICY PARADOX

GERMANY'S FOREIGN POLICY PARADOX: ALIVE AND WELL

The election of Angela Merkel as the first female Chancellor of Germany does not herald a fundamental transformation of Germany's foreign and security policy. Her foreign policy shift toward the United States was not a change of substance but of method and personality. The striking feature of the direction of German external policies under her chancellorship is continuity with past policies.

The Merkel government meticulously observes the red lines set by her predecessors: no transformation of the Bundeswehr into an all-volunteer army; no higher defense expenditures; a fierce opposition to the use of force as an appropriate means to solve international conflicts; an unequivocal support of a grand strategy of cooperation, dialogue, and negotiations; and no engagement in more frontline missions. The preferred method is incremental change as reflected in the 2006 White Paper. The strategy paper underscores Germany's proclivity to adapt the country's security and defense policy incrementally to present exigencies rather than promote a fundamental reorientation to the requirements of the future. While Merkel's preferred gradualist approach assuages deep-seated skepticism within the German public about the use of military power, it offers too little too late to Germany's allies and partners in regard to the critical issues of the transformation of the Bundeswehr into an all-volunteer army, a decisive push of defense expenditures to the level of 2 percent of GDP, or a more frontline role for German troops in overseas missions. In short, incremental change exacerbates the tension between what Germany will need to do and what it can do.[112]

The dilemma facing Germany's allies and partners is exactly the opposite: they expect too much too quickly. Growing allied pressure on the Merkel government to accept a greater share of a global security burden in places like Afghanistan is fraught with heavy domestic political difficulties. A top official at the chancellery summed up Merkel's quandary as follows, "The problem could become that the world will ask us to do too much at this stage of our learning process."[113] The uncompromising stance of politicians across the political spectrum on a wider German engagement in Afghanistan[114] proves that the past is not a distant and fading memory but a compelling force. Any change in Germany's post-war reconstruction and development role in NATO's ISAF mission would spell political disaster for the Grand Coalition. "It's simply reality—coalition reality and domestic reality," a German official summarized the Merkel government's predicament.[115]

The glaring gap between what Germany should do and what it is willing to do unveils the fundamental problem German decision-makers have been confronted with since the end of the Cold War. As a result of the fundamentally changed security environment and its different demands posed on German security and defense policy, the two core elements of Germany's foreign and security policy—multilateral

cooperation and the culture of reticence—no longer complement and reinforce each other. Gone are the days when simply 'being' rather than 'doing' was the essence of Germany's membership in NATO. The terror attacks in the United States and the subsequent decisions by NATO and the EU to tackle the new security threats worldwide further widened the cleavage. The transformation of the Bundeswehr, the size of the defense budget, and the use of force illustrate these crosscutting pressures of allied demands and domestic constraints. In particular the ISAF controversy highlights the red lines of Germany's commitment to multilateral cooperation. The competing external and internal demands make it extremely difficult for any German government to remain consistent and faithful to the country's reflexive commitment to multilateral cooperation and the ingrained culture of reticence.

Allied calls for military toughness like "The Germans must learn to kill"[116] illustrate the ignorance of the German predicament. Allies and partners should show a better understanding of and greater sensitivity to political constraints in Germany and keep their expectations at a realistic level of what a German government can and will actually contribute to common actions. As the *Economist* rightly observed, "Germany has made great progress at finding its place in the world since unification, but it's not yet over the hump of history."[117]

If allied partners truly "understand the complexities of the German situation," as Secretary of State Rice has repeatedly stated,[118] they should entangle the German government in the "multilateralism trap"[119] and frame the German ISAF commitment as follows:

■ Emphasize the differences in constitutional and political structures within the Alliance and recognize the uniqueness of the German case, in particular the prevailing culture of restraint;

■ Emphasize the commonly defined objectives of the ISAF mission—providing a permissive security environment in Afghanistan that allows coordinated efforts of the international institutions (EU, UN) and non-governmental organizations—to further the cause of reconstruction and development;

■ Emphasize the indispensable German contribution to the ISAF mission, particularly in those areas where Germany enjoys special competences, such as reconstruction and development assistance and the training of Afghan security forces;

■ Emphasize the stakes for Germany's presence in the Hindu Kush with 3,500 troops in terms of the country's overarching security interests, its reflexive commitment to multilateral cooperation, its solidarity with NATO allies, and its vital interest to preserve the Alliance's capacity to act;[120]

■ Encourage the federal government to move Germany out of its safe harbor of innocence and explain to a war adverse public why an investment in the right war in Afghanistan is an indispensable investment in the country's security interests in the post 9/11 world.[121]

Allied partners should also take the Merkel government at its word that German security policy serves as a bridge between self-sustaining development and lasting security. Framed within the multilateral context they should ask the German government for additional help it will find difficult to refuse:

■ Ask Berlin to extend Germany's highly successful reconstruction efforts in the northern sector to other parts of the country and to man two or more PRTs in the south together with allied forces with wide experiences in that region like New Zealand or the Netherlands;

■ Ask Berlin to extend its commitment for the training of Afghan security forces; point out that training shortages are critical because NATO's strategy and Germany's comprehensive security approach rest on rebuilding Afghan security forces, which should assume the lead role in defeating the Taliban insurgency; remind Berlin about the imbalance of its commitment to the EU-run police missions in Afghanistan and in Kosovo (EULEX) with up to 180 police trainers;[122]

■ Ask Berlin to allow German military trainers as part of NATO's OMLT program to follow their units of the Afghan National Army (ANA) to all of Afghanistan without any geographical and operational restrictions;[123]

■ Ask Berlin to redefine the criteria of providing emergency assistance to allied forces that would allow the Bundeswehr to offer assistance in the critical areas of tactical air transport, i.e., helicopters, and surveillance and reconnaissance, i.e., unmanned aerial vehicles, in all of Afghanistan on a permanent basis;

■ Ask Berlin to redeploy the 100 crisis special forces (KSK) as part of Operation Enduring Freedom to Afghanistan, to consider an augmentation of these special forces to a level of up to 200; make these special forces fully available to the changing operational needs of NATO's ISAF mission; [124]

■ Ask Berlin to let NATO's Quick Reaction Force under German leadership operate under the same rules of engagement as under the previous Norwegian command; this would allow the German QRF force to engage in "pro-active" missions as the Norwegian forces successfully did in operation Hare Kate Yolo II in fall 2007;

■ Ask Berlin to set up a bipartisan commission along the lines the Weizsäcker Commission in 2000 that addresses the sensitive issue of whether the national caveats currently imposed on German ISAF forces are still tenable; the commission should submit its recommendations to the Bundestag with the declared intention to use parliament as the appropriate platform to launch an enlightened public discussion on this issue and the overall German contribution to the ISAF mission;

■ Ask Berlin to consider the potential use of NATO's Response Force (NRF) as the ultimate back-up to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan if the security situation further deteriorates, which could lead to a meltdown of NATO's collective mission;

■ Ask Berlin to build-up the overall German troop ceiling of presently 3,500 to 4,500-5,000 with emphasis on the availability of specialized ground combat units of the Division Special Operations established in 2001 for these types of high intensity ground combat missions;[125]

■ Ask Berlin to follow the French example and make up to 500 specialized forces[126] available to NATO's battle against the Taliban in the south; emphasize that the German contingent will operate in close alignment with French troops, as had been the case in the Balkans since 1996;

■ Ask Berlin to reorient the procurement part of the defense budget to the operational requirements defined by NATO and the EU for expeditionary forces with emphasis on command, control, communication, information, reconnaissance and surveillance, medium airlift capability, and the availability of employable, interoperable, and sustainable forces.

The Afghanistan case clearly demonstrates the intrinsic interconnectedness of military intervention, stabilization, and reconstruction. The German mantra of a comprehensive security policy presupposes an assured commitment by all NATO members to provide the needed civilian and military assets to common actions, especially in cases where allied countries like Canada have explicitly asked for help. Talking the talk without walking the walk undermines Germany's strong advocacy of a double-track security strategy. Again, doing as an unequivocal demonstration of allied solidarity has become the litmus test of Germany's reflexive commitment to multilateral cooperation.

In conclusion, the Berlin Republic faces the politically delicate challenge of striking a balance between the competing demands of "the Scylla of collective memory" and "the Charybdis of contemporary exigencies"[127] in such a way that predictability and reliability remain the proven maxims of Germany's security and defense policy. The Merkel government has to cope with the double tasks of backing up the country's institutional and material commitments to both NATO and the EU by concrete deeds and to reconcile the rising external demands with the core principles of the culture of reticence. To bring the competing external

expectations and internal constraints into a lasting balance is the true challenge for Chancellor Merkel's analytical approach. To the disappointment of some allied partners, this indeed highly demanding task may again prove to be like trying to square the circle.

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