

## German problems with their mission in Afghanistan

Justyna Gotkowska

The increase in the Bundeswehr's contingent in Afghanistan up to 4,500 soldiers, which the Bundestag voted for this October, has not eased the criticism of German engagement by some of their allies. In the next few months, Germany will find itself under increasing pressure to enhance their participation in the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan, especially from the new US administration. President-elect Barack Obama has already promised to shift the emphasis of the US engagement from Iraq to Afghanistan, expecting at the same time that European allies, mainly Germany will intensify their engagement in combat operations. Although the German contingent is the third biggest in Afghanistan, its engagement in combat operations against the Taliban is rather small. The government has limited the Bundeswehr's activity to non-military operations in the relatively quiet northern provinces of Afghanistan and prefers engagement in reconstruction and development aid. One of the reasons for that is the German public opinion's negative perception of the Bundeswehr's military missions for historical reasons. The German policy is unlikely to change, especially considering the approaching parliamentary elections next autumn and the diminishing consensus over the engagement in Afghanistan among the political elite. Germany expects that the USA will treat its European allies' views regarding security issues with greater respect and at the same time is not ready to incur an equal share of the military costs as part of NATO. Therefore the mission in Afghanistan may become a problem in future relations between Germany and the USA.

### Conditions of German engagement in Afghanistan

Analysing the German engagement in Afghanistan, one should take into account the historical and internal-policy related aspects of the Bundeswehr's participation in foreign missions as well as Germany's obligations as a member of NATO and the EU:

1. The approach to the Bundeswehr's participation in foreign military missions is still undergoing change in Germany. In the early 1990s, the consensus prevailed that their army could be used only for defence purposes. Although auxiliary (medical and logistical) units of the Bundeswehr had been sent to UN missions abroad, full participation of the German army in NATO and EU-led military missions became possible as late as 1994, when the Federal Constitutional Court

ruled that German participation in military operations led by international organisations conformed with the German constitution. However, final consent to the German army's participation in foreign missions (mandate) is granted each time by the Bundestag; therefore the Bundeswehr is often referred to as the 'parliamentary army.'

2. The Bundeswehr's foreign combat military missions receive little support from the German public<sup>1</sup>. As a consequence, MPs are rather unwilling to send the army on new missions or significantly increase contingents already sent before the parliamentary elections (autumn 2009). Moreover, Germans are discussing whether their army should rather be engaged in missions which are significant for the economic and political interests of their country. For example, Germany has refused to participate in the European mission in Chad because it has no interests in that region. During the debate, questions are also being asked about the German interests and engagement in Afghanistan, where the prospects of ending the Bundeswehr's mission seven years since its commencement

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are still unclear. Therefore, the German elite's support for their country's military engagement seems to be weakening even among representatives of the government coalition (CDU/CSU/SPD). Voices of criticism and appeals for the reduction or withdrawal of military engagement and the activation of more reconstruction projects instead can be heard. The need

to develop a strategy for the Bundeswehr's withdrawal from Afghanistan is also being emphasised ever more strongly.

3. The German government is trying to convince the public that their army is engaged in stabilising the situation in Afghanistan and securing German development aid projects, and is not taking part in military operations. Thus an artificial distinction is being made between two missions: the currently NATO-led stabilisation mission ISAF (in which German troops are taking part) and the US-led combat mission OEF-A (see Appendix 1). However, this image of the two missions is nowadays false because NATO at present is in charge of all military missions in Afghanistan (including combat missions), while marginal operations are being carried out by the USA as part of the OEF-A mission.

4. The promises by president-elect Barack Obama to shift US military engagement from Iraq to Afghanistan and his expectations that their European allies should play a greater role in the military stabilisation of Afghanistan have aroused anxiety among Germans, who expect more pressure from the new US administration.

## Germany imposes limitations on military engagement...

**Considering the Bundeswehr's dependence on internal policy, its actions in Afghanistan are subject to many limitations; one of the goals being the minimisation of the risk of casualties among their soldiers.**

Firstly, the government does not want to send the Bundeswehr to the dangerous southern and eastern provinces of Afghanistan, where nearly 90% of all security risks happen. Germany insists on the continuation of its engagement in the calmer northern provinces (Zone North, where approximately 3,500 soldiers are stationed at present), which even under the Taleban rule were predominantly controlled by the opposition Northern Alliance, which later became allied with the USA. Although the German government, under pressure from other NATO allies, has previously agreed to carry out operations across the entire Afghan territory, these are not combat operations (see Appendix 1).

<sup>1</sup> In a public opinion poll carried out by the German institute TNS Emnid in June 2008 for the weekly magazine, *Spiegel*, 74% of respondents were against increasing the German contingent (23% supported it); 62% of the respondents believed that the Bundeswehr's engagement in Afghanistan was 'rather wrong', and 34% believed that it was 'rather right.' *Spiegel*, no. 27, 30 June 2008, p. 40.

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Secondly, even in Zone North, Germans insist on carrying out predominantly logistical operations (see Appendix 1). The Bundeswehr's actions in Afghanistan have been limited by a number of clauses which have been negotiated

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as part of ISAF concerning the participation in combat operations and restrictive regulations concerning the security of the units. Due to those limitations, the German army is criticised for its insignificant contribution

to the improvement of security in the northern provinces, where it has been stationed.

Thirdly, in addition to the territorial and task-related limitations, the Bundeswehr's engagement is further restricted due to Germany's refusal to use German soldiers for combating the drug industry in Afghanistan. The USA and the United Kingdom among other allies want the ISAF mission to take part in such actions arguing that the rebels' activity is backed with funds generated by the drug industry. According to Germany, the Bundeswehr's engagement in the struggle against the drug manufacturers would infringe upon the interests of local leaders who control the northern provinces, which would automatically increase the number of attacks against the German army stationed there.

## ... and emphasises its contribution to development aid and reconstruction

**Germany compensates the allies' criticism for its insufficient military engagement by emphasising its civil engagement. The German government has been trying to attract attention to their development aid and reconstruction projects in Afghanistan, which have also been used to promote their own technologies, economic co-operation and the good image of Germany.**

Formally, military engagement is compensated with civil engagement as part of the implementation of the 'integrated security' (*vernetzte Sicherheit*) concept developed by the federal government in 2006<sup>2</sup>. Germany emphasises the fact of combining military (the Bundeswehr's activity) and civil instruments (reconstruction projects) in one comprehensive, strategic and operational planning of actions to be taken in the provinces of Afghanistan. Germany has presented its Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), which

**German development aid and reconstruction projects are aimed not only at contributing to the improvement of the living conditions and education of the local population but also at promoting German exports and know-how.**

operate as part of ISAF (see Appendix 2) as an example of such activity. Comparisons of PRT activity have shown that Germans are more successful in civil reconstruction in Afghanistan because German PRTs are engaged in proportionally more projects, and the projects are more prominent<sup>3</sup>. At the same time, however, German PRTs are able

to ensure security in the provinces where they operate only to a limited extent due to the aforementioned limitations imposed on the Bundeswehr and the German government's concept, according to which the smallest possible military contingent should be stationed with a PRT.

<sup>2</sup> "There is no security without reconstruction and development. There is no reconstruction and development without security." This is the motto of the German government's strategy for Afghanistan, which was updated this September. Das Afghanistan-Konzept der Bundesregierung, 9 September 2008, <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/de/Aussenpolitik/RegionaleSchwerpunkte/AfghanistanZentralasien/Downloads/80909-Afghanistan-Konzept2008.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Gauster, Markus, Provincial Reconstruction Teams In Afghanistan. Ein innovatives Instrument des internationalen Krisenmanagements auf dem Prüfstand. Schriftenreihe der Landesverteidigungsakademie, Vienna, October 2006, [http://www.bundesheer.at/pdf\\_pool/publikationen/mg\\_prt\\_studie\\_okt\\_2006.pdf](http://www.bundesheer.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/mg_prt_studie_okt_2006.pdf)

German development aid and reconstruction projects in Afghanistan are aimed not only at contributing to the improvement of the living conditions and education of the local population but also at promoting German exports and know-how (see Appendix 3). Germany has been trying to achieve bilateral benefits by adopting the 'win-win' model in the shaping of its development aid, so that both its partners and Germany itself can benefit from the aid projects; the latter through exports of goods and know-how, co-shaping economic regulations friendly to investors, and good contacts in the administration structures supported by it.

German development aid projects are focused on school education, the economic development of the provinces, the improvement of drinking water and electric power supplies. Those areas have not been selected randomly. Germany has been promoting its own technologies in the two latter fields, especially in using alternative energy sources and so-called green technologies. It seems that a great deal of funds coming from the budget of the federal Development Aid Ministry which are allocated to such projects in Afghanistan are returning to German companies dealing with renewable energy or water treatment in the form of orders or requests for supplies of equipment necessary for projects in Afghanistan. Germany has also made efforts, as in other developing countries where it is engaged, to influence the shaping of investor-friendly economic regulations in Afghanistan through the implementation of consulting projects for the Afghan Economy Ministry. Germany has also emphasised its engagement in the reform and training of Afghan police.

<sup>4</sup> Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ). Literal translation: Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development, which is in fact in charge of the coordination of German development aid.

## Prospect of German engagement in Afghanistan

1. The German model of engagement will cause increasing criticism at home and abroad mainly due to the following two factors:

Firstly, the risk of Taleban attacks has grown in the previously safe northern provinces of Afghanistan, where the Bundeswehr is stationed. Attacks against German troops have intensified since July 2008 in the Kunduz province. Security is likely to worsen in the northern provinces unless stronger military engagement, including offensive operations against the Taleban, is adopted.

Secondly, Barack Obama's promises of increased solidarity in the sharing of responsibility as part of NATO will mean strong pressure from the USA on European allies (mainly Germany) to increase their military contingents and engagement in fights against the Taleban in the southern and eastern regions of the country. This will probably become a problem in relations between Germany and the new US administration.

2. However, Germany is unlikely to change the nature of its engagement in Afghanistan before 2010 due to parliamentary elections scheduled for autumn 2009. Considering the electoral campaign, Germany will still try to minimise the risk of human casualties.

**Demands for the government to develop a plan of withdrawal from Afghanistan and push forward the plan within NATO have been becoming increasingly stronger in Germany.**

Military engagement will remain at the level of 4,000 soldiers stationed in Zone North. The increase in the number of soldiers to 4,500, which has been recently admitted by the Bundestag, will be used to reinforce security during the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections in Afghanistan (due to be held respec-

tively in 2009 and 2010) and to enhance the training of the Afghan police and army, and not for intensifying the struggle against the Taleban, contrary to US expectations.

3. Demands for the government to develop a plan of withdrawal from Afghanistan and push forward the plan within NATO have been becoming increasingly stronger in Germany. Therefore, for the needs of German public opinion, the federal government will emphasise German development aid to Afghanistan to an even greater extent, stressing their engagement in the reform and training of Afghan police and presenting these as achievements contributing to the withdrawal from Afghanistan.

## APPENDIX 1

### German military engagement in Afghanistan



#### **As part of ISAF mission (International Security Assistance Force)**

The Bundestag accepted the Bundeswehr's mandate for participation in the international mission in December 2001. At the time, the ISAF mandate provided for supporting the interim Afghan government in maintaining security in and around Kabul. However, the scope of ISAF was gradually extended to the entire Afghan territory, and the mission command was taken over by NATO upon an official request from Germany and Holland due to problems with the coordination of international units and planning.

**The main area of German engagement:** The Bundeswehr has been in charge of Regional Command North since July 2006. The main German base in Zone North is Camp Marmal near Mazar-i Sharif. Additionally, for logistical purposes, Germany leases an airbase from the Uzbek government in Termez in southern Uzbekistan (nearly 100 German soldiers are stationed there). Zone North extends to nine northern provinces. Approximately 3,500 German soldiers are stationed there at present. The federal government may have up to 4,500 soldiers in Afghanistan pursuant to the Bundestag's decision passed this autumn.

**The Bundeswehr's tasks in Zone North:** regional command in Zone North, command support, air transport, medical service, logistics and surveillance. In response to intensified criticism inside NATO, the German government decided at the beginning of 2008 to deploy a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) unit, which replaced the 200-strong Norwegian unit in Zone North this July. One of the QRF's tasks is to offer assistance to German and other allies' units outside their bases which have found themselves under direct threat. Since, at least formally, this is the first German unit of this kind in ISAF, the government's decision was preceded by a parliamentary discussion on the scope of German commandos' authority in fighting the Taleban. According to MPs, the German QRF has no mandate to initiate actions against the rebels, and it can only respond to direct threat.

**The Bundeswehr's tasks in the entire Afghan territory:** Tornado reconnaissance aircraft flights, transport of equipment and personnel (including injured), operation of communication and data transfer specialists and, in exceptional cases and for short periods, special units' operations. It is very likely to assume a new task soon, namely participation in NATO's electronic radar surveillance units using AWACS aircraft, which are predominantly operated by German soldiers.

### As part of OEF-A mission (Operation Enduring Freedom Afghanistan)

The Bundestag accepted the Bundeswehr's mandate for participation in the OEF-A mission (more precisely, a 100-strong special unit KSK) in November 2001. The unit was present in Afghanistan as part of OEF-A between 2002 and 2005. OEF-A has been criticised in Germany due to the strictly military nature and US command of the mission. The then Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder linked the Bundestag's consent to the German army's participation in the mission in 2001 with the vote of confidence for the SPD/Green Party government. The present government coalition CDU/CSU/SPD decided in October 2008 that the Bundeswehr's mandate for participation in OEF-A would not be renewed. The government decided this in order to convince hesitant SPD representatives to vote for the extension of the Bundeswehr's mandate as part of ISAF.

## APPENDIX 2

### German-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) as part of ISAF

Currently, there are 26 PRTs across Afghanistan. The teams' military personnel takes care of security, while their civilian members coordinate development aid and reconstruction projects in the regions. Individual PRTs differ in operation and structure, depending on the country in charge of the team and financing sources. Civilian-military co-operation is most evident in German PRTs. Germany is in charge of the following three teams in Zone North:

- Kunduz Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT in Kunduz)
- Badakhshan Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT in Fayzabad)
- Takhar Provincial Advisory Team (PAT in Taloqan).

Each of the German PRTs is headed by representatives of the Bundeswehr and the German Foreign Ministry. Each team includes associates of the German Defence Ministry, Foreign Ministry, Development Aid Ministry (BMZ) and Interior Ministry (however the coordination of co-operation between some German-led PRTs needs to be improved). The operation of PRTs is based on a four-pillar model, which comprises the following:

- security ensured by the Bundeswehr – PRT functioning and the implementation of development aid projects;
- diplomacy – contacts with local authorities and the UN-led UNAMA mission, for which a representative of the German Foreign Ministry is responsible;
- development aid – coordination and ordering development aid projects by a representative of the Economic Co-operation and Development Ministry (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, BMZ);
- coordination of police advisors' work by the German Interior Ministry.

## APPENDIX 3

### German civil engagement in Afghanistan

#### **Funding**

Germany allocated nearly 80 million euros annually between 2002 and 2006, including:

- 30 million euros for development aid (funds from the Development Aid Ministry's budget),
- 30 million euros for Afghan police training (funds from the Foreign Ministry's budget),
- 20 million euros for the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund.

In 2007, Germany allocated an additional 20 million euros for development aid projects in Afghanistan, of which 17 million were spent on education projects, and 3 million on projects concerning renewable energy sources. In 2008, aid funds for Afghanistan are expected to be increased to 170.7 million euros.

#### **Development aid projects**

German development aid is concentrated in the three northern provinces where the German-led PRTs are located (Kunduz, Badakhshan and Takhar). Germans are also engaged in projects in Mazar-i Sharif, where the German command of Zone North is located, in Kabul and in Herat in western Afghanistan, where Germany had its consulate and conducted development aid projects as early as the 1970s. The German Archaeological Institute supports and carries out projects for the preservation of cultural heritage of the region in Herat.

Development aid projects are ordered by the federal Development Aid Ministry and are implemented mainly by German governmental organisations dealing with development aid, such as the German Development Aid Organisation (DED), the Association for Technical Co-operation (GTZ), the German Association for Investment and Development (DEG) and the Development Aid Bank (KfW Entwicklungsbank). German development aid projects are also implemented to a lesser extent by German non-governmental organisations such as Deutsche Welthungerhilfe, Arbeitsgruppe Entwicklung und Fachkräfte (AGEF) and Katachel e.V.

#### **Police training**

The training is coordinated by the German Interior Ministry, while the funds for it are supplied by the Foreign Ministry. Germany was in charge of reforming the Afghan police as the 'leading nation' from 2002. As a consequence of criticism inside NATO for police training - which was believed to be excessively lengthy and inadequate for Afghan conditions - and problems with personnel, the European Union took over the responsibility for Afghan police reform in 2007 upon Germany's request. The Union undertook to send 400 police instructors to Afghanistan as part of its EUPOL AFG mission. Germany promised to send 120 experts. However, due to problems with personnel, there are only 40 of them in Afghanistan.

In addition to participation in the common European mission, Germans are still engaged in bilateral police projects in Afghanistan as part of the German Police Project Team, and they have their office in Kabul. A team of nearly 40 experts offers consultations to the Afghan Interior Ministry on the organisation of police services and coordinates projects aimed at modernising the infrastructure and equipment of the Afghan police, mainly in the German command zone in the north of the country and in Kabul.

#### **Centre for Eastern Studies**

Koszykowa 6A  
00-564 Warsaw  
phone: (+48 22) 525 80 00  
fax: (+48 22) 629 87 99  
e-mail: info@osw.waw.pl

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Editors: Anna Łabuszewska,  
Katarzyna Kazimierska  
Translation: Ilona Duchnowicz  
Co-operation: Nick Furnival  
DTP: Katarzyna Kazimierska  
Map: Wojciech Mańkowski

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