A Civilian Power at War

An analysis of Germany’s military engagement in Afghanistan since 2001

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The paper analyzes why and how Germany has been participating in the Afghan war since 2001. By looking at the official justification of Germany’s civil-military engagement in Afghanistan in parliamentarian debates and, in particular, by the government, we argue – contra mainstream approaches of the Democratic Peace – that the Afghan war represents a “democratic war”, fighting for objectives particular to liberal democracies. We call this an example for the “antinomies of Democratic Peace”. By analyzing the ways in which Germany actually shaped its contribution to the war, we show that German military engagement does not signal the turning away from its postwar political culture usually called “Civilian Power”, but that, in fact, we can only understand the actual German conduct of war, which looks highly incoherent and irrational at the surface, if we interpret it as the outcome of the intense effort to deal with the dilemmas of a “Civilian Power” at war. Thus, we need to look at the antinomies of the Democratic Peace in order to understand why Germany participates in the Afghan war and pay attention to Germany’s specific political culture in order to understand how it does so.

1. Introduction

Why should Germany’s military engagement in Afghanistan be of interest to International Relations scholars? First and generally, Germany is a stable liberal democracy and as such, according to one of the most prominent paradigms in contemporary IR (the Democratic Peace), should be wary of waging war. Second and more specifically, Germany is usually considered a rather war-averse “Civilian Power” (Maull 1990; Harnisch/Maull 2001) which makes the more than ten years of German military engagement in Afghanistan all the more puzzling. Of course, there could be relatively easy answers to this dual puzzle: Well in line with the Democratic Peace, Germany’s military engagement in Afghanistan could be explained as a form of (collective) self-defense against an aggressive non-democratic enemy. And with a view to the “Civilian Power” approach, German participation in the Afghan war could be read as an additional piece of evidence that, following up on the Kosovo war of 1999, demonstrates that the country’s foreign-political culture, since 1990, has consistently turned away from the “Civilian Power” conception towards a “normal” major middle power (cf. Hellmann 2000, 2001, 2002; Baumann/Hellmann

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1 This paper draws on theoretical and methodological approaches developed in two research projects at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF) which have both been funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG): a project on the “Causes of the Differences in War Involvement of Democracies since 1990” and a project on the “Determinants of democratic states’ handling of conflicting objectives in democracy promotion” (in cooperation with Goethe University Frankfurt). A previous version of this paper has been published in German in a Special Issue of the Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik (cf. Müller/Wolff 2011). We thank the two editors of this volume, Klaus Brummer and Stefan Fröhlich, as well as Anna Geis and Jörg Krempel for their helpful comments, and Elizabeth Boshold for great help in preparing the English version. Gregor Hofmann and Enrico Klotter, in addition to assisting in research on literature and documents, contributed invaluable work in the content analysis of the parliamentary debates. All translations of German quotations are those of the authors.
2001; Baumann 2006). In this paper, we aim to show that neither of these two easy answers convincingly grasps Germany’s military engagement in Afghanistan.

By analyzing why and how Germany has been participating in the Afghan war since 2001, we argue that, first, we are concerned here with an example of a “democratic war” as conceptualized by the critical theory of the antinomies of Democratic Peace: a war that is justified by specific liberal democratic reasons (cf. Geis et al. 2006, 2012; Müller 2004; Müller/Wolff 2006). That is, we have to systematically take into account the “liberal purposes” (Doyle 1983: 230) behind the war, which can neither be understood, as mainstream approaches to the Democratic Peace would have it, as a case of (preventive) self-defense against a (supposed) autocratic threat nor can it be explained in purely Realist, interest-based terms. Second, we show that Germany’s war participation does not support the claim of a consistent turning away from its “Civilian Power” culture but that, in fact, we can only understand the actual German conduct of war, which looks highly incoherent and irrational at the surface, if we interpret it as the outcome of the intense effort to deal with the dilemmas of a “Civilian Power” at war.

The paper, thus, contributes to two important academic debates: a general one, dealing with the phenomenon of democratic states waging war (“democratic war”); and a case-specific one, dealing with continuity and change in German foreign policy (“Civilian Power”). The overarching argument is that we need to look at the antinomies of the Democratic Peace in order to understand why Germany participates in the Afghan war and pay attention to Germany’s specific political culture if we are to understand how it does so.

We start by presenting the critical theory of the antinomies of Democratic Peace (2.) and, then, briefly report the debate on Germany’s foreign-political culture since 1990 (3.). The empirical analysis is divided in three parts: First, we present the quantitative results of a qualitative content analysis of the justification for the war in the parliamentarian debates which preceded the decision to adopt, or prolong, the mandate for the armed forces to participate in the Afghan war between 2001 and 2011 (4.). Second, we analyze how the Federal Government, over the years, has justified and explained German policies in Afghanistan to the parliament and the general public (5.). Third, we look briefly at the ways in which Germany conducted the war in terms of material effort and rules of engagement against the background of its overall defense policy (6.).

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3 Contributions to this debate about continuity and change in German foreign policy – while not always explicitly referring to the “Civilian Power” concept – include the edited volumes by Harnisch/Maull (2001); Webber (2001); Katzenstein (1997); Eberwein/Kaiser (2001); and Rittberger (2001); as well as Arora (2007); Berger 1998; Buras/Longhurst (2004); Dalgaard-Nielsen (2005); Duffield 1999; Geis (2012); Katzenstein (2003); Leithner (2009); Tewes (2002).
2. Democratic Peace and its Antinomies: “Democratic wars”

Afghanistan, together with Iraq, is usually seen as one of the key cases in which Western democracies have embarked on a mission of “democratization through war” (Grimm/Merkel 2008). The double war – first the international intervention to topple the Taliban regime, then the internationalized internal war following the intervention, in which the international troops are involved as a party – has thus become a dramatic example of the practical turn the Democratic Peace paradigm has taken: from a theory of peaceful relations between democracies to a political project to, if need coercively, promote democracy in non-democratic countries (cf. Ish-Shalom 2006; Jahn 2005; Smith 2007; Wolff/Wurm 2011). “How far is it from Königsberg to Kandahar”, Anna Geis and Wolfgang Wagner (2011) ask, alluding to the connection between Democratic Peace, inspired by Immanuel Kant, and the war at the Hindu Kush.

That democracies may use force against non-democracies is not at all a new phenomenon. At first sight, Afghanistan therefore does not pose a problem to mainstream approaches to the Democratic Peace, which have generally restricted the finding of democracies’ peace-proneness to inter-democratic relations (cf. Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999; Risse-Kappen 1995; Russett/Oneal 2001).4 The war against the Taliban regime, from this perspective, would just be an additional example for the fact that democracies wage, at times, feel compelled to wage wars against non-democracies because the latter are considered a threat. To explain the dyadic finding that democracies seem not to wage wars against their own kind, three arguments in particular have been brought forward.5 According to a rational-utilitarian line of reasoning, citizens, when they have a say, avoid the risks to life, physical integrity and property that war entails. A normative-cultural argument points to the preference for peaceful conflict resolution, which democracies have put into practice internally and which they also seek to implement in their external relations. Rooted in Western thinking since the Enlightenment, the normative basis is the respect for human rights, which always are at stake in violent confrontations. An institutionalist consideration emphasizes, that democratic institutions present higher thresholds for a bellicose executive than for those of autocracies: free speech, critical media and “checks and balances” provide opponents of war a multitude of possibilities to raise objections and slow down the decision-making process; in democracies, politicians have to take voters’ preferences into account – in order to establish broad ‘winning coalitions’ – if they want to remain in office.

These justifications are met with difficulties (see Henderson 2002; Rosato 2003; Mül-

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4 Even if it is contested whether democracies might be on average slightly less war-prone than other states (cf. Benoit 1996; Rummel 1983; Russett/Oneal 2001), only very few scholars would argue that democracies are generally peaceful in the behaviour towards non-democratic regimes (but see Czempiel 1996).
5 For reviews of the different (monadic and dyadic) attempts to explain the Democratic Peace, see Risse-Kappen (1995) and Müller (2002).
ler/Wolff 2006). For one, it is not plausible that these ideational and institutional structural features of democracies should only take effect in the relationship between democracies, but not in relation to non-democracies. That democracies are not only drawn into military disputes and wars with non-democracies, but often initiate them, shows that the democratic involvement in wars can hardly be explained with autocratic aggression (see Russett/Oneal 2001; Henderson 2002). The theories of Democratic Peace therefore use additional assumptions, of which the thesis of an inclusion/exclusion dynamic is the most convincing: democracies perceive each other as democracies, and thus know that the democratic partners share their preference for peaceful conflict resolution. They also observe the violent internal practices of autocracies and conclude a high risk of external use of force. The security dilemma can thus be overcome between democracies, while it becomes exacerbated in the relations with non-democracies (Risse-Kappen 1995; cf. Owen 1997). However, war research has shown that the security dilemma is only seldom the source of military conflicts (Vasquez 2000). Concerning democratic war operations that are directed at clearly inferior countries, it is completely implausible. It is equally difficult to understand, why democracies adhere to their perception of mutual peacefulness if they realize that some of their fellow democracies act in a markedly bellicose manner, while a substantial number of autocracies live in peace with their neighbors and do not exhibit excessive internal violence.

An additional problem has prompted the development of a critical theory of Democratic Peace. Established approaches accept the phenomenon of democratic participation in and initiation of war, without really analyzing it. Mainstream accounts of the Democratic Peace usually talk about some general patterns that are supposed to characterize relations between democracies and non-democracies without paying attention to the fact that there is a high variance in the violent external behavior of democracies (Müller 2004; Chojnacki 2006): While some democratic states never or hardly ever take up arms, others are far more militant. This variance cannot merely be explained with a disparity in power (Nisley 2008): On the one hand, even states with small armed forces can participate (and have participated, like Denmark or Poland in the Iraq war) in the coalition wars, which have become typical nowadays; on the other hand, powerful states like Germany and Japan are among the rather force-averse democracies.

Critical theory begins with highlighting the “antinomies” of Democratic Peace (Müller 2002, 2004): The suspected causal mechanisms that are to explain democratic peace-proneness are anything but unambiguous. Utilitarian reasoning can enable (or even drive) war as soon as citizens expect that military conflicts can be “won” quickly and at a low cost, e.g. because their

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6 Institutionalist lines of argument, which are mainly based on the paradigm of rational choice, point in another direction (see Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1998; Lipson 2003). The theoretical consistency and empirical plausibility of these institutionalist explanations is, however, fairly limited (cf. Müller/Wolff 2006: 52-58).
country or alliance is clearly superior, while promising some kind of important benefit. In addition, risks for life disappear when warfighting is outsourced namely to professional soldiers, security firms and coalition members. With a view to the normative explanation, Michael Doyle noted the ambivalence of liberal norms early on when pointing to the existence of “liberal purposes” for war (Doyle 1983: 230). For example, the respect for human rights can provide motives to end violations of human rights by force or even establish a democracy in the incriminated country to ensure a lasting protection of human rights (cf. Vasquez 2005: 307). Therefore, democratic norms contain the impulse to intervene militarily as well as motives to abstain from using force. Democratic institutions transport preferences; if they are geared towards military action, they will not stand in the way of a “democratic war”.

This ambivalence is an intrinsic element of liberal thinking since the Enlightenment (Müller 2004; Soerensen 2006). It is not a bellicose virus introduced by liberal imperialists following in the wake of Kant (Jahn 2005), nor the residue of a pre-Enlightenment conservatism, fostered by the political right (MacMillan 1996). Kant himself considered the “unjust enemy” a necessary concept and justified bellicose action to combat it (Müller 2004). However, there is no explicit liberal imperative for interventionism (Desch 2007), as the identification of an “unjust enemy“ requires a practical judgment that is not prejudged and otherwise the categorical Kantian ban on intervention applies (Maus 1998). Liberal or democratic norms, therefore, do not cause “democratic wars” in a deterministic or probabilistic sense. Rather, pursuant to Giddens’ theory of structuration, they structure democratic decisions about war by enabling and constraining. In publicly justifying a decision to go to war, democratic governments are bound by an obligatory reference to liberal norms and by the need to “verify” this justification through democratic procedures (Müller/Wolff 2006: 61). The range of public reasons acceptable within the normative liberal-democratic framework, for example, does exclude wars of conquest, pillaging or subjugation. They also contain a prohibition of wars against states that are perceived as fellow democracies: Because “democratic wars” have to be justified as ultimately in the interest of the country to be attacked, they can only be directed against regimes that can be presented as illegitimate (in the sense of not representing the people).

Where liberal reasons for war can be given, however, democratic norms do provide for military action. Three ideal types of “democratic wars” have been deduced as possible cases in which liberal-democratic norms allow for justifying war (cf. Geis et al. 2006, 2012): “order wars” which aim at enforcing or restoring a lawful international order; “humanitarian interventions” which react to gross violations of human rights; and wars for democratic “regime change”. The Afghanistan war has, indeed, been subsumed under all three categories: as a war against a
regime that violated basic rules of the international community by harboring terrorists; as support for the Afghan people oppressed by Taliban rule; and finally as a mission that would enable the transition to a democratic regime.

While “order wars” and “humanitarian interventions” are not based on exclusively liberal-democratic reasons but can be justified in terms of broader, not necessarily liberal or democratic norms as well, the “regime change” by force is the clearest example of liberal norms turned into reasons for war (cf. Desch 2007; Smith 2007). It is part of a general trend that has unfolded since the end of the Cold War: the rise of democracy promotion as a goal and a strategy of the foreign policies of established democracies. The notion of the Democratic Peace has played an important role in the political rise of this paradigm by justifying democracy promotion as a means to further both national security and international peace (cf. Goldsmith 2008; Ish-Shalom 2006; Spanger/Wolff 2007; Wolff/Wurm 2011). Of course, most of the activities that established democracies (and international and non-governmental organizations) employ to support the spread and stabilization of democracy around the world are non-military, ranging from the promotion of democratic values by diplomatic means, through development policy aiming at strengthening democratic institutions or empowering civil society, to the democratic conditioning of development aid and trade preferences. In general, coercive regime change is certainly an extreme – and heavily contested – way of “applying” the Democratic Peace, but it obviously is a possible one. While Afghanistan was initially justified as a case of (collective) self-defense, it quickly became an intervention to bring democracy to the people. By this way, democracy promotion became a crucial element in the internationalized internal war that followed the toppling of the Taliban regime. On the one hand, military-backed efforts at establishing a democratic state in Afghanistan were presented as a kind of preventive self-defense: necessary in order to guarantee that the Taliban would not come back and Afghanistan would not again turn into a threat to “the West”. On the other hand, the respect for the (human) rights of the Afghani people also requires the establishment of democracy and the rule of law (see below).

When considering intrinsically ambivalent liberal-democratic norms as part of the discursive opportunity structure within which democratic governments operate, it also becomes possible to account for the above-mentioned variance in democratic war participation. Given different political cultures, democratic countries may tend towards different “solutions” of the tension between the impulses to respect the norms of collective self-determination and non-violent conflict resolution, on the one hand, and enforcing individual rights and democratic standards, on the other (cf. Soerensen 2006; Wolff/Wurm 2011). Countries that have been traumatized by the conse-

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7 For the concept of “discursive opportunities”, see Koopmans/Olzk (2004).
quences of their militarist past (Germany, Japan, Italy) or neutral countries would arguably tend to prefer pacifist policies, e.g. military restraint and multilateralism based on international law. States with a more successful military tradition, the practice, dating back to imperial times, of using the military as an instrument for political aims, and allied states have fewer inhibitions to use their armed forces for the “right” purpose. Traditional great powers are also less prejudiced against blending specific democratic political motives with traditional power and security interests. To the extent that a given democracy is characterized by a stable, clearly dominant political culture in this regard, it can, thus, be placed on a continuum between a rather militant pole, which leans towards military solutions for impeding conflicts with non-democracies, and a more pacifistic one, which is willing to rely on peaceful solutions and cooperation in dealing with autocracies (Müller/Wolff 2006). But, of course, democracies can also move on this continuum as political change, both domestically and internationally, may prompt change of political culture. In this sense, an important debate among experts on German foreign policy has been whether this country, since 1990, has been moving from a largely pacifist “Civilian Power” to a much more “normal” country that is willing to do power politics and, if need be, even to use military force.

3. Patterns of German Foreign Policy since Unification: “Civilian Power” and beyond

As a democracy, Germany should only take up arms for “liberal causes”, therefore act within the framework of the “antinomies” of Democratic Peace. This does not determine, however, where the country is located between the “pacifist” and the “militant” pole of democratic behavior. This positioning requires a characterization of the culture of German foreign and security policy.

In the 1980s, Richard Rosecrance (1987) saw the Federal Republic of Germany as a model for his notion of a “trading state”. Such a state, according to Rosecrance, prefers maximizing economic prosperity over expanding political power. The shift from a power to a welfare preference order is favored by the material interests of citizens and thus takes roots especially in democracies where the influence of citizens on politics and policies is relatively strong; in this, Rosecrance follows Kantian arguments. In the end, a trading state withdraws from the pursuit of

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8 Different institutional set-ups that characterize democracies intervene in the causal chain between political culture and the decision for or against war (see Auerswald 1999; Elman 2000). Presidential systems and systems in the Westminster tradition grant the executive greater freedom to act and limit the control functions of the parliaments in foreign and security policy. The executives can also rely on a beneficial opportunity structure, when they want to push military operations through (Peters/Wagner 2010); a corresponding preference has to be present, however, as it is not generated by the institutions. Democracies with a majority voting system have a tendency toward polarization between ideologies, which can lead to strong swings between militancy and pacifism. Democracies with proportional representation are characterized by a competition among the parties for the political center; here – depending on the characteristics of the political culture – a greater continuity of a more militant or pacifist political behavior is to be expected (Müller 2004; Müller/Wolff 2006).
power postulated by Realism. The military is constrained to strictly defensive purposes. A trading state, according to Rosecrance, is war averse, but might be inclined to pursue its national economic interests with considerable vigor.

Going beyond Rosecrance’s utilitarianism, Hanns Maull developed the concept of a “Civilian Power” (Maull 1990; Harnisch/Maull 2001). The role conception of a Civilian Power is not simply determined by the constellation of material interests but shaped, in particular, by a specific set of guiding norms which result from culturally embedded historical experiences. Moral orientations join material interests to shape a system of preferences where the military takes a low priority and, consequently, a marginal role in societies and policies. Civilian Powers, according to Maull and colleagues, are guided by humanitarian values, multilateral cooperation and international law; they have a deep-seated skepticism regarding the benefit and the moral value of military operations, without being completely pacifistic (Tewes 2002: 12). Under exceptional circumstances and under observance of legal international procedures, even civilian powers may join the international community in conducting military operations for the common good.

In the case of Germany, the trauma of two catastrophically lost wars has led to a greater confrontation and analysis of the past than elsewhere and to the recognition of historical guilt. The German past between 1870 and 1945 was characterized by a strong appreciation for the military, a militarized culture, and bellicose policies. The results of this constellation were physical and moral devastation. This experience has created a culture of restraint; in the field of foreign and security policies, a multilateral style prevails. Germany has firmly embedded itself into the European Union (to consciously constrain its possibilities to use power unilaterally) and into NATO (to consciously bind its military forces in controlling international structures). This culture underlies an all-partisan consensus on the basic principles of public policy, and induces citizens to keep a watchful eye on German foreign and security policy. German thinking about foreign policy is strongly marked by the taboos of “never again” and “never alone” (Maull 2001: 118). Further studies have generally confirmed Maull’s interpretation (cf. Katzenstein 1997; Berger 1998; Duffield 1999). They took note that Germany agreed to reduce its armed forces disproportionately after unification, and to sacrifice its main instrument of (economic) power, the D-Mark, for a European currency.

Since the end of the 1990s, the end of the taboo against the deployment of German forces abroad, culminating in the German participation in the Kosovo War – without a mandate by the UN –, an increasingly interest-driven policy within the EU, the claim to a permanent seat in the UN Security Council as well as the refusal to take part in the 2003 Iraq War have given rise to a debate about a possible “normalization” of German foreign and security policy. Germany was
seen as slowly departing from the model of a Civilian Power and beginning to imitate the behavior of secondary great powers like France and Great Britain (see Hellmann 2001; Baumann/Hellmann 2001). This implied, first, to put the national interest first instead of taking partners’ interests in account while formulating one’s own policy lines – including the instrumental use of multilateralism, and, second, to have less aversion to use military force if that serves these interests (Baumann 2006: Chapter 6, 168-185). It is noteworthy that the proponents of this position do not warn against a German return to the attitudes of the first half of the 20th century, or take a pessimistic attitude about the “tragedy of great powers politics” like John Mearsheimer (2001). Rather, they see the emergence of an era in Europe where the integrative impulses are countered by more competitive ones and relative harmony might give way to tougher bargaining (Baumann 2006: 188).

In contrast, Maull himself defended the Kosovo War as an exception that showed that the multilateral (alliance) engagement allows for German operations in extreme cases, as the above-mentioned “never again” maxim refers not only to war (“never again a war originating from German soil”) but also to the Holocaust: “never again Auschwitz” (Maull 2001: 118); the distance from the dark past, emotionally loaded, has been of course at the roots of the political culture of Civilian Power. The Kosovo war, in this sense, confirmed the observation that German foreign policy is “shaped throughout by norms and firmly held beliefs, rather than by material interests”, while being driven by a multilateral approach and the attempt to avoid being “isolated from its Western allies” (Maull 2001: 119-129). Empirical studies have generally supported this notion of “modified continuity” (Harnisch/Maull 2001; cf. Rittberger 2001; Buras/Longhurst 2004; Dalgaard-Nielsen 2005; Arora 2007; Leithner 2009). Peter Katzenstein, whose earlier work on Germany had already pointed to the close linkage between political culture, political institutions and foreign policy, also sees more continuity than change (Katzenstein 1997, 2003).

Anna Geis (2012) has analyzed Germany’s behavior regarding three “democratic wars” (Gulf War 1991, Kosovo War 1999, Iraq War 2003) in the context of a comparative study of seven Western democracies (cf. Geis et al. 2012). The specifically German elements she found were an emphasis on international law, the need for a strong humanitarian argument (“never again Auschwitz”) to justify military operations, and the reference to alliance obligations. The perception of Germany’s role in the world is also emphasized – as an argument for as well as against participating in military operations. She also determined that the German position is in no way free of “national interests”, though always contained by the characteristic “culture of restraint”. According to Geis, the role conception of a Civilian Power is clearly reflected in the German discourse (Geis 2012; see Geis et al. 2010: 193-4). Geis’ results give powerful support to Maull’s
thesis. While she has analyzed the discourses prior to the decisions on the participation in military operations, we are concerned in this article with the question of how German politics deal with the reality of military operations, using the example of Afghanistan.

4. Official Reasons for Germany’s Civil-Military Engagement in Afghanistan

Anika Leithner, in a discourse analysis, examined the German parliament’s debates on Afghanistan for the year 2001 (Leithner 2009: 51-84). Her findings closely correspond to those of Anna Geis. Thus, Germany’s participation in the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) was primarily justified with a reference to “responsibility”, “solidarity”, and the relationship to the United States (Leithner 2009: 57). “Responsibility” refers, on the one hand, to the allies (especially the US), and, on the other hand, to the international legal order and democratic values. Solidarity with the attacked US becomes a relevant motive against the backdrop of the historic memory of five decades of US support. The reference to democratic values is primarily directed at the international defense of democracy and freedom against terrorism in 2001, and not (yet) at the promotion of democracy and human rights in Afghanistan (Leithner 2009: 69). This points to German security interests, identified by Leithner as a secondary reason, even they have been framed as a collective security interest of the democracies or the “entire civilized world” (Leithner 2009: 71-72).

The qualitative content analysis of parliamentary debates between 2001 and 2011 (see Table 1) confirms the basic motives mentioned above. The justification of Germany’s civil-military engagement in Afghanistan, however, shows substantial shifts in emphasis, which correspond to the changing context – from the justification of the entry into war to the justification of the ongoing intervention: In terms of the Democratic Peace, the political transformation of Afghanistan and its significance for German security become central motives. International “responsibility” and international law remain present but take more of a back seat.
Table 1: Selection of Parliamentary Debates*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. of Speeches</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>22.12.2001</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Bundestag, Plenary Proceedings 14/210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.06.2002</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Bundestag, Plenary Proceedings 14/243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>20.12.2001</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Bundestag, Plenary Proceedings 15/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>24.10.2003</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Bundestag, Plenary Proceedings 15/70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>30.09.2004</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bundestag, Plenary Proceedings 15/129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>21./28.09.2006</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Bundestag, Plenary Proceedings 16/51, 16/54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>28.02./09.03.2007</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Bundestag, Plenary Proceedings 16/81, 16/86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.06./20.09./12.10.2007</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Bundestag, Plenary Proceedings 16/102, 16/115, 16/119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>07.10./16.10.2008</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Bundestag, Plenary Proceedings 16/181, 16/183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>17.06.2009</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bundestag, Plenary Proceedings 16/226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>26.11./03.12.2009</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Bundestag, Plenary Proceedings 17/7, 17/9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
*: All debates between December 2001 and January 2011 were selected in which the German parliament discussed issues directly related to the ISAF mandate. This includes the debate on June 13, 2007, which had the purpose of amending the ISAF mandate and, due to the temporal proximity, was included in Parliamentary Debate No. 9. Debates that continued over several days were analyzed together.

Table 2 summarizes the main quantitative results of the content analysis. Grouped in thematic clusters, the arguments used in the German parliament to justify the ongoing intervention provide a clear picture. The reasons (pro arguments) most often used to justify the German civil-military engagement in Afghanistan refer to two thematic clusters: “democracy promotion” and “universal values”. Almost every second speech mentions democracy promotion, a bit fewer statements emphasize universal values. Arguments that refer “national interests/ power” rank third, but they mostly concerns defensive references to national security and self-defense. The clusters “role”, “international law” and “alliance/ ‘the West’” are mentioned in around 20% of all speeches. Notably, there are hardly any explicit references to Democratic Peace.

9 The qualitative content analysis follows the procedure of the above-mentioned research project on the war involvement of democracies (see Geis et al. 2010, 2012). General statements justifying the operation in Afghanistan (“pro arguments”) refer to speeches by CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP and BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN. Statements by the party DIE LINKE (or PDS), which rejected the operation from the beginning, are only mentioned to provide contrast.

10 The cluster “democracy promotion (pro)” incorporates pro arguments that point to the right to and the universality of democracy, or that either directly or implicitly refer to democratization as a goal (implicit references to democracy state self-determination, freedom, rule of law, or human rights as a goal).

11 Arguments in the cluster “universal values (pro)” refer to humanitarian values, the improvement of living conditions or collective aims of the “international community”.

12 Pro arguments in the cluster “role (pro)” refer – explicitly or implicitly – to Germany’s identity, the understanding of its own role and external expectations of this role. “International law (pro)” includes pro arguments referring to international law or the UN. Arguments in the cluster “alliance/ ‘the West’” refer to obligations towards the allies/ the alliance as well as arguments concerning the credibility and effectiveness of the alliance.
Table 2: Justifications of the Engagement in Afghanistan*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic cluster</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Maximum (Debate)</th>
<th>Minimum (Debate)</th>
<th>Trend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democracy promotion</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>88% (6), 86% (2)</td>
<td>30% (4,8), 33% (11)</td>
<td>decreasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal values</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>75% (6), 70% (3)</td>
<td>0% (11), 22% (5)</td>
<td>decreasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National interests/ power</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>50% (3,6,13)</td>
<td>14% (2), 26% (8)</td>
<td>fluctuating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>45% (9), 44% (5)</td>
<td>0% (11), 13% (7,12)</td>
<td>fluctuating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International law</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>86% (1), 43% (2)</td>
<td>0% (11), 13% (7)</td>
<td>decreasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance/ “the West“</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>50% (6), 48% (8)</td>
<td>0% (2), 4% (10)</td>
<td>fluctuating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-/ Nation-building</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>50% (3), 44% (7)</td>
<td>0% (11), 4% (8,10)</td>
<td>fluctuating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casualties/ Costs</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>71% (2), 50% (3)</td>
<td>0% (4,6,7,8)</td>
<td>fluctuating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Peace</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>29% (2), 11% (5)</td>
<td>0% (6,8,10,11,13)</td>
<td>decreasing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
*: Arguments justifying the German involvement in Afghanistan (“pro arguments”) contained in the speeches of all parties in the Bundestag that generally defend the operation, grouped in thematic clusters. “Frequency” is the percentage of speeches of a given debate in which a pro argument of the respective thematic cluster is mentioned at least once; the share refers to the average across all debates analyzed (see Table 1). “Maximum” and “Minimum” refer to the debates with the highest or lowest frequency, respectively. “Trend” refers to the overall tendency of the frequency over time.

Arguments that refer affirmatively to democracy promotion run through all debates. The percentage of speeches per debate that mention this theme declines over the years, but is never below 30% and, from debate 12 to 13 again rises from 34% to 50%. In some debates, almost 90% of the speakers somehow refer to democracy promotion. The references to the thematic cluster “universal values” show a greater fluctuation (between 0% and 75%), but the frequency also tends to decline over time. This suggests that liberal purposes and values that somehow refer to the aim to help the Afghan people, indeed, constitute a crucial element in the public justification of the German involvement in Afghanistan. The group of pro arguments that refer to “state-/nation-building” adds to this. At the same time, these liberal reasons seem to become increasingly downplayed as the intervention in Afghanistan goes on.

This “altruistic” justification is, however, only part of the story. The percentage of speeches that refer to “national interests/ power” – which includes mainly pro arguments that refer to national security or self-defense – is, in most debates, fairly high. In a series of debates half of the speakers make a national interest-related argument. The frequencies for this cluster do not display a clear trend over the years, but the average frequency in the two most recent debates for “national interests/ power” is actually the highest of all clusters (with 42%, closely followed by democracy promotion with 40%).

In line with Leithner’s analysis (2009: 69-70), references to international law were prominent in the first debates: When speakers had to defend the decision to intervene in the first place, they felt apparently obligated to affirm the legality of the military intervention. Apart from these initial debates, the overall relevance of legal arguments was, however, fairly limited. On average,
references to Germany’s “role” in the world constitute another relevant cluster, with frequencies fluctuating without a clear trend. At a lower average level, the same holds true for “alliance/ ‘the West’”.

When differentiating the frequency according to political parties, security- and interest-related arguments can be found especially among the Conservative parliamentary group of CDU/CSU. 63% of the speeches from the CDU/CSU refer to this cluster. “National interests/power” is also the most important cluster in speeches of the Liberal party FDP, but on a much lower level (37%). At first sight, specifically liberal reasons seem more a topic among the Center-Left as, in the case of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), “democracy promotion” (56%) and “universal values” (52%) are the most important pro arguments. But the frequency of these two clusters among the speakers from CDU/CSU is roughly the same. In approximately 30% of the speeches, members of the CDU/CSU also refer to arguments about “alliance”, “role” and “international law”. With the SPD, “democracy promotion” and “universal values” are followed by the clusters “role” (38%), “national interests” (30%) and “alliance” (28%). In case of the FDP, “democracy promotion” (34%) closely trails “national interests” (37%); “role” (31%) and “universal values” (26%) follow. The speakers of the Green Party (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) most frequently refer to “democracy promotion” (36%), followed by “international law” (26%), “state building” (24%) and “universal values” (21%). Speeches by members of the leftist party (DIE LINKE), which – due to their fundamental opposition to the deployment – were not considered in the quantitative assessment above, as expected show hardly any pro arguments. The central themes that run through their speeches are “democracy promotion” (48%), “universal values” (45%) and “international law” (43%), but always as reasons to oppose the whole mission (“con arguments”).

Besides the positive reasons that are used to justify the civil-military engagement in Afghanistan, there is one important negative pro argument, which is not assigned to a cluster but mentioned in nearly a third of the speeches (28%, without the LINKE): “no exit option”. In a series of debates every second speech refers to the lack of this option in order to justify the continuity of the mission. In general, this emphasis on the lack of alternatives is used to counteract the criticism that there is no progress to be observed, as a quote by the foreign minister at the time, Joschka Fischer, vividly shows: “There were voices saying that the Petersberg Agreement had failed. I can only reply: I have a completely different opinion. On the contrary: There is no other concept. We have to see it through.” (Bundestag 2003: 5999)

13 Statements by the CDU/CSU, therefore, do not clearly prioritize national interests over more altruistic liberal values but are characterized by a systematic combination of both types of arguments.
14 These are the debates no. 2 (57.14%), 6 (50%), 9 (48.48%) und 10 (52.17%).
5. Shifting Justifications and Explanations by the Federal Government

In order to move beyond identifying quantitative patterns of justification towards a more qualitative analysis of the ways in which the German involvement in Afghanistan is politically justified and explained, we now take an in-depth look at the government declarations that opened up the respective parliamentary debates. The following review of statements by the Bundesregierung confirms our finding that – in contrast to the well-known US rhetoric – the paradigm of Democratic Peace is hardly explicitly mentioned in German politics. At the same time, the qualitative analysis of the speeches demonstrates, however, that the two primary goals of German Afghanist policy – democracy/human rights and peace/security – cannot be seen as independent objectives but are directly related along the lines of the Democratic Peace paradigm. Furthermore, government declarations, over time, refer more and more to a security-based justification for the participation in the Afghan war (which for the most time, however, was not called a war); the goals that implicate a political transformation of Afghanistan, while remaining rather vague throughout, are increasingly narrowed down to a focus on domestic stability and security.

In opening the first debate on December 22, 2001, Chancellor Schröder (SPD) named peace and women’s rights as two central goals (cf. Bundestag 2001: 20821), which stand in close connection and are linked to democratization. “Peace in Afghanistan” had “only drawn closer through war“; “pseudo-religiously legitimated and motivated violence” had to be “overpowered and overcome by democratically legitimated counter-violence” (Bundestag 2001: 20822). While war “always affects innocents”, “the absence of democratically legitimized power has affected many more innocent people and stripped them of their rights, especially women and girls” (Bundestag 2001: 20822). The war was thus explicitly said to serve the purpose of establishing a democratic state which would allow for peace and human rights – whereby the latter do not “only” concern basic human rights (for life etc.), but also specific liberal rights (like gender equality). An additional justification concerned “solidarity“ – clearly, if implicitly referring to the United States (Bundestag 2001: 20822). It is striking that the security or defense of Germany did not play any part in Schröder’s speech.

This changed with Defense Minister Scharping (SPD) on June 14, 2002. Peace (“a future without terror, war, or violence“) and human rights (“basic human rights“, “a life in dignity“, “access to public life, to education and training“ for women and “especially the girls“) remain

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15 We focus on statements by the executive, for one, because the pressure to justify foreign policy lies primarily with the government. Secondly, the quantitative content analysis shows that the differences between government and opposition (without the LINKE) are rather limited, which points to a common pool of reasons, even if the justifications on the government side, as expected, are more pronounced.
the main stated goals (Bundestag 2002: 24464). But Scharping added a security-related justification by pointing to the UN Security Council, which had declared on May 23, 2002, that “the situation in Afghanistan continues to present a threat to global peace and international stability”; in addition, Scharping mentioned “nests of scattered Taliban” and “Al-Qaida fighters in hiding” (Bundestag 2002: 24465). The international engagement in Afghanistan was declared to be “preventive policy”: “We want to prevent that Afghanistan reverts to the times of oppression and civil war; we do not want Afghanistan to be misused as a seemingly safe haven for terrorist organizations.” (Bundestag 2002: 24465).

On December 20, 2002, Scharping’s successor Struck (SPD) pointed out what would be necessary to prevent this relapse:

“We know that the stabilization of the country, the consolidation of the multi-ethnic government of national reconciliation and the creation of a framework for the economic development and the societal democratization are of central importance for the success of the fight against international terrorism.” (Bundestag 2002: 1313).

In general, the security-driven justification was dominant with Struck – which only makes sense against the backdrop of Democratic Peace: It is the “reconstruction under democratic auspices” that should advance German “security“ (Bundestag 2002: 1314).

Foreign Minister Steinmeier (SPD) justified the German engagement on September 28, 2006, by combining humanitarian and security-related motivations: On the one hand, he invoked the “hope” of a young Afghan generation, which was “without options and education until five years ago” and which now “is pinning all its hopes on us, not only the Germans, but the entire international community” (Bundestag 2006: 5208). On the other hand, he reminded the audience “that apart from humanitarian aspects there were other reasons for us to set out on the dangerous journey to Afghanistan”: “In the years of the inhuman Taliban rule, [Afghanistan] has become the main training grounds for international terrorism” (Bundestag 2006: 5208). After five years of “reconstruction work”, Steinmeier showed certain disillusionment – and responded with morale-boosting slogans: The “decisive phrase” for the foreign minister thus is: “Afghanistan is only lost, if we give up on it.” (Bundestag 2006: 5208). In general, Steinmeier stuck to the democratization agenda: “the reconstruction, which we have begun with the Petersberg Conference in Bonn,” should be “continued with patience but also with determination”. But, at the same time, he somewhat qualified this plea for continuity by conceding that the “further political reconstruction” should take “the socio-cultural conditions of the country into account” (Bundestag 2006: 5208).

A year later, on February 28, 2007, the contested proposal to send Tornados to support ISAF
and NATO led Steinmeier to strengthen the security argument. The foreign minister now emphasized that the sustained “war against terror” required “firstly strength and secondly perseverance”; this was about a “test” that had to be “passed” (Bundestag 2007: 8127). Regarding the requirements to win this “fight”, the agenda of promoting democracy and human rights was no longer explicitly mentioned, however prosperity, education and research were (see Bundestag 2007: 8129). This also ties in with a rather vague notion of the overall goal: “Afghanistan has to get back on its feet, has to be able to sustain itself” (Bundestag 2007: 8128).

In the face of growing criticism within the German public (Miller 2010: 109), Foreign Minister Steinmeier later intensified the security argument. On September 20, 2007, he made clear that in the first place it were “the murderous attacks of September 11” “that brought us to Afghanistan”, and that, secondly, the alliance had succeeded in “bringing down the criminal Taliban regime” (Bundestag 2007: 11798). The goal was now described as preventing “that Afghanistan turns into a safe haven for terrorists again” (Bundestag 2007: 11789). Steinmeier also referred to the status quo ante in order to emphasize the responsibility to the Afghan people: for example, he reminded the audience of the “catalogue of prohibitions […], through which, in an inhumane and cynical manner, any kind of life in Kabul became practically impossible” under Taliban rule (Bundestag 2007: 11799). What is needed to reach the declared goal, however, remains vague: To prevent Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for terrorists again, Steinmeier argued, “we have to give the people in Afghanistan a new perspective, new hope, by making it possible for them to take the future of their country into their own hands and by supporting them in assuming, step by step, the responsibility for the security in their country again” (Bundestag 2007: 11799). Here the primary focus on a security agenda becomes apparent, also regarding the goals in Afghanistan. Correspondingly, the far-reaching goals related to a political transformation of Afghan society and polity increasingly take a back seat (see also Bundestag 2008: 19306).

Steinmeier’s speech of October 7, 2008, was primarily characterized by the fact that he, while continuously referring to security-related reasons and vague objectives, added arguments related to responsibility. More specifically, the foreign minister referred to the responsibility towards an oppressed people and emphasized that a “word given” had to be kept (Bundestag 2008: 19305). Furthermore, he appealed to the “responsibility” that could not be “shirked”, demanded “solidarity” with the allies, and argued that “reliability and trust” towards the Afghan partners were at stake (Bundestag 2008: 19306).

Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle (FDP), speaking on November 26, 2009, also initially provided humanitarian and security-related reasons for the operation – a fact that points to the

16 In addition, Steinmeier pointed to the “solidarity” that Germany owed to “the alliance” (Bundestag 2007: 8128).
broad consensus across the political spectrum (with exception of the LINKE).^{17}

“We are engaged in Afghanistan for humanitarian reasons, but first and foremost because of our own security interests. Afghanistan and the Afghan-Pakistani border region cannot become a refuge for terrorists again. The operation has the purpose of ensuring that we can live in freedom and security.” (Bundestag 2009: 384).

This quotation, first, shows once again the connection between humanitarian goals and security interests that, in a general sense, correspond to the practical turn of Democratic Peace (security through democracy). Secondly, the security interest is not only dominant (“first and foremost”), but itself points to democracy (“freedom”). Thirdly, in Westerwelle’s speech the security-related justification, for the first time, goes beyond the narrow post-9/11 terrorism agenda: A “rash and panic-stricken” end of the Afghanistan operation “would create a zone of instability of previously unheard of proportions in this explosive region of the world and in the immediate neighborhood of Iran and the nuclear powers Pakistan and India. We cannot let this happen. Our own security is at stake.” (Bundestag 2009: 384).^{18} The specific objectives to be achieved in Afghanistan that follow from the overall humanitarian and security-related goals still remain vague, but, similar to Steinmeier, hardly retain any democratic or human rights-based connotations: The issue at stake, according to Westerwelle, is the “construction of civil and security structures in Afghanistan“ (Bundestag 2009: 384): “self-sustaining security in Afghanistan, so that the transition of responsibility can take place responsibly“ (Bundestag 2009: 385).

Westerwelle explicitly qualified expectations regarding transformational goals by emphasizing “that the idea, which still exists, that we can, in a sense, rebuild Afghanistan in our own Western image, is not realistic“ (Bundestag 2009: 385). It remains obscure, however, what this qualification exactly implies, which expectations have to be laid to rest and which ones maintained. A year later, Westerwelle would call the modified goal “good enough governance” (Bundestag 2010: 8908; original in English). But, again, he would avoid clarifying any further what the criteria for “good enough” were. Only in terms of the expected output, the measure for deciding what is “good enough” seems relatively clear: the political framework conditions have to be sufficient to meet the goal of “self-sustaining security in Afghanistan“ (Bundestag 2010: 8909).

On January 28, 2011, Westerwelle further concentrated justification on the security argument: Afghanistan, he declared, “cannot become a safe haven and retreat for international terrorism again” (Bundestag 2011: 9604). He now directly connected the argument of international responsibility to German security: In the war against terrorism, Germany needed its “friends“, who therefore must not be disappointed (Bundestag 2011: 9606). In terms of Democratic Peace,

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^{17} Until 2005, Germany was governed by a coalition between the SPD and the Green party led by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (SPD). Between 2005 and 2009, Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) governed based on a so-called grand coalition between the SPD and CDU/CSU. Since 2009, Merkel has been governing in coalition with the FDP.

^{18} Furthermore, Westerwelle added arguments relating to responsibility and alliance (see Bundestag 2009: 385-386).
Westerwelle continued to link security and freedom – in Germany as well as in Afghanistan: “It is primarily an issue of the security, freedom and future of our country and of Afghanistan’s.” (Bundestag 2011: 9606) Regarding the transformational goals in Afghanistan, however, neither freedom nor democracy were mentioned. It is the “stability of the country” that was seen as at stake – and, hence, the goal was to bring “Afghanistan lasting and sustainable stability” (Bundestag 2011: 9604).

As outlined in Section 2, the notion of a “democratic war” has been conceptualized as an antinomy of the Democratic Peace. The argument is that the same liberal-democratic norms that lay the foundation for democracies’ capacity for peaceful conflict resolution and cooperation can also, under certain conditions, lead to an exclusionary, confrontational and, in extreme cases, bellicose foreign policy. While the Kosovo War, justified as a “humanitarian intervention”, may appear as a prime example of such a “democratic war“, Afghanistan initially does not seem to fit that picture. The war against the Taliban was a result of their refusal to cooperate with the US after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, to extradite Osama bin Laden and to prevent any al-Qaeda activity on Afghan territory. For Germany, the alliance obligations within NATO and the “unlimited solidarity” declared by Chancellor Schröder became the binding factors. If the military operation in Afghanistan served the purpose of (collective) self-defense, the war can hardly be read as expressing an antinomy of Democratic Peace: The proposition that democracies are particularly peace-prone does, of course, not preclude war for purposes of self-defense.

The analysis of the official justifications of the German participation in the war – and of the civil-military engagement in Afghanistan more broadly – shows, however, that the reference to self-defense was, from the very beginning, only one of the publicly stated reasons and embedded in a broader spectrum of liberal justifications. That the need to defend Germany “at the Hindu Kush” was still brought forward to justify the military engagement years after the fall of the Taliban regime, points to the fact that it is a genuine part of a specifically liberal justification for war: The self-defense motive did not serve as a justification for a clearly delimited defensive war, but a comprehensive political and social transformation of Afghanistan was seen as necessary to ensure German’s security. This implicates that the German need for “self-defense” vis-à-vis Afghanistan was, in principle, without limits as explicitly acknowledged by Foreign Minister Westerwelle in 2011: Even if the complete transfer of the security responsibility to the Afghan authorities should succeed until 2014, Westerwelle argued, Germany would still have to remain “involved to ensure sustainable security in Afghanistan“:

“If we did not do this, the Taliban would immediately take over again. They would carry their seed of terrorism into the world and the entire commitment, especially of the soldiers of the Bundeswehr, would have been in vain. We would be back where we started.” (Bundestag 2011: 9604)
Therefore, the security argument, which was further strengthened in recent years, does not indicate that Germany has adopted a “Realist” perspective in terms of International Relations theories. Germany’s security, according to the “Liberal” mainstream of the German political elite, depends upon the domestic conditions in Afghanistan. In addition, and in line with Leithner (see above), there is the regular reference to international responsibility and solidarity: towards the international community and the alliance, less so towards “the Afghan people“. In the course of increasing disillusionment, however, liberal transformational goals clearly loose significance. The once dominant motive of women’s rights completely disappears from the official rhetoric. This is similarly true for explicit references to the goal of promoting Afghan democracy, which is named in the first years, but later becomes narrowed down to a mere question of stability. In 2002, Defense Minister Struck listed “societal democratization“ as a goal (Bundestag 2002: 1313) and saw Afghanistan on an, albeit long, road “to a stable, democratic state“ (Bundestag 2005: 17574). This corresponds to a polarized juxtaposition of democracies and their enemies: Thus, Chancellor Schröder regarded “democratically legitimated counter-violence” as necessary to overcome “pseudo-religiously legitimated and motivated violence” (Bundestag 2001: 20822).

And Struck pitted “those who are against democratic development in Afghanistan” against those “who support and sustain this development“ (Bundestag 2004: 11746). While it was never clearly stated what democracy and human rights as objectives of German Afghanistan policy would entail on an operational level, the departure from high standards speaks a clear language – already under the grand coalition of CDU/CSU and SPD (2005-2008).

In 2006, Minister of State Erler defined the “political goals” as “the stabilization and ensurance of self-responsibility of Afghanistan“ (Bundestag 2006: 4972). Foreign Minister Steinmeier, two years later, called it a “clear goal” that “the people in Afghanistan can take the future of their country into their own hands as fast as possible and ensure the security in their country again“ (Bundestag 2008: 19306). Westerwelle merely sharpened this focus: “This is, what is at stake in Afghanistan: that they may have their own security structures in Afghanistan.” (Bundestag 2009: 668)19

The 2010 “Progress Report” by the Federal Government confirms the narrow stability and security agenda. Similar to the Bush doctrine of preventive self-defense, the report related the

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19 The turning away from democracy-related goals corresponds to a less dichotomous view of domestic actors in Afghanistan. Instead of juxtaposing good democrats and their evil enemies, in more recent government declarations the own allies – and namely President Karzai – are presented in an ambivalent manner regarding good governance and the fight against corruption. At the same time, a hard core of Taliban is identified that has to be isolated by convincing insurgents to “give up the fight” and “offer them a return to Afghan society”, if they fulfill minimum criteria (Bundestag 2009: 385). Correspondingly, the tasks of reintegrati

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Afghanistan engagement to “security precautions against dangers that materialize before they reach our borders” (Bundesregierung 2010: 4). The declared goal to construct “an independent and stable state” corresponds to the stripped-down perspective (Bundesregierung 2010: 4). With regard to “political system and governance“, the report focused on security guaranteed by a state monopoly on the use of force and legitimacy through a minimum of effective and good governance. Democracy and human rights are not brought into play as German goals, but merely, “in addition“, as elements of the Afghan constitution (Bundesregierung 2010: 41). Such a reduced approach focused on stability and security was already visible in the 2007 Afghanistan concept of the grand coalition:

“At the end of this reconstruction process, there shall be a political order that complies with the fundamental preconditions of political legitimacy, hence is supported by a large majority of the Afghan people. It has to provide sufficiently effective security and judicial organs to be able to fend off the remaining threats of terrorism and organized crime.” (Bundesregierung 2007: 9)

To what extent democracy, human rights and certain governance standards are necessary for self-sustaining security in Afghanistan remained unclear throughout the process. The keyword “good enough governance” (Bundestag 2010: 8908), as well as the argument that “sufficient legitimacy“ requires “a minimum of effective and good governance“ in the eyes of the population (Bundesregierung 2010: 41), at best indicate a vague direction. The same applies to Steinmeier’s emphasis on the need to consider “the socio-cultural conditions of the country” (Bundestag 2006: 5208).

Interestingly enough, the programmatic narrowing down of the agenda to “realistically“ reduced goals, until 2011, went hand in hand with an ever increasing extension of the civil-military engagement in Afghanistan (cf. Brück et al. 2011: 796-797). In 2002, it was still obvious to Defense Minister Scharping that – in view of the negative experiences that “the Afghan people have had with a strong presence of foreign troops” – it would be “the wrong political signal” to show a strong military presence beyond Kabul and its surroundings (Bundestag 2002: 24465). For obvious reasons, this insight was no longer mentioned later on. Throughout the government declarations analyzed, there were abstract references to important changes in strategy, but neither are these changes substantiated or exemplified nor are mistakes or miscalculations admitted. This applies as much to Foreign Minister Steinmeier, who dismissed the criticism that the government

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20 In general, the report justifies the German engagement by recalling “the starting point and continual reason for the enormous efforts and the sacrifices of the Bundeswehr as well as the civilian representatives and reconstruction workers in their engagement: the threat to the Federal Republic through international terrorism and Islamist extremism” (Bundesregierung 2010: 4).

21 What Afghanistan “needs” (this is the starting point for the considerations in this chapter) are “efficient police and security forces to enforce the state monopoly on the use of force“. “The government“ is – for that purpose? – “primarily depending on attaining sufficient legitimacy in the eyes of the population“. “This requires a minimum of effective and good governance on the state and provincial level.“ An “independent judiciary and administration“ as well as the fight against corruption are seen to be necessary to reach this goal (Bundesregierung 2010: 41).
acted “according to the motto ‘keep it up’” (Bundestag 2008: 19306), as to his successor Westerwelle, who emphasized a “change in strategy” that took place at the 2010 Afghanistan Conference in London (Bundestag 2011: 9604).

6. Afghan Realities and Germany’s War Conduct: A bit of war

In this section, we analyze the way Germany has been participating in the Afghanistan war. We start with the way the political class tried to circumvent the insight that they had led the country and its soldiers indeed into a real war. We then focus on three aspects of conducting the war: rules of engagement, mode of deployment, and equipment. We then assess the financial war effort before the background of overall defense and total budgetary expenditures. Throughout this section, we do not ask whether the overall decision to wage this war (and continue waging it) was a good one (by whatever standard), but we “only” assess the German war conduct against the official reasons and aims given for the military engagement in Afghanistan.

6.1 Discourse on “war”

If this truly were a war immediately and directly related to German security, to defend “Germany at the Hindu Kush” in order to ensure its national security, we should expect to see a completely different operation (cf. Kornelius 2009: 40-70). The refusal across Germany’s political elite, lasting for years, to even use the term “war” already contradicts the claim that this operation was meant to defend Germany and the alliance.

There is a legal, a social science and a common-sense problematique involved. In terms of international law, “war” used to designate the armed clash between two or more states. In recent decades, the term has come out of use and has been replaced by “armed international conflict”; the term “armed non-international conflict” might best describe most of what is happening in Afghanistan, but it is still doubtful whether the terrorist part of the violent action is covered by that term as well. In social science (research on war), war has been defined as the armed clash between two or more organized parties with (almost) continuous fighting; whether the organized combatants are states or not is of no importance. This is a very accurate description of the reality in Afghanistan. In the perspective of social science, then, the military dispute in Afghanistan was a war from the beginning. Common sense perspective is very close to the understanding of social science: Where organized groups kill each other and civilians regularly over an extended period, the people in the street will speak of war. Since they are the addressees of public political dis-

22 The only indication of what this latter strategic change might consist of is Westerwelle’s emphasis on the need “to include everyone”. Westerwelle, here, explicitly referred to the “affected neighboring countries”, but did not mention domestic actors (the Taliban? parts of the insurgents?) within Afghanistan (Bundestag 2011: 9604).
course, the common sense term should be in use, not the fine print of international law considerations (cf. Schaller 2010).

This attitude of denial survived the distinct deterioration of the years 2006/7 and continued into 2010, when the new (and very temporary) Minister of Defense Karl Theodor zu Guttenberg used bluntly the “w”-word. The deployment was described as “stabilization mission”, as “robust stabilization mission” and in a last resort attempt that had an almost comical twist “a robust stabilization mission which included regularly fighting engagements”. The German discourse was full of the semantic figure of oppositions between which there was logically no contradiction, such as “we don’t fight a war against Afghanistan, but we fight terrorists and an inhumane regime”. In fact, fighting terrorists and a regime can easily amount of war; thus, war is not excluded by excluding “Afghanistan” as enemy. Former defense minister Struck explained “we do not conduct a war mission, but a peace mission” which ignored the impact of the enemy (who could turn a peace mission into a war easily) in the same way as Green deputy Trittin who remarked “they do not wage war there […], but they secure the postwar recovery” which overlooked that the enemy, if so wishing, could force the allies to fight by making the postwar recovery insecure (Quotes taken from von Krause 2010: 219-222).

It could be that all this was a governmental ruse to lull the German people in the belief that their soldiers were just doing social work, as the Left Party, the only faction in the German parliament to oppose the Afghanistan deployment, has been insinuating (cf. Gehrcke et al. 2011: Chapter 1). It is true that there was much skepticism in the German public concerning the mission. Even early on, when the impression of 9/11 and the Chancellor’s statement on “unlimited solidarity” with the American ally still hang over the national discourse, only small majorities would support the deployment according to some opinion polls; others showed slight majority opposition already during this period. In subsequent years, whatever support might have existed gave way to ever increasing refusal. If the government and parliamentarians avoided the term “war” for public relations purposes, they were highly unsuccessful; strategic use, however, would already indicate that because of the public mood officials had to play the game of “Civilian Power” in order to avoid a public outcry. This, of course, would lend support to the thesis that the Civilian Power attitude was still dominating Germany – if not the German political elite – in the new millennium (cf. von Krause 2010: 280).

However, it is as plausible and probably far more likely that the German political elite was desperately trying to delude itself. They bore responsibility for sending German soldiers in the most deadly environment they had been in since 1945. For politicians who had incurred the same socialization as every ordinary German citizen as well, this was a heavy burden to carry. To deny
reality was probably the best way to keep a revolting conscience at ease. Hence the outspoken and increasingly obtrusive emphasis on the priority given to civilian aspects over fighting aspects and the implied and often explicit criticism against the more “militaristic” allies (cf. Chauvistré 2009: 26-31).

When, at last, the government accepted the notion of “warlike circumstances” or even “war” and reluctantly agreed to give the Bundeswehr contingent more robust and offensive capabilities (from mid-2009 on), this move was mitigated by two placebos. First, the alliance accepted the “comprehensive approach” which integrated the military mission with a strong civilian component and asked for the close coordination of the respective actors (never mind that however well you coordinate, the aggressive actions of the enemy will inevitably lead to responses which entail collateral damage with the respective negative consequences for civilian peacebuilding, while the coordination among actors with vastly different organizational routines, worldviews, and values will remain incomplete even with the best efforts). Second, immediately with accepting the term “war”, the prospect of an early termination of the mission and withdrawal of the major part of the deployed troops was envisaged – fighting “war” could only be tolerated once its foreseeable end was firmly in sight.

6.2 Rules of engagement
That the idea of the mission as “protected social work” was genuine is also suggested by the rules of engagement which obtained for German soldiers into 2009. For one, the unification of ISAF and OEF was fought and rejected (cf. Chauvistré 2009: 33-35). Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), in which some 140 German special forces participated in Summer 2010, had the mandate to combat terrorism. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was to support the authority of the Afghan government and to provide security for the reconstruction of the country. The German participation in OEF, as far as Afghanistan was concerned, was rather token: some 100 soldiers of Germany’s Special Forces (KSK) whose role in OEF remains somehow mysterious until today.

However, ISAF as well had a robust mandate. Since the reconstruction of the country in support of the Afghan government was an objective contrary to the interests of the Taliban and their allies, it was clear for everybody who had taken a look at the Afghan situation that ISAF was bound to run into military confrontation with the insurgents, however softly politicians would characterize its tasks. The separation of the mandates, thus, were sort of illusionary from the be-

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23 Understandably, this criticism did not sell well to those involved in heavy fighting from the beginning, because they were stationed in parts of the countries where the Taliban and their allies were more active and aggressive than in the North where the Bundeswehr was stationed.
ginning and had probably the only sense of preserving maximum freedom of action for US forces which were leading OEF. Indeed, reading the ISAF mandate carefully reveals its impressive robustness; this reading, however, appears not to have found its way into the minds of German politicians (cf. Chauvistré 2009: 33-35).

The German government wanted to hold the two mandates apart even though the economics of force and the prospects for making progress in the war depended, as in all wars, on the unity of command and action (Weinlein 2011). It resisted early requests by allies to be more flexible in the way German soldiers were to be deployed. Keeping the two mandates and related forces apart was the only way to maintain the unwarlike rules of engagement for German soldiers, which did obviously not reflect the need to fight against determined and well-organized enemies. The rules of engagement in force until mid-2009 limited the use of force to cases of strict self-defense and prohibited the pursuit of fleeing enemy units. Destroying or capturing enemy units once defeated, of course, are legitimate and indeed inescapable actions in real warfighting and a condition to win any war..

These rules of engagement which reflected a classical peacekeeping/peacebuilding job had an impact on the equipment accorded to the troops deployed (see below), and had inevitably negative consequences for the protection and security of the troops, both at bases and even more so on patrol. That this situation lasted for more than four years after serious fighting reached the North first (in 2005, while first instances of resistance were already confronted by the German contingent at Kabul in 2003) betrays the degree of delusion in the German political class and, it appears, the military leadership as well.

6.3 Staying in the “quiet” North

Germany’s first deployment – as that of ISAF generally – was in the Kabul area to secure the Afghan capital. When it was decided to extend the geographical scope, the Germans opted quickly (end of 2003) to take responsibility for a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in the North, in Kunduz. It was generally held – not the least in Germany itself – that this came out of the expectation that that area – with a vast majority of North Alliance (Usbek and Tadschik), anti-Taliban population – would not face similar challenges that were to be expected in the Pashtun areas in the South and East (Lindemann 2010: 198).

The insistence of the German government that its troops stationed in the North would not be

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24 It might be that being accustomed to these RoE led Colonel Klein to call for airstrikes at two oil tank trucks on September 4th, 2009, rather than sending ground troops which some close observers deemed the better alternative, though others contest this stance (e.g. the former UN Commissioner for Afghanistan, the German Tom Koenigs, (Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung, 17 January 2010, 5).
available for support missions in other ISAF sectors, but that sector responsibility must be strictly observed, presented another nuance of the same problematique. In the first few years of the war, the Pashtun areas in the South and Southeast saw heavier fighting, and more interaction between OEF and ISAF forces than in the (then) relatively calm North where the Germans operated. Looking at the ISAF mandate, the political objectives which the allies pursued were clearly targeting the country as a whole. Failure in one part was likely to affect the other parts as well. In addition, once the insurgents had regrouped and restarted their military activities, it was unlikely that they would appreciate the artificial sectoral borders on which NATO had agreed. To the contrary, observing that a softer line was pursued in some of them than in others, the probability was high that they would fathom that the soft-governed sectors might offer either viable targets to attack, or safe heavens, or both (Lindemann 2010: 221). Rather than understanding that the whole Afghan mission was intimately interconnected and interrelated, German authorities insisted on the (of course highly artificial) division of sectoral responsibilities which were a parody on the serious conduct of a war, but served the need for reality denial: As long as the relative calmness obtained, the illusion of a purely peaceful “social” mission could be better upheld.

Almost from the moment of the deployment in the North on, Germany was confronted by demands from the allies, and increasingly from the US government, to make troops available in the more contested parts of the country. A series of parliamentary decisions which escalated the degree of the German military engagement in Afghanistan by leading to an enhanced scope of the mandates reflected the desperate attempt by the government to prevent even worse contingencies, that is, to take a small step in the direction of satisfying allied demands in order to avoid the much larger steps which allied governments, in fact, requested (cf. von Krause 2010: 281-282).

In a significant step in this direction in 2006, Germany took leadership of the whole ISAF Regional Command North for 16 ISAF countries. Nevertheless, government and parliament never mandated the number of soldiers which the commanders deemed necessary for the increasing combat tasks. It was also criticized that the deployment period for most German soldiers was limited to only four months – a third shorter than most partners – in a mission where knowledge of geography, population, and culture was quite essential for success (Nachtweih 2012: 37, 42). One year later, under the impression of mounting pressure to “go South”, Germany agreed to send six Tornado surveillance aircraft to Afghanistan which would be available in the whole ISAF mission area, including the South. Again, avoiding further pressure to send ground troops to the South was the pivotal motivation for this move (von Krause 2010: 155-6). The next step then was the taking over of the Quick Reaction Force command in the North, an expansion of the
tasks of the Bundeswehr in that area (von Krause 2010: 156). In 2009, after a strong critique by US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Germany relaxed the no-go rule to the South for information operations, but not for other missions (Jungbauer 2010: 69). In addition, it was decided to send AWACS aircraft to Afghanistan for air traffic control; the Bundestag was weary that these aircraft might also be used to direct air attacks. Eventually, the decision proved abortive as it proved impossible to secure necessary overflight rights (von Krause 2010: 296-8).

The complex of inhibitions imposed on the troops in Afghanistan contradicts the notion that the German troops were in Afghanistan to defend the country against a threatening enemy. It signals, in contrast, a clear priority to avoid “collateral damage” over military efficiency, as reflected in the norm of proportionality in humanitarian war, which accepts some civilian damage if the military advantage gained from an operation is large enough to justify the civilian loss (as long, that is, as civilians are not the genuine targets of the operation).

6.4 Deficiencies in equipment

When the first German soldiers entered Afghanistan in 2002, one might understand that the leadership believed that the mission might indeed be similar to classical peacekeeping where lightly armed soldiers were all one needed to do the job. When the first signs of violent resistance had emerged in the South (and this was fairly early on), however, the risk that this might happen all over Afghan territory was at least to be considered. To the extent that the German government decided to continue its military engagement, then, measures should have been taken to equip the troops for this possibility, just in case. When hostilities reached the North in 2006, this was the latest time that equipment should have been adapted to the obvious challenge.

Lack of appropriate equipment was visible in at least four areas. First, transport helicopters were lacking. The much heralded NH 90, which had been waiting for production for years, was in another turn of “improvements” and thus not available for the troops. Rather than looking for a quick solution, it was possible to lease the CH-47 Chinook from the US. This, however, did not happen. The troops remained dependent on allies for these services, and this meant inevitable delay in case of need.

It was similar for combat helicopters, one of the most important weapon systems given the circumstances of fighting the Afghan war, that is, the kind of fire attacks combined with the rugged landscape. To support and rescue units that had come under attack, combat helicopters were indispensable because of their speed, firepower, and capability to evade terrain hindrances, not to speak IED traps on the road. The German-French Tiger in its combat version, another (Germ-
man/French) armament project with an impressively long history, had not been procured in time. Procurement was not accelerated in an emergency mode when the need became obvious, nor was the leasing option (possibility: AH-64 Apache) be used.

The two most dangerous military risks for the troops consisted of rocket attacks from the distance against bases, and of massive assaults against units on patrol. The capability of prompt, accurate fire at an extended range was the best answer to this challenge. At home, the German army disposed of the Armored Howitzer 2000, an artillery piece in use of the Dutch contingent in the South, where it rendered highly useful services from the beginning of heavy fighting in that area on. Despite repeated requests, the weapon was deployed with the German troops only in June 2010 – meanwhile five of these weapon systems are employed (Nachteiwh 2012: 38).

Finally, the equipment most important for the protection of patrolling troops, and for making possible the successful engagement of an attacking enemy, was well-armored transport with adequate firing capability. German troops were stuck with the Dingo, a medium armored carrier which offers protection against most IED and anti-tank mines, advanced ballistic anti-tank weaponry; its offensive weaponry, however, is too light for combat effectiveness. Even worse, the notorious Mungo, which was deployed in significant numbers as an ideal peacekeeping vehicle, is lighter and even vulnerable to people throwing hand grenades towards the hapless inhabitants. Other armored vehicles like the Wolf, the Fuchs or the Eagle IV share the main characteristics: At best, they offer reasonable protection against a certain spectrum of threats, but none has the combat qualities for the contingencies with which the soldiers are routinely confronted. As is well known, Germany is producing one of the most capable main battle tanks, the Leopard II, but the tank was not deployed until 2010 while allies such as Canada had been using it since 2007 (the lighter Marder with a capable 20 mm cannon was deployed in the combat area at Kunduz no earlier than 2009).26

The very outspoken Armed Forces Commissioner (who is appointed by, and reports to, Parliament) has enumerated further shortcomings, e.g. a safe transport vehicle for bringing wounded soldiers back to base, a special mine clearance vehicle, spare parts for essential equipment, munition.27 All these examples document a vast gap between the military equipment and the necessities on the ground, which were not shaped by the good wishes of the mandate and its bear-

26 This pattern, which has been widely discussed in Germany, is confirmed by a less noticed fact: The Eurofighter, which is replacing the Tornado as the main combat aircraft in the German Air Force, is not yet available in a ground support capable role, because armament and software for this mission have not been procured, even though about 40 multi-role capable aircraft have already been introduced into the air force. This means that Germany is in no position to participate in air support for ground operations in Afghanistan (Buch 2012).
ers, but by the strategy, tactics, and operations of the insurgents. Three reasons may jointly explain this obvious shortcoming:

- First, a priority for implementing long-term procurement contracts – most of them with German companies – rather than to reshuffle money to fulfill the immediate needs of the troops. The reasons for that were obviously economical, to serve industrial interests rather than military expediencies. While this is not necessarily the attribute of a Civilian Power, it is quite characteristic for the “trading state” which gives priority to economic over military objectives when a conflict of interests arises and survival is not at stake.

- Second, a refusal to increase the defense budget at the cost of other – civilian – priorities. Germany has been working for the consolidation of the federal budget since the early years of the new century, and the defense budget was in no way exempted from the need to show savings. Whatever tiny budgetary growth was there had to support the operations and was not available for enhancing mission-related procurement. Germany was not at all willing to redefine priorities in favor of the ongoing war effort – the Civilian Power preferred civilian expenditures. And it was equally unwilling to sacrifice the objective of budget consolidation – the trading state wanted a solid economy, not a war economy. These characteristic limitations of the war effort will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

- Third, the desire to avoid acknowledging the reality of war. One cannot deploy heavy armored artillery pieces, main battle tanks, or combat helicopters in a mission which emphasizes protection and social work. The discrepancy between mission statement and character of the equipment would be discernible even for laypersons. Politicians would have to stop the illusion that “we are not fighting a war”, and they would be confronted with citizens whose preferences were definitely directed against Germany’s participation in real warfighting. As long as the equipment remained inadequate to the increasing military challenge, illusions could live on – to the dismay of the soldiers on the ground who knew all too well what sort of encounter they found themselves in.

6.5 A very limited war effort

War is an earnest matter, binding considerable assets of a state, notably if the matter is defense of one’s national security. States, democracies included, tend to be serious when it comes to their security, investing what it takes to win the contest. The war economics do not prove that Germany has undertaken such an effort even after its troops became involved in heavy fighting, after its defense White Book declared deployments out of area the main mission of the armed forces
(2006), and not even after the fact that a war was being fought was admitted by the political leadership (2010).

When comparing the evolution of defense expenditures between 1991 and 2009 of Germany, France and the United Kingdom, German expenditures ranged significantly below the French and British ones for most of the post-Cold War period (see Annex, Table 3). While the UK undertook a determined effort in the mid-nineties to revamp its military by higher expenditures, there was no equivalent activity on the German side. The very modest rise after 2007 reflects the operational costs of the deployment rather than an effort to give the deployed contingent the teeth which it was asking for. As a consequence, the share of the defense budget in the GDP remained strongly below the portion the French and the British spent for their military, and in fact has been in 2009 below the share of 2001, that is, before the deployment in Afghanistan started (see Annex, Table 4). Thus, while available economic resources rose, the part of it invested in defense sunk. The same applies to the share of the federal budget spent for defense: Even here, defense has lost a part of its percentage during the course of the war engagement (Annex, Table 5). Looking at the part of the defense budget devoted to investment, that is, R&D and procurement, the difference to the European peers is even more succinct. In 2009, Germany spent less than 60% of what the UK expended, and less than half of French expenditures for military investment, even though the amount has modestly risen since the beginning of the war (see Annex, Table 6). As a consequence, the expenditure for equipment per soldier in Germany is below that of France and Britain (see Annex, Table 7).

New budget figures confirm the impression that money-wise the German war effort is a side-show for German politics. According to the Federal Budget 2013, the budget of the Ministry of Defense is actually sinking between 2009 and 2013 by more than €2 billion. In contrast, Health rises by 61.7%, Education and Research by 36.4$, Environment by 13.4% and development aid by 13.1%. The priorities speak by themselves: While civilian purposes fare well, defense – and thereby the engagement in Afghanistan – does not even get the balance for inflation (German Federal Ministry of Defence 2012). Real-term cuts in the defense budget during the war, and war expenditures that (until very recently) did not exceed 2% of the defense budget – these observations are a practical disclaimer that winning the Afghan war is a serious national purpose. This, in turn, is disproof that it is really a matter touching national security.

To be sure, Germany does not stand alone with a less than serious war effort (Merz 2007: 5; Miller 2010). The Bush administration, quick to intervene, already set a signal by going into Afghanistan with a minimal operation. The declared goal of eliminating the leadership of al-Qaeda was betrayed by the US during their operation at Tora Bora in 2001, when the risk of a massive
deployment of their own infantry seemed too high, in spite of good prospects of success (Krause 2008). Even President Obama, who takes Afghanistan far more seriously than his predecessor, only partly complied with the demands of his generals. The Canadian and Dutch allies, whose armed forces suffered high losses in the highly embattled south, by now have had enough of the war and are planning their withdrawal (Kaim/Niedermeier 2010: 2). This is not a step we would expect of governments which really see their countries’ security at stake. However, in contrast to Germany, as long as they were in a war, they were ready to fight one, without caveats and comparable incoherences between equipment, doctrine and the situation on the ground as has been so typical for the Germans. The effort was not equivalent to the challenge, but it was a warlike effort. For Germany, this has not been the case.

7. Conclusion

The emphasis on promoting democracy and human rights in Afghanistan as a justification for the operation has been clashing with the reality on the ground for years (see Hippler 2008; Kornelius 2009: 17, 81; Reichelt/Meyer 2010: 98; 163, 206; Steinberg/Wörner 2010: 5-6). The so-called Progress Report of the German government provides an unsparingly honest assessment of the situation. The retraction of ambitious transformational goals for state and society, which was visible over time, also supports the impression that the German government is increasingly skeptical concerning the chances of success for the operation – in belated compliance with academic findings on the enormous difficulties of democratic state-building, especially in the context of military interventions (e.g. Bliesemann de Guevara/Kühn 2010; Edelstein 2008; Grimm 2010) as well as with journalistic assessments of the situation on the ground (e.g. Reichelt/Meyer 2010: 15, 85, 100-107). The minimal goal of “good enough governance” could have the purpose of temporarily reaching conditions (by including the Taliban) that seem sufficient to make a face-saving withdrawal possible, but without offering any guarantees of sustainability. One cannot resist noticing the close analogy to Vietnam.

German governments have pursued the war effort on the basis of a less than convincing justification half-heartedly from the beginning. This half-heartedness has often been criticized, by the allies as well as by analysts within Germany (e.g. Kornelius 2009; Reichelt/Meyer 2010). However, it corresponds exactly to the traditional role and political culture of the country. Corresponding to an unconvincing justification for the war, and a strong improbability for winning it, Germany is waging “a bit of war”. Germany’s conduct of the war in Afghanistan as well as the

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28 According to this report, the security situation in Afghanistan has “continually declined” after an initial stabilization; 2010 was the year with the highest number of losses since the beginning of the mission in 2001 for the ISAF forces (Bundesregierung 2010: 9).
general comparison of German with French and British defense expenditures has shown that there is no discernible trend towards a “normalized” use of military-based power politics. Clearly, war as an instrument of national policy is as alien to Germans in the “Berlin Republic” as it was to those of the “Bonn Republic” – even if military activities that can plausibly be presented as “humanitarian” or “peacebuilding” missions short of war are now much more acceptable to both the German public and the political elite than before the 1990s.

The explanation lies, as Maull suggests, in Germany’s political culture. The Civilian Power element shows clearly in public opinion polls on out of area deployments. A comparative study of eight European countries found that apart from Austria, Germans showed the lowest approval for combat missions in ISAF (20% as compared with 36% for Sweden, 37% for France, and 63% for the UK). The employment of the military for solving conflicts in general is supported by 50% of the polled British, and even 18% of the Swedes, but only 14% of the Germans (again, only the Austrian share is lower) (Biehl 2012). The preference for “civilian” missions of the German armed forces is visible by the different support for such missions: Purely peacekeeping and policing deployments like Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina (both after the respective wars) as well as operations against piracy attract majorities, while ISAF, after 2009, is opposed by majorities (Fiebig 2012). The ostensible hesitance of the political leadership thus corresponds to the attitudes of the public: Both are rooted in the shared political culture.

The German military “adventure” in Afghanistan with its incoherence has meanwhile attracted considerable scholarly attention. Two in-depth analyses explain the incoherences and contradictions by the opposing impulses of multilateralism (alliance orientation) and the (pacifist) Civilian Power culture (Naumann 2008, 2010; von Krause 2011). While this comes close to being convincing, it is conceptually imprecise. Maull, for good reasons, included multilateralism as a key element of the Civilian Power. It is not outside, but part and parcel of the role/identity complex of which the political culture of a Civilian Power is composed. While this might appear a fine point, it is nevertheless essential. The explanation offered by Naumann (2008, 2010) and von Krause (2011: Chapter 7) reduces the dilemma of the German government to managing the contradictions between two different discourses, the international (alliance) and the domestic one (culture). The resulting policy is the attempt to bridge the horns of the dilemma, and the expression of the aptitude or lack thereof of the German government.

Once one understands the contradicting impulses as part of a role/identity complex where, in Freudian terms, the “superego” and the “I” come into conflict, the psychological dimension of the matter comes into focus. A part of Germany’s political leaders might indeed have tried coolly to manage incompatible tasks. It is more plausible that the majority of them had to manage their
own contradicting desires to give both parts of their identity and role their due. This inner conflict influences the cognition of facts on the ground. The mechanism of “assimilation” means that new incoming information is selected as far as it fits the existing mental structure. What appears as “recognition” of facts in the outside world (in the sense of a mirror theory of recognition), is thus factually active agency by which the mental structure applies itself to the world. It follows the mechanism of “cognitive consonance”: Feelings of security and satisfaction emerge when pre-existing expectation of what the world is about are confirmed. The schema has thus an emotional function by creating certainty and familiarity (even if it suggests danger and future struggle and fight). Contradictory information is excluded, filtered out or reinterpreted (unless the evidence is overwhelming and permanent failure of one’s own actions forces a fundamental re-ordering of the mind). The cognition process is thus a kind of progressive spiral in which incoming information is shaped in a way as to make existing beliefs ever firmer: They are immunized.

A second relevant approach in political psychology is defensive avoidance. This mechanism falls in the category of motivated biases. Needs, fears, guilt or strong desires create the tendency to suppress incoming information that indicates that these emotions cannot be satisfied. In the case of desires, this means that such information is filtered out and kept away from consciousness which would strongly suggest that it is highly unlikely that these wishes can be fulfilled, or only at exorbitant costs that create other inconveniences for the actor (cf. Jervis 1976, 1985).

German governments show the necessary symbolical solidarity with NATO and take on some international responsibility. They make a moral reference to human rights and the desirability of democracy and, at the same time, work hard to maintain its civilian identity while attempting to shield German troops from the worst and limiting the overall scope of the military engagement (Merz 2007; Schreer 2010). That this combination cannot succeed – and, as the air raid in Kunduz in 2009 shows, occasionally results in catastrophic “collateral damages” – is due to the conditions on the ground. Still the changing German governments have tried to arrange themselves with the dilemmas that their policies create, by maneuvering vaguely back and forth in the conflict of irreconcilable demands.29 Critics are irritated by the lack of “realism” of the “naïve” Germans and their government. However, the government’s course of action since 2001 might be characterized by more realism than the faith in the success of the latest American version of “counter-insurgency”, which is found in some criticism of German policy (Kornelius 2010; Reichelt/Meyer 2010; on the criticism of the doctrine, see Rudolph 2011). The half-heartedness – and inconsistency – of Germany’s military engagement in Afghanistan is, thus,

29 This strikes us as a more realistic interpretation of German policy than the assumption that Germany is “learning” to live with a rising number of casualties (see Kümmel/Leonhard 2004: 125-126; Noetzel/Schreer 2008; Meiers 2008).
quite consequent. It does not only represent a serious attempt to reconcile external and internal demands, and contradictory impulses emerging from elements in the role and identity into which German politicians have been socialized.\textsuperscript{30} It represents also a satisficing approach to the need to participate in a military mission with marginal importance and limited prospect of success.\textsuperscript{31} After all, it was only after the beginning of the operation in Afghanistan that Germany moved into the cross hairs of al-Qaeda and their allies, while the effort not to turn Afghanistan into the headquarters of transnational terror organizations became obsolete through their re-deployment to Pakistan or Yemen (Bender 2008).\textsuperscript{32}

Germany’s intentionally weak military engagement in Afghanistan, thus, corresponds exactly both to its weak justification and to the limited prospects (and high risks) of a stronger military “footprint”. Yet, the bitter reality remains that the soldiers and the civilian casualties of the war are paying the price for a half-hearted policy\textsuperscript{33} that, as far as we can see, has not contributed to plausible prospects for a lasting peace in Afghanistan.

References


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\textsuperscript{30} To ascribes the German dilemmas to the mechanism of a “multilateralism trap” (Kaim 2007) overlooks that the trap does not reside in the tricky nature of multilateral bonds, but, pathetically speaking, in the “German soul”

\textsuperscript{31} It would be fatal if the only “lesson learned” from Afghanistan would be that more bang on the ground would do the job (Annen 2011: 144). Against the social engineering optimism that all is doable if only the right instruments are at hand, it is necessary to emphasize the reality that “missions impossible” might be more frequent than one would wish.

\textsuperscript{32} Authors supporting the security argument are merely basing this on strong claims; evidence-based arguments are lacking (see Kornelius 2009; Keller 2009; Paul 2010).

\textsuperscript{33} A very impressive collection of how German soldiers with Afghanistan experience feel is Groos (2010)


Bundestag (diverse Jahrgänge). *Stenografischer Bericht/ Plenarprotokoll,* diverse Wahlperioden und Sitzungen.


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**Annex: Tables 3-7**

**Table 3: Absolute Defense Expenditures 1991-2009: Germany, France and the UK**

![Graph showing Defence expenditures](image)
Table 4: Defense Expenditures as % of GDP: Germany, France and the UK

Table 5: Defense Expenditures as % of National Budget: Germany, France and the UK
Table 6: Defense Expenditures for Equipment: Germany, France and the UK

![Graph: Equipment expenditures (including military research & development)]

Source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database 2011; "Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence" (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49198.htm); no Data for France prior to 1997

Table 7: Equipment expenditures per Soldier: Germany, France and the UK

![Graph: Equipment expenditures per soldier]