
German Afghanistan Policy after 2014

Talk given at FES Almaty, Saturday 9 March 2013

Germany will be no exception to this rule!

- “More often than not leaders of intervening states are faced with the choice of trying to satisfy the policy interests of their constituents to remain in office or promoting the democratic aspirations of the citizens in targeted states. Because the citizens in a transformed democratic target state are likely to have different policy priorities than those of the intervener’s winning coalition back home, the intervening state will tend to pass up the opportunity to establish a liberal democracy in favor of establishing an autocratic or rigged election polity that it expects will be more willing to agree to implement the policies it desires. As a result, intervention does little to promote democracy and often leads to its erosion and the substitution of largely symbolic reforms.”

(Bueno de Mesquita/Downs 2006: 647)

The analytical narrative

1. Situation: Germany and NATO are hanging on the horns of a state-building dilemma that has confronted all members of the intervention coalition in Afghanistan. In withdrawing the majority of troops from Afghanistan, Germany and NATO risk to unravel the fragile governance structures they helped to create.
2. State-Building dilemma: the external intervention originally aimed at increasing the self-determination of the Afghan population, but it came down in constraining and undermining it through supporting choosing and supporting “reliable national and regional elites” which rely on non-democratic governance schemes.
3. Prognosis: Germany, as all NATO and EU member states, will try to uphold fragile balance between center and regional power centers. It will focus on the northern region and requiring compliance with basic governance norms (human rights, electoral processes, anti-corruption efforts) and use the EU as a vehicle to multiply its resources.

The „light footprint“ approach (2001-2004)

- Troop to citizen ratio in Afghanistan was far below internationally accepted ratio of 1 on every 20 citizens.
- At the time, German policy makers knew this but given the US engagement in Iraq, Germany and its European partners could not provide more security.
- Instead, to cover its military involvement the then red-green government strongly engaged in political initiatives, including the Petersberg Conference, which failed to include „moderate Taleban groups“.

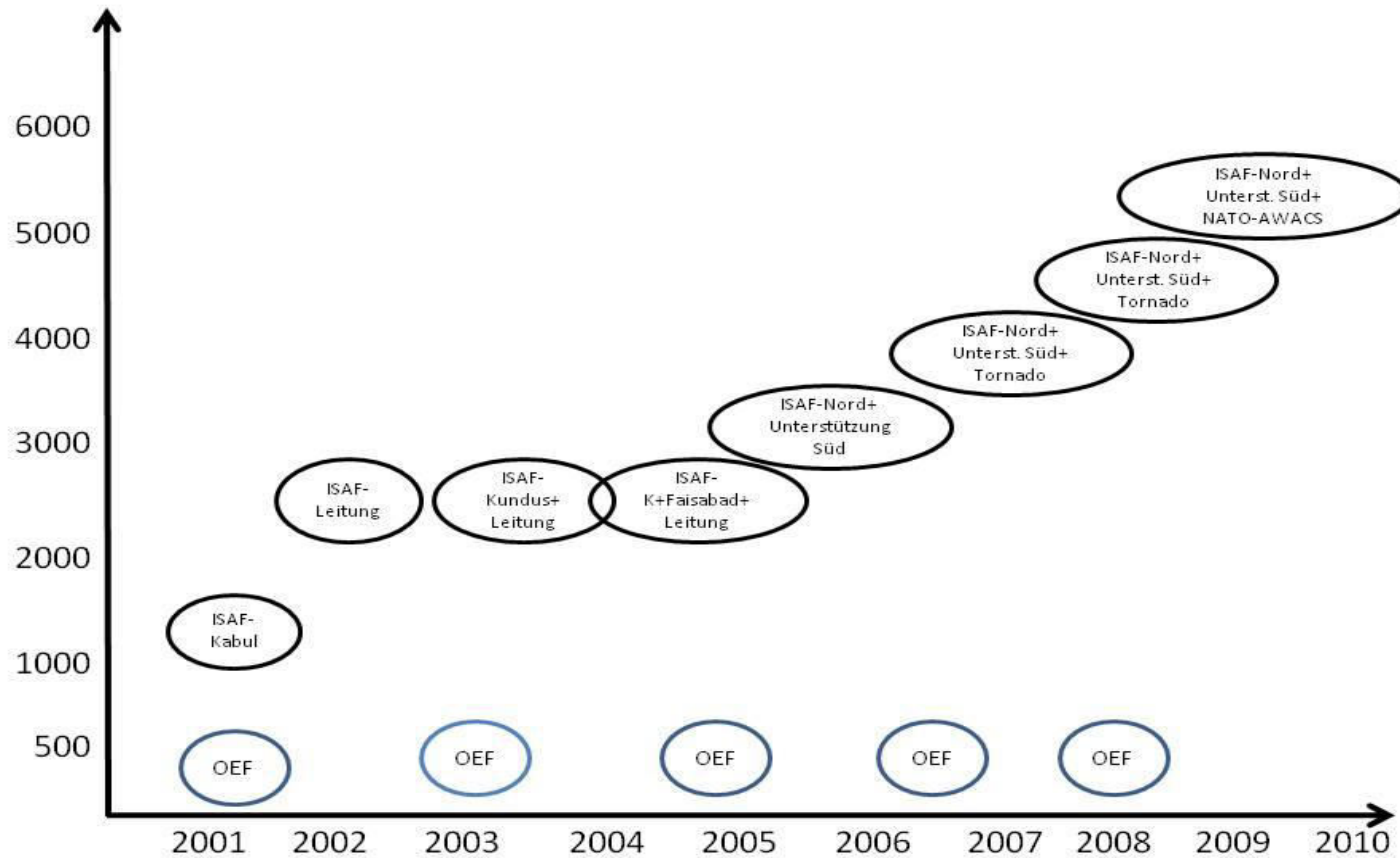
German Civilian vs. Military expenditures in Afghanistan 2002-2010

German Expenditures in Afghanistan in billion €			
	Military	Civilian	Proportion
2002–2007	1.9	0.55	78:22
2002–2010*	4.0	1.1	78:22
2002–2010 including spending through EU/NATO*	4.4	1.4	76:24
2010	1.0	0.43	70:30

Stronger military footprint + COIN (2005-2011)

- Domestically, FRG-GOV struggled to distinguish ISAF from OEF operation in Afghanistan to hold onto political support.
- Growing number of collateral death, corruption cases and reports from soldiers and NGO-members deployed leads to a significant drop in public support, but parliamentary support remains steady.
- Germany's Afghanistan approach remains reactive as it follows the United States „surge“ and „withdraw“ decisions.

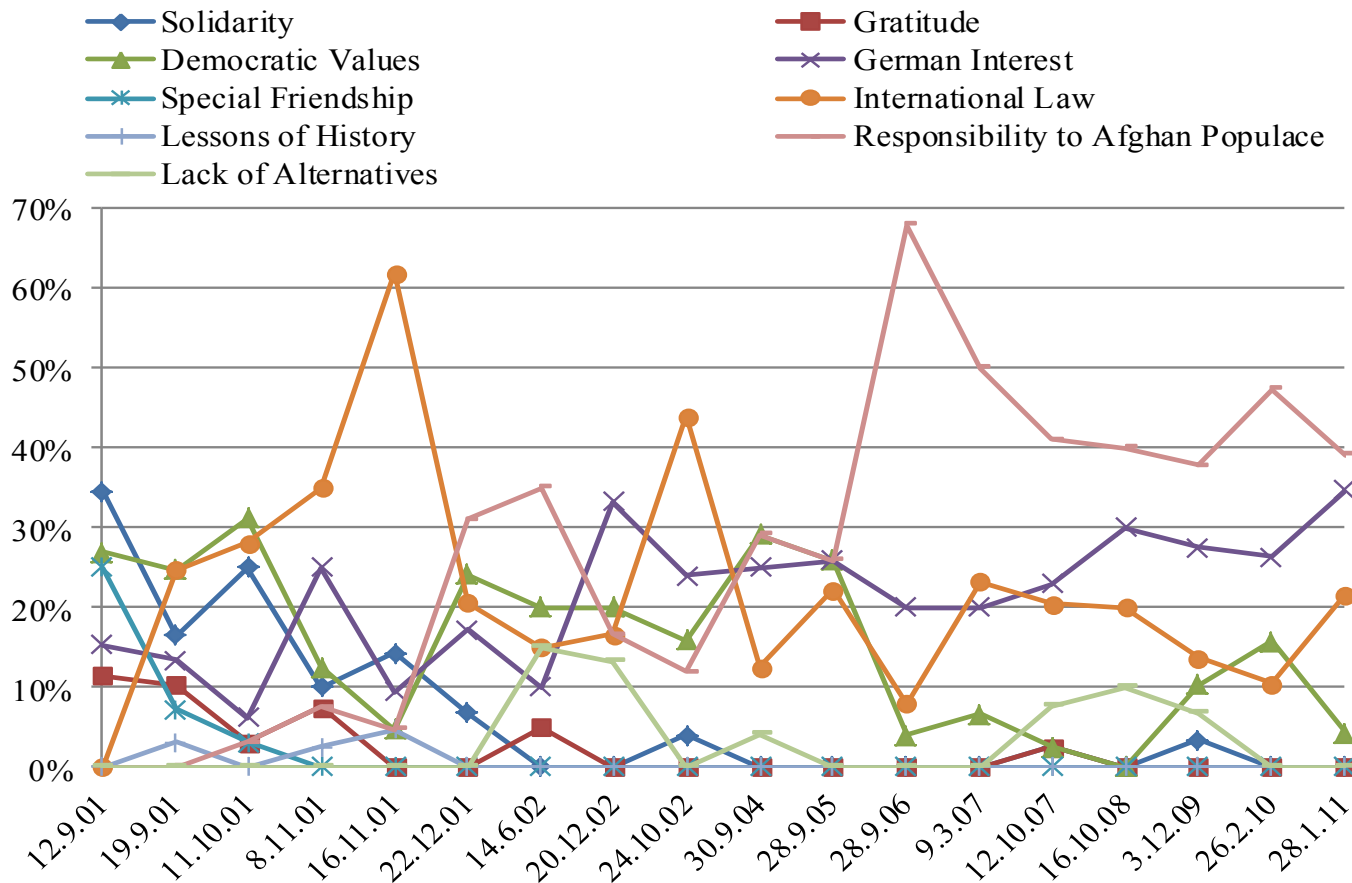
German military engagement in Afghanistan, 2001-2010



Drawdown phase (2012-2014)

- There is a substantial political and societal commitment to stabilize and moderately improve the situation in Afghanistan that will last through 2014.
- Managing the withdrawal: 6,000 containers and up to 1,700 vehicles will have to be shipped home.
 - German Armed forces plan to use the northern land route starting from Mazar-i-Sharif, traversing Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Russia, to the Baltic Sea for non-military goods only.
 - This leaves all military equipment, weapons, ammunition and military vehicle for the air passage either through Mazar-I-Sharif and/or Termez in Uzbekistan.

Changing Arguments in German Parliamentary Debates on Afghanistan Effort, 2001-2011



Frequency given as percentage of total number of arguments identified in each of the 18 Bundestag debates analyzed

Germany's post-2014 Afghanistan approach

Some educated guesses

Overarching considerations

1. Germany's and Europe's influence should not be overestimated: regional powers (China, India, Central Asian countries, Pakistan), the US and Afghan society itself determine the outcome.
2. A fragile equilibrium in which regional powers centers balance a moderately capable central Aghan government is the most likely scenario, as of now.
3. The 2014 Presidential elections in Afghanistan are obviously an important event to determine the power consideration of the main players.
4. Predictability capacity of social science is low here.

Germany's security posture in Afghanistan post 2014

1. A commitment of 1,500-2000 troops is likely.
2. These troops will not be mandated for active combat and hot pursuit of terrorist groups.
3. The troops will be most likely disposed in the northern region and will support ongoing ODA activities there.
4. A crucial questions appears to be Emergency medical extraction capacities which the German Armed Forces do not have over the whole spectrum needed.
5. It appears feasible that the FRG-GOV uses multinational force structures to lock-in germany's military comittment, i.e. European Battle-Groups etc.