



OCTOBER 2008

26

Counter-Terrorism and German-American Relations: A German Perspective

BY GUIDO STEINBERG

How does the German public view U.S. counter-terrorism policies?

Are domestic political decisions in Germany influenced by al-Qaeda's actions?

What German and American policies are necessary in effectively confronting Jihadist terrorism?

Introduction

German-American relations reached a historic low point during the years of the second Bush administration. Many argued that this was mainly due to widespread disagreements and a deep personal animosity between President George W. Bush and Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, who left office in late 2005. However, although relations improved after Angela Merkel and her Grand Coalition government was voted into office, they remain partly strained, hinting at deeper, perhaps structural political differences. Many of these differences are related to the question of how to deal with the threat of Jihadist terrorism, including the military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, American policies in the Middle East, and the legal status and actual treatment of detained terrorist suspects.

With the advent of a new administration in the U.S., the time might have come to develop a new transatlantic consensus in some of the issues related to the fight against terrorism. Both candidates for the presidency, Senators John McCain and Barack Obama, have made clear that America needs old and new partners in order to successfully address some of the burning issues of international politics in the coming years. Counter-terrorism will be one of these issues. Germany, as the U.S.' (formerly?) most important ally after Great Britain, would be an obvious choice. In Germany, most policymakers will still believe that it was the right decision not to take part in the Iraq War but they would also agree today that Gerhard Schröder's policy of aligning himself closely with France and Russia in 2002 and 2003 led to an unnecessary alienation of the U.S. The fact that Putin's (and Medvedev's) Russia has proved to be a highly dubious partner, as seen during the Georgia crisis in late summer 2008, might have helped convince some policymakers that Schröder's Russian policy was misguided. Now that Schröder has left and Bush will soon leave the political scene, the time has come for a thorough review and renewal of German-American counter-terrorism cooperation.

Problems

Since 2001, an unhealthy tension has built up between the U.S. and German governments, the political elites, and parts of the public alike. Perceptions of the respective other's counter-terrorism policies are—to say the least—highly unflattering and have hindered transatlantic cooperation. These perceptions and conflicts emerging out of them have negatively influenced German-American relations and have narrowed opportunities for a renewed cooperation.

On the German side, across the political spectrum, there is widespread opposition to the way the U.S. government is fighting its “war on terror.” Perhaps most importantly, the Iraq War has dominated the Germans' perceptions of U.S. policies in recent years. Many Germans—policymakers and the wider public—are convinced that the U.S. government deliberately lied to its allies and the world by insisting that Iraq in 2003 continued to develop weapons of mass destruction and entertained links to al-Qaeda. Rather, these justifications were seen as a cover-up of less altruistic geostrategic interests, among them the control of Iraqi energy reserves. As a consequence, many Germans saw the subsequent outbreak of violence in Iraq and the Bush administration's growing problems in countering the insurgency as a predictable consequence.

The distrust that built up after 2003 translated itself into an increasing unease about American policies in Afghanistan and the presence of German troops there. While the Grand Coalition in Berlin still defends the deployment, the government has come under increasing public pressure in recent months. According to several opinion polls, about 60 percent of the population reject the presence of German troops in Afghanistan. This rejection is due to several factors, one of them the German perception of U.S. strategies and their implementation. Many Germans are of the opinion that the United States is unduly focusing its efforts in Afghanistan on military measures, which cause an unacceptably high number of civilian casualties. Even among policymakers, especially among Greens and Social Democrats, one is frequently confronted with the argument that the American focus on military solutions is rather counterproductive and that a new, comprehensive strategy is needed. In order to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan, ISAF (and OEF) would rather have to focus on civil reconstruction.

The harshest criticism, though, is leveled at the Bush administration's overall counter-terrorism measures. The U.S. is widely seen as having overreacted to the attacks of September 11, 2001 and thereby creating new generations of anti-Western terrorists. In Germany, it is considered unnecessary to fight a “war on terror.” Rather, terrorists are considered to be criminals who have to be fought by the police and intelligence serv-

ices, not by the military. A government that does not strictly stick to the rule of law is seen as provoking not only the terrorists but their sympathizers and thereby aggravating the threat. In this context, Germans have viewed many American measures with disbelief and growing anger. Declaring Afghans and foreigners arrested in Afghanistan and further afield to be “unlawful enemy combatants,” jailing them in Guantanamo or in secret detention centers, and refusing them access to due legal protection are seen as signs of American paranoia dominating its war on terror. In Germany, just as in other countries, Guantanamo and the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad have become symbols of how the United States has transformed counter-terrorism into a brutal and unfocused war on Islamists. Extraordinary renditions, especially in cases in which German or European citizens have fallen victim to the CIA, are widely opposed.

As the more powerful of the two partners, the U.S. government, political elites, and public have not focused nearly as much on the German political scene as Germans have on the U.S. Nevertheless, German-American relations were especially close during the Cold War, so that their deterioration in 2002 caused considerable consternation on the western side of the Atlantic as well. German reactions to the Bush administration's designs to attack Iraq were the starting point. The U.S. government at first seems to have been caught by surprise by the harsh German reaction, possibly because Chancellor Schröder had promised “unconditional solidarity” in the persecution of the perpetrators after September 11. Unfortunately, while the U.S. government saw the war against Iraq as an integral part of its “war on terror,” the German government regarded it as an irresponsible adventure not related in any way to the fight against Jihadist terrorism.

Relations between the Schröder and Bush governments deteriorated when the German chancellor and his foreign minister, Joschka Fischer, began to voice their uncompromising opposition to the American plans. Schröder did not only oppose the war, but made his position a topic in the electoral campaign of summer 2002 which finally led to his re-election in September. By playing to the widespread criticism of the American plans among the populace, Schröder, according to many American observers, damaged the transatlantic alliance in order to foster his own career. Furthermore, the Social Democratic-Green government was seen as seeking a new alliance with France and Russia as an alternative to its close alliance with the U.S.

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Therefore, when Donald Rumsfeld voiced his remarks about the split between “old” and “new” Europe, expressing the high degree of dissatisfaction especially with Berlin, he did not represent only the radicals of the Bush government, but spoke for a much larger spectrum of the American political elite.

The conflict over Iraq proved to be only part of larger disagreements. Afghanistan became a problem between the two partners as well. First, after Schröder’s pledge of unconditional solidarity, Germany agreed to send troops to Afghanistan—a decision taken against opposition from within the ruling coalition. However, the German government insisted on deploying the troops in the north, which from 2002 was considerably safer than the Pashtun heartland. The fact that the Germans refused to send troops to join the fight in the south and south-east became an important point of contention when the Taliban gained strength in 2006. Britain, Canada, and the Netherlands, together with the U.S., complained that Germany was not willing to equally share the military burden. Although Washington understood the limitations of the new Merkel government with regard to public opinion, Berlin was widely (and rightly) seen as lacking in solidarity with its NATO partners.

Furthermore, the U.S. government sees Germany as unduly lenient with Jihadist terrorists. This was most obvious shortly after September 11, when, due to several loopholes in the German legal system, known associates of the Hamburg cell could not be convicted. Abdalghani Mzoudi, a close friend of Muhammad Atta and his entourage, was acquitted. Mamun Darkazanli, a Syrian-German businessman with close relations

to the Hamburg cell and Syrian al-Qaeda associates across Europe, continues to live in Hamburg undisturbed. In what many Americans saw as an irresponsible act of appeasement, until August 2002, only membership in a German—not in a foreign—terrorist organization was punishable according to German law. Receiving training in a terrorist training camp remains legal until this day. Furthermore, the American security services did not see their German counterparts as full partners—legal restrictions like the extremely strict separation of law enforcement and intelligence make them difficult colleagues in the “war on terror.” Besides, the American security services doubt that their German counterparts are sufficiently professional and effective. This led, for instance, to the kidnapping of Khalid al-Masri by the CIA. A German citizen of Lebanese origin with contacts among radical Islamists in southern Germany, Masri was arrested when entering Macedonia in late 2003 and later transferred to American custody in Afghanistan, where he alleges he was tortured. Only when his interrogators found out that he was not connected to al-Qaeda did they return him to Albania, where he was dumped in a remote forest. In spite of all the tensions between the governments, the security services by and large cooperated reasonably well; still, renditions of German citizens caused new political problems. When the Masri and similar cases became public and subsequently the subject of a prolonged parliamentary investigation, they enhanced the already existing unease with which even German transatlanticists watch American methods in the fight against Jihadist terrorism. As a result, the German government has had to act more cautiously when cooperating with the U.S. in countering terrorism.

Stakes

These problems in counter-terrorism are especially unfortunate because the stakes are high. Seven years after September 11, Jihadist terrorism in general and al-Qaeda in particular are far from vanquished. While al-Qaeda as an organization has been weakened after 2001, it might be considered its biggest success that it has avoided total disintegration in spite of the worldwide measures designed to fight it. Today, Jihadist terrorism is a broader and more dangerous phenomenon than in 2001. Western strategies in the war on terror have been inadequate and competing European and American concepts might have played a role. As a consequence of the failure to root out al-Qaeda after 2001, Jihadist terrorism is likely to remain a threat for years to come.

Judging to what extent al-Qaeda and affiliated organizations and networks remain a force to be reckoned with is difficult because the Jihadist phenomenon is ever changing and adapting to new circumstances. The core organization around Osama Bin Laden and his deputy Aiman al-Zawahiri might

have weakened, but affiliated groups and cells in the Arab world and Pakistan have gained in importance and continue their Holy War against the West and regimes in their home countries.

Since 2001, three trends have characterized the development of Jihadist terrorism: the return of Arab volunteers from Afghanistan to their home countries, the emergence of new organizations only loosely affiliated with al-Qaeda, and al-Qaeda’s change from organization to ideology.

■ In 2001, al-Qaeda was mainly an Arab organization, dominated by a small group of Egyptians and Saudi-Arabians. When it lost its headquarters in Afghanistan as a consequence of the American invasion of the country, many of its fighters returned to their countries of origin in the Arab world. As a result, Jihadist terrorism returned to the Middle East, where the terrorist threat had lost some of its former importance since the mid-1990s. This changed in 2003. “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian

Peninsula,” the Saudi Arabian branch of the mother organization, started an unprecedented terrorist campaign in Saudi Arabia in May 2003 which lasted well into 2005. Other Middle Eastern countries—including Turkey—witnessed terrorist attacks and the Iraq War drew young volunteers from all over the Arab world. As a consequence, the Middle East has (re-)established itself as al-Qaeda’s main battleground besides Pakistan and Afghanistan. Although they are only able to threaten the stability of Arab countries in times of crisis, Jihadist groups have become a constant security nuisance in the region. North Africa is threatened in particular, as the new “al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb” is spearheading a trend toward militant activity in Algeria and its neighboring countries.

■ Second, new Jihadist organizations have emerged and aligned themselves with “al-Qaeda central” in the Pakistani mountains. The Iraq War proved to be the most fertile ground for these groupings. In 2004, the Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi founded “al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia” and exploited the rare opportunity to fight the U.S. and their (Western and local) allies in one of the core countries of the Arab world. Until his death in 2006, al-Zarqawi even outrivaled Osama Bin Laden as the most dangerous terrorist worldwide. By renaming itself, al-Qaeda in Iraq aimed at accessing al-Qaeda’s recruiting and financing networks in the Gulf region. It was clearly not subordinate to al-Qaeda central but spread the impression that al-Qaeda was indeed a transnational organization with global reach. And although al-Qaeda in Iraq was severely weakened after the American “surge” in 2007, it might re-emerge if the Iraqi government does not solve its conflict with the Sunni part of the Iraqi population.

■ In late 2001, the al-Qaeda leadership escaped to the Pakistani side of the Afghan-Pakistani border, where Bin Laden and his second-in-command Aiman al-Zawahiri have remained ever since. From October 2001, in a process that has been labeled as al-Qaeda’s development from organization to ideology, the two leaders increasingly relied on video and audio messages in order to spread their ideology, but also strategic and tactical advice to their followers worldwide. Thereby, they managed to retain some of their former influence. In fact, in several cases attacks were perpetrated in countries after Osama Bin Laden had demanded action there. To the extent, however, that the al-Qaeda leadership was not able to orchestrate attacks from its headquarters, Jihadist terrorism became more independent from larger organizations, especially in Europe.

Most threatening, however, a resurgent al-Qaeda managed to regain some of its former capabilities. From 2005, the organization influenced the planning of at least three terrorist attacks in Europe. Several future plotters trained in Pakistan and stood in contact with a new generation of al-Qaeda field

commanders or operational chiefs based in the Pakistani tribal areas. For instance, the Egyptian Abu Ubaida al-Masri took part in planning the July 2005 London Underground bombings and the thwarted 2006 transatlantic aircraft plot. The Libyan Abu Laith al-Libi had contacts to a group of young Turks, Kurds, and German converts preparing to attack American targets in Germany in September 2007. From 2005 on, al-Qaeda spectacularly regained its capabilities to act as a transnational terrorist organization. Its focus, however, was now determined on Afghanistan, where the chances of success grew after the Taliban intensified their insurgency against the multinational forces in 2005 and 2006. The al-Qaeda leadership seemed to be more firmly than ever established in the Pakistani tribal areas. It is not entirely clear whether al-Qaeda can sustain these successes in the coming years. As it has successfully rebuilt its old alliance with the Taliban and with the growing power of the Pakistani Taliban, it is very likely that al-Qaeda will remain a force to be reckoned with. It is not able to topple regimes in the Arab and Muslim worlds, but it will remain a security problem for years to come.

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While the balance sheet of seven years of countering Jihadist terrorism is mixed, this short summary on the state of al-Qaeda and the Jihadist phenomenon in general makes clear that the “war on terror” has failed. Seven years after the attacks in New York and Washington, Jihadist terrorism is a more widespread phenomenon than in 2001. Its most important proponents, al-Qaeda and its leader Bin Laden, remain active. The organization has increased its appeal to European Muslims and has returned to the Arab world, where it has spearheaded an insurgency in Iraq for more than five years and where it is challenging authoritarian regimes all over the region. Obviously, Western strategies adopted in the fight against Jihadist terrorism have failed.

The reasons are manifold. The most serious mistake was the invasion of Iraq, which gave a new generation of Jihadist fighters the opportunity to fight the U.S. in the heart of the Arab world and destabilized the whole Middle East. The loss of focus on Pakistan and Afghanistan played a role as well. Many of the successes in the fight against al-Qaeda in 2002 and 2003 were due to intensive cooperation with Pakistani security forces. From 2002 already, the U.S. concentrated its intelligence resources on Iraq, which allowed al-Qaeda to reorganize in Pakistan and reestablish its alliance with the Taliban. Since 2007, the U.S. government seems to have realized that it has to re-focus its efforts on Pakistan and Afghanistan, so that one precondition for more successful

counter-terrorism efforts in the future is fulfilled.

With the Iraq theater losing some of its former importance, and Afghanistan and Pakistan entering the focus, there is a chance that the U.S. and Germany will develop a new consensus on counter-terrorism cooperation. By promising “unconditional solidarity” in 2001 and sending German troops to Afghanistan in 2002, Gerhard Schröder took a difficult and controversial position. He thus hinted at a consensus in the interpretation of September 11 and the importance of rooting out al-Qaeda in Afghanistan—a consensus on which the German and U.S. governments might base their search for a new strategy. The early consensus was only destroyed by the Bush administration’s adventure in Iraq and Schröder’s problematic decision to make his rejection of the Iraq War a leading issue of his electoral campaign in 2002. Now that the situation in Iraq has calmed down and the protagonists of the conflict in both governments have left or will soon leave the political scene, the time is ripe for a new beginning.

Furthermore, recent events show more clearly than before that the threat is a common one. After 2003 many Germans believed that the decision not to join the Iraq coalition exempted them from terrorist attacks. And in fact, the Jihadists singled out those countries which supported the U.S. in Iraq like Britain, Spain, and to a degree Turkey and the Netherlands. However, with al-Qaeda’s new focus on Afghanistan, Germany is at least as high on the list of possible targets as the countries mentioned. One result, the planned attack on American and possibly Uzbek targets in Germany, was thwarted by German security services in September 2007. Initial information about the “Sauerland cell,” named after the region in North Rhine-Westphalia where three of the plotters were arrested, was passed on to the German security services by the U.S.—again highlighting Germany’s dependence on cooperation with the U.S. security services. The plotters had been trained by a small Uzbek organization called the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) in Pakistani North Waziristan, which seems to have been closely affiliated with al-Qaeda. Its aim was twofold: First, to attack American and Uzbek targets, because the U.S. and Uzbekistan are the IJU’s main enemies. Whether it had any more concrete goals prompting it to attack these two nations has remained unknown until now. Second, and more importantly, the attack was designed to influence the German Bundestag’s debate on extending the parliamentary mandates for the deployment of the German Army in Afghanistan (OEF and ISAF). The IJU

leadership apparently calculated that high-profile attacks just before the Bundestag votes in October and November 2007 could prevent an extension and perhaps force the withdrawal of German troops from Afghanistan. The Taliban and al-Qaeda have long regarded Germany as the

The Taliban and al-Qaeda have long regarded Germany as the weakest link in the chain of major troop providers and wanted to exploit growing criticism of the campaign in Afghanistan in the German public sphere.

The plot showed quite strikingly that the threat remains a common one. While critics of the deployment of German troops would argue that only a German withdrawal might protect Germany from Jihadist terrorism, they ignore the fact that the cell detained in September 2007 was part of a larger group of young mainly German-born Turks, Turkish Kurds, and some converts. While the plot was hatched by their superiors in Pakistan, it is very likely that the young recruits had already been radicalized and would have become a security issue even if they had not joined the IJU. Since most of them were Turks or Turkish-origin Germans, the events raised the question of whether Germany had an integration problem which developed into a terrorist one. More than two million ethnic Turks (among them 500,000 Turkish Kurds) live in Germany, but Turks had not embraced Jihadist terrorism in larger numbers before 2006. The IJU plot hinted at the possibility that this may change. This would have supported the hypothesis widespread in the U.S. that the lack of integration of Muslim minorities in Europe leads to radicalization and the emergence of a new threat not only to Europe but also to the U.S. One of the most forceful counter-arguments after 2001 has been that if the lack of integration played any role in the radicalization process, German Turks would have had to radicalize in large numbers, which they did not. Although it has not been established whether the events of 2007 hinted at a larger trend, it has been obvious that al-Qaeda has broadened its recruitment base among young Muslims in Europe. In any case, the Sauerland plot again proved that Jihadist terrorism poses a threat for the U.S. and Europe alike and that only comprehensive cooperation will lead to solutions.

Solutions

Both the U.S. and Germany will have to fundamentally rethink and readjust their strategies and concepts if they are to find common ground again. The German political elite is already eagerly waiting for the new U.S. administration to take up its

work. In order to rebuild trust with its allies, the U.S. should first rely on some confidence-building measures. Closing Guantanamo will be the top priority. This, together with a prohibition of torture and refraining from any new extraordinary rendi-

tions, will help transatlanticists in Germany and other countries to defend possibly unpopular U.S. policies in the coming years.

Afghanistan will remain a priority for several years to come. It will be necessary to come to an agreement with the Pakistani army and government about a common strategy to deal with the Taliban and al-Qaeda hideouts in the tribal areas. It is understandable that the U.S. has recently intensified its attacks on the Taliban and al-Qaeda in their hideouts in the tribal areas. This might be successful in the short run, but the attacks are posing problems for the Pakistani government and might therefore threaten the stability of an important ally in the long run. Therefore, there is no alternative to an agreement with the Pakistani authorities. Furthermore, the U.S. will have to find a new strategy for Afghanistan itself. In fact, staying the course here will most probably mean losing the war. While it is true that the U.S. should place more emphasis on civil reconstruction and development, the most important shortcoming of NATO forces is that they cannot guarantee the security of the population. Only a substantially larger force would be able to do that and effectively fight the Taliban. By necessity, U.S. troops would form the backbone of any larger "surge" in Afghanistan.

While Afghanistan needs and already gets more attention, the new U.S. administration will have to deal decisively with conflicts in the Middle East. While the situation in Iraq has improved, it is far from stable. A resurgence of al-Qaeda in Iraq remains possible as long as the fundamental differences between the Shiite-Kurdish government and its Sunni opponents—especially the Sunni tribal militias—have not been solved. Perhaps more importantly, the U.S. will have to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although this is not the "core" or "key conflict" in the region as many believe, the Bush administration has willfully ignored an important source of anger and frustration among young Muslims worldwide. A détente between Israelis and Palestinians would diminish one important motive for the radicalization of future militants.

The Middle East, however, is important in a different way as well, because the roots of al-Qaeda lie here. Most Middle Eastern terrorists first fought the regimes of their home countries, like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Algeria. Only after several insurgencies failed did they realize that they would either have to give up violence or change strategies. As a consequence, small groups, which from the mid-1990s formed al-Qaeda, decided to fight the most important ally and supporter of their regimes, namely the U.S. The Bush administration therefore rightly identified Arab authoritarianism as a root cause of Jihadist terrorism and the democratization of Arab states as an important priority. Although its strategies were totally inadequate and not credible to a German audience—demanding democratization while outsourcing torture to countries like

Jordan, Egypt, and Syria—the correct diagnosis should guide U.S. policies in the future. Only a thorough reform of the political systems in most Middle Eastern countries will lead to an eradication of Islamist terrorism in the long run. Important American allies like Saudi Arabia and Egypt are the most obvious candidates for such a policy.

In counter-terrorism policy, the U.S. will have to contain its own tendency to overreact. Jihadist terrorism is no existential threat to the U.S. and its Western allies. Therefore, many of the more controversial measures adopted by the U.S. in recent years—renditions, torture, detention in secret jails—did not only damage relations with important partners but were simply unnecessary. The U.S. will not change German society; Americans policymakers must accept that terrorism suspects are treated with a certain, if recently reduced, degree of leniency here. This should not prompt illegal activities of U.S. security services on German territory. Rather, the new administration will have to convince the German government that a tougher counter-terrorism strategy is needed. In general, cooperation between the two countries' security services still proceeds reasonably well. Kidnappings and renditions of German citizens and intelligence operations on German soil rather damage relations, and are especially damaging when they become public.

Germany will have to make some very tough decisions as well, if it wants the Western alliance to succeed in countering Jihadist terrorism. In Afghanistan, German calls for more civil reconstruction address an important aspect of a much needed new comprehensive political, economic, and military strategy. However, success first and foremost depends on ISAF and OEF guaranteeing security in the country. In this regard, Germany hardly takes part in the stabilization of the country. Its troops are mainly busy protecting themselves, and German police training has not had the desired effects. If the German government really believes that a stabilization of the country is possible, it should support the efforts of the U.S., Canadians, Britons, and Dutch in fighting the Taliban in the south and east of Afghanistan. Germany should send more troops as part of a general "surge." In fact, it might soon be forced to reinforce its troop levels as the situation in the north is worsening. German forces are increasingly targeted by Taliban insurgents. At the same time, it should insist on a thorough reexamination of existing strategies with its NATO partners.

Furthermore, the German political elite should not evoke the impression that a large-scale attack on German targets—either in Germany itself or on German troops in Afghanistan—might prompt it to withdraw these troops. The masterminds of al-Qaeda behind the Sauerland cell speculated that an attack in Germany might intensify the ongoing debate about the extension of the ISAF and OEF mandates. The Greens have already

given up on their decision of 2001 to support the American effort. More importantly, though, the SPD, as one of the governing parties, has become increasingly lukewarm in its

support of the Afghanistan campaign. German fickleness invites al-Qaeda and the Taliban to perpetrate exactly these attacks. The German government will have to make clear that no attack whatsoever will influence political decisions.

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At the same time, Germany will have to develop an Iraq policy. Until today, the governing coalition fears that any new initiative in this regard might renew conflicts between the CDU and the SPD which erupted over Gerhard Schröder's handling of the topic in 2002 and 2003. This is understandable, but not the basis for a reasonable strategy to deal with a major Middle Eastern country. Germany has a vested interest in a stable Iraq, especially because of a possible spillover of terrorist activity to Turkey and Europe. While Iraq does not need any German troops, it badly needs European partners for the reconstruction of its economy.

Perhaps most importantly, Germany will have to fight Jihadist terrorists more effectively. The Sauerland plot showed very strikingly that Germany is highly dependent on the cooperation

of the U.S. Meanwhile, cooperation in counter-terrorism issues has become more problematic because of widespread public opposition in Germany and because of American doubts as to whether the German government is willing and able to effectively confront al-Qaeda and its sympathizers. In fact, the biggest problems are not legal, but rather the shortcomings of German security services. They have not been able to track the radicalization processes and recruitment among young Muslims in Germany, even in cases when the suspects were known for years. They have not been able to penetrate Jihadist networks and find out where possible dangers might emanate from. Quite surprisingly, seven years after September 11, German services still lack regional expertise and language specialists. In general, Germany needs a systematic overhaul and centralization of its counter-terrorism structure, eliminating the current thirty-eight independent institutions dealing with counter-terrorism in the country.¹ German federalism has numerous advantages, but federalism of the security architecture leads to inefficiency and possibly dangerous gaps in the information flow. Furthermore, Germany needs to set up a coordinating body for security policies in the government and possibly create an independent and effective military intelligence service catering to the needs of German troops abroad.²

Limitations

Although the prospects for a new start in counter-terrorism cooperation are better than during the Bush administration's tenure, there are limitations. Most importantly, both American candidates for the presidency will show a certain degree of continuity in their foreign and security policies. If there will be substantial changes in U.S. security policy, both Obama and McCain will have to avoid inviting accusations that they are weak in the face of the terrorists. Both will have to prove that they are effectively fighting the U.S.' enemies—and this is most visibly done by using military means. Although many Germans hope for substantial changes in U.S. foreign and security policies, these will probably be limited. Most importantly, the Iran dilemma might lead to further deterioration in German-American relations if the U.S. at one point decides that it has to take military measures against the Iranian nuclear program. In short, there will be a degree of continuity between the Bush administration and its successor government that will disappoint many Germans and Europeans.

On the part of Germany, the electoral campaign for the elections in September 2009 has just started. The governing Grand Coalition will not have the capacities for major foreign policy initiatives until then and will try to avoid addressing possibly divisive issues like Afghanistan and Iraq. Therefore, there will

be no partner for any major initiative for an overhaul of counter-terrorism strategies until winter 2009/2010. Furthermore, Germany might enter a period of political uncertainty. The rise of the Left Party (*Die Linke*) has weakened the SPD and at the same time given voice to widespread opposition to the war, to the German deployment in Afghanistan, and to the close alliance with the U.S. within NATO. Thereby, opposition to any deeper cooperation with the U.S. has been institutionalized and might gain influence in the coming years, possibly through the Left Party gaining in electoral strength, but possibly also through the Left Party forcing the SPD to lay claim to this trend of leftist thinking in Germany. An improvement of German-American relations should therefore not be taken for granted. Any major improvement in counter-terrorism cooperation will depend on the willingness of both partners to accept possibly tough compromises.

¹ Each of the sixteen German states (*Bundesländer*) has its own independent state investigation bureau (*Landeskriminalamt*) and its own domestic intelligence service (*Landesverfassungsschutz*) which are subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior of the respective state.

² Currently, the federal intelligence service (*Bundesnachrichtendienst*, BND) is responsible for the collection of military and foreign intelligence.

The fight against international terrorism shapes not only the U.S. presidential debate but also the German-American relationship. While recent polls show German and American publics agreeing on the danger of terrorism, a great divergence exists on possible solutions and policies. This publication examines the political causes and consequences of international terrorism and analyzes German and American perceptions of the problems and their solutions. It is the result of a conference held in Washington, DC on "Terrorism in the Transatlantic Context: The Political Dimension" which studied the foreign and domestic policy dimensions of terrorism and aimed to find concrete solutions to the problems terrorism presents.

AICGS is grateful to the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung for its generous support of this project.

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