

Angelika Beer
Expert in Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

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Panel: Civil-Military Cooperation: The Case of Afghanistan**

It's an honour and a pleasure for me to be invited as a politician to take part in this discussion on a more than difficult and very controversial issue. In these days, everybody is discussing the future of Afghanistan: NATO, Russia, UN, EU, Parliamentarians and – of course – NGOs as well as national and foreign experts. And we have to recognize: there are more questions than answers.

Do we need more troops in Afghanistan? Or is it better, to withdraw them as soon as possible? What does this mean? Will this be an exit-strategy with a fixed date? What could happen after foreign troops left Afghanistan?

Where is the public discussion about **lessons learned** to analyse, where the international community has failed in the past years during the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking? In a few days, there will be the second round of presidential elections in Afghanistan. Are the civilians ready to participate in the election once again, knowing, that this could cost their lives?

In my view, there is a common sense that the **NATO strategy must be changed**. But this does not just mean the question, to send more and more soldiers, tanks and aircrafts to that destabilised crisis area. No, all efforts are to be improved to answer the essential question:

What is necessary to bring more security to the civil society? What is necessary to train and support effective Afghanistan's police-units and their own military forces? And how can we assure reconciliation in the whole country and establish legal structures, in which the civil society can trust and can find hope for a stable future?

In my view it is necessary to strengthen the civil-military cooperation and coordination. There has to be found a way to strengthen and combine all assets that are already on the ground.

It is e.g. not a military task to fight the insurgents, it is a police task. But how to do it with a police force, that loses every year 25% of its capacity by death or leaving, taking the weapons with them to their new employer?

My experience in all war and post war crisis areas is that often humanitarian aid, reconstruction and medical service can only be successful, if NGOs and GOs can act in a secure area. **My thesis is that there can be no development without a secure environment.**

Coming from the peace movement of the early 80th, military was something like a devil and only civilian engagement was accepted. At the start of my parliamentary work in 1987 my aim was to dissolve NATO and the German Bundeswehr. That was utopia as I had to learn.

My visits to crisis areas changed my mind. Just three examples:

1. After the second Gulf-War in 1990/1991 I was working with a German NGO, medico international, and we were asked to work in the **northern Part of Iraq**, where until today the majority of Kurds is living. They were threatened by Saddam Hussein; they couldn't cross the border to Turkey to reach a hospital or to bring their children into a safe environment, because Turkey didn't accept Kurds in the own country. There were booby traps and anti personnel land mines not only in the border zone. And we as a NGO, we started a program for mine awareness and demining. We were able to distribute water and food, but we had no chance and no vehicles, to bring those, who needed medical support, out of the destroyed country. It was at that time my part, to contact the Commander of the US Troops – with the aim to get logistic support – to save lives.

And just a few hours later, we got support by 4 American helicopters and at the end of the same day the wounded Peshmerga were in a US hospital in Turkey.

2. **Bosnia and Kosovo:** After the military intervention, it was obvious, that neither NATO nor UN had the capacity or a concept to support the people in cities or in the countryside. The soldiers had been confronted with all tasks, which normally are not and have not be done by soldiers:

Quick repairs for destroyed houses to assure, that the people can stay at their homes during rain and the upcoming winter season, to reconstruct hospitals and schools, to organise the withdrawal of garbage, to rebuild communal structures. The need was there and had to be answered.

Since that time, the German Military took the lead to define concepts for civil-military cooperation in post-war conflicts. And parallel the German Green Party started to define concepts for civil-conflict prevention, for a European civil peace corps. That means: as the German Greens became a part of the German government, they accepted after a fierce discussion to take responsibility to protect human beings, if necessary to send NATO troops, but they were still focussed to enforce all non military instruments and to train people to be deployed in crisis areas as soon as possible.

Just two successful launches are to be mentioned: The civil action plan of the former red-green Coalition and the start of the Center for

International Peace missions in Berlin. They are in place but lack personal and financial resources to be effective on its own. Thus still is valid: The Civil military cooperation is an essential part of a successful peace strategy, if common goals and interests are defined and implemented.

Just a short note: My aim to start and build partnerships between schools in Kosovo and Germany could only be finalised - with first and successful ties between schools - through the support of the German CIMIC unit in Kosovo.

3. **In Afghanistan – after 9/11** – UN gave a mandate under Article V to intervene in Afghanistan. But how to reach the decision? In Germany chancellor Schröder made a junctim between the German participation and the end of his chancellorship. This forced the red-green coalition at that time to show all necessary support for Schröder and by doing so - for all - to stay in office.

This was the biggest and severest dilemma I ever experienced during my 30 years in politics and in elected positions. In this situation I gave all my objections - 3 pages - into protocol at the German Bundestag. It was and is my opinion that neither the government nor the parliament has the right to decide on a coalition or its end. These decisions have to be made by the congress of a party, not by a few elected members in the parliament. For the green party the next congress was due 10 days later, thus there was no need to decide immediately.

But the junctim worked and is not a date or a decision to be positively remembered in our democracy. The Green Party congress accepted that decision with almost any discussion.

Since this experience, **my demand is that parliamentarians who have the power to vote for or to change the German Armed Forces mandate should also have the right to decide in the same mandate on all civilian and development support** (e.g., police, reconstruction, law enforcement, good governance). It still is the taxpayers' money and a national responsibility and cannot be left to specialists and certain ministers working on their personal reputation and not for the good of the country as a whole.

But this military decision to support the fight against terror is all until now. There was no common strategy how to stabilise the region afterwards, there were – and still are - three different concepts of civil-military cooperation, and the US lead international troops became more a part of the problem than part of a peaceful solution.

Germany was very involved in that process – I recall the Petersberg conference that initiated the support for Kharsai – and still is. The new German government now – after 8 years war - wants a special ambassador for Afghanistan and a new interdisciplinary committee in the cabinet with all relevant ministries.

This sounds good as an idea but the reanimation of the old civil action plan that is what we need in Afghanistan and everywhere where Germany is involved with or without soldiers. **We need the European Civil Peace - Corps!**

At least, the political **challenge should be to check on the current UN Mandate.** As long as the International Forces (ISAF) have the order, to support the Afghanistan Government, and that means President Kharsai, who is a part of the problem, we will not find a peaceful solution for Afghanistan's civil society.