

# The German Institutional Security Policy Setting through the Lens of Networked Security

Networked Security (Vernetzte Sicherheit) is a German term to describe a quality of security policy that has been subject to numerous international debates in recent years. Recurring on and operationalising a broad understanding of security, Networked Security assumes that complex threats or security challenges, be they domestic or external, can only be tackled when security policy meets the following criteria:

- Interagency coordination and coherence: Governmental actors and agencies share a common political objective and a comprehensive understanding of a security problem. Hence their procedures, instruments and capabilities are deployed in a coherent and coordinated manner. To the extent possible, this applies also to nongovernmental actors.
- Effects based approach: Policies and activities focus not only on immediate goals, but take into account complex interdependencies and effects, both intended and not intended.

However, realities often tend to lag behind the dynamics of political discussions. Therefore, we should have a closer look at the German legal and institutional security setting to see whether it is fit to meet the challenge of Networked Security.

## The Security Policy Setting at the Political Level

The division of roles and responsibilities in German security policy is stipulated in the Basic Law (Grundgesetz) and respective specific laws. Responsibilities for German foreign and external security policy in general rest with the Foreign Office (FO); the Defence Ministry (MoD) deals with defence issues in particular. Matters of domestic security and law enforcement, as far as they concern the federation or common interests, lie under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Interior (MoI). The responsibility for all other matters of domestic security (law

*German ISAF Truck in Afghanistan.*  
(Source: Wikimedia)



*German Bundestag.*  
(Photo: Lichtblick / Achim Melde)

enforcement, disaster management) is placed on the Federal States (Bundeslaender) and their respective Interior Ministries.

Interagency consultation and coordination on security issues at Ministerial level is conducted through the Federal Cabinet. The Federal Security Council (Bundessicherheitsrat) convenes seven Federal Ministers (beside the FO, the MoD and the MoI, the Ministers for Economics, Development Cooperation, Justice, and Finance) as well as the Chancellor and the Head of the Federal Chancellery (Bundeskanzleramt). For many years it has primarily been a coordinating body for deciding on export cases of armaments, munitions and likewise sensitive goods. In recent years there have been discussions to extend the function of the Council as a forum for consultation on broader security issues or to install a National Security Advisor. This debate is still in flux.

While the Chancellery only occasionally exerts direct political influence and has no operational role to play in day-to-day politics, it determines the general policy guidelines and conducts a monitoring and coordinating function. The Board on the Intelligence Situation (Nachrichtendienstliche Lage), the Coordinator of the Intelligence Services (Geheimdienstkoordinator) and the Federal In-

telligence Agency (Bundesnachrichtendienst) act under the domain of the Chancellery.

This setting emphasizes two principles: With regard to external security policy, it favours ministerial autonomy (Ressortprinzip) with the FO and the MoD as key actors within their scope of responsibility. With regard to domestic security policy, the setting favours a strong federalism, considerably confining the competencies of the Federal MoI.

## The Security Policy Setting at the Level of the Implementing Agencies

At the level of the implementing agencies, the German legal and institutional security policy setting rests on four pillars:

1. The Federal Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) in the portfolio of the MoD.
2. The law enforcement agencies, i.e. the Federal Police (Bundespolizei) and the Federal Criminal Police Office (Bundeskriminalamt) (both in the portfolio of the MoI); 16 State Police Services (Landespolizeien) and respective State Criminal Police Offices (Landeskriminalaemter) (in the portfolio of the Interior Ministries of the Federal States).

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3. The disaster response agencies, i.e. the Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance (Bundesamt für Bevölkerungsschutz und Katastrophenhilfe) and the Federal Agency for Technical Relief (Technisches Hilfswerk) (both in the portfolio of the MoI), the local administrations, fire fighters and civilian aid organisations (under communal auspices).
4. The intelligence services, i.e. the Federal Intelligence Service (under the auspices of the Chancellery) and the Military Intelligence Service (Militärischer Abschirmdienst) (in the portfolio of the MoD) for services abroad; the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz) as well as the State Offices for the Protection of the Constitution (Landesaemter für Verfassungsschutz) for domestic services.

Besides, there is a huge variety of civil society actors such as the media, political parties, the scientific community, humanitarian aid organisations or interest groups that shape security policy and/or exert political oversight vis-à-vis the security system.

Although roles and responsibilities of the governmental agencies are regulated in specific laws, regulatory loopholes remain with view to the manifold practical interfaces between these agencies.

## Towards a Better Management of Interfaces

The issue of practical interfaces of diverse security actors and how to cope with them is exactly where Networked Security comes into play and where the criteria of interagency coordination and coherence as well as an effects based approach become particularly relevant.

One example to demonstrate the challenge of interfaces: Germany contributes to stabilising Afghanistan with military and civilian means on a wide scale. Practical interfaces occur not only between the Armed Forces (ISAF) and the Police mission against the background of increasing needs for counter insurgency capacities. Also support and training activities for Afghan security forces show many practical interfaces with the various long-term development activities for ba-

sic education, economic development, administrative reform, or good governance. Is counter insurgency a civilian or a military task? How can development expertise in capacity building be used for military and police build up? To what extent can the military support civilian activities? These interfaces need to be better co-ordinated.

The German security system has witnessed several adaptations in recent years to better cope with practical interfaces of its civilian and military security actors. This process has taken place in different and distinct "arenas", understood as subfields of security. With regard to international crisis management arena, a lively and broad debate on enhanced civil-military coherence has come up in 2003. In this wake, the Action Plan on Civilian Crisis Prevention (Aktionsplan Zivile Krisenprävention) was launched in 2005, establishing the idea that international crisis prevention is a cross cutting issue and bringing together governmental and civil society actors from a wide range of departments and fields of action. Several interdepartmental forums and initiatives helped to improve common understanding and practical coordination between civilian and military actors in international crisis deployments. Within the military, Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) has become a decisive capability in international crisis response operations. Although most valuable in terms of building practical linkages, these initiatives lack a clear and powerful political impetus "from above", bundling the diverse strands of activities together in a national strategy for international crisis and conflict management.

Although restricted by constitutional and legal provisions, the process of improving German homeland protection and counterterrorism capacities has been even more dynamic. Much progress has been made in this arena in a short period of time. Only a few examples: A huge legal package, the Counter Terrorism Act, entered into force in January 2002, enabling the law enforcement agencies to work more flexibly. A Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre (Gemeinsames Terrorismus-Abwehrzentrum) was established in December 2004. It brings together analysts from the Federal Criminal Police Office and the Federal Office for the Pro-

tection of the Constitution. In December 2006, an Act on Joint Databases provided the legal basis for creating a joint, central counter-terrorism database (Gemeinsame Anti-Terrordatei), as well as joint police and intelligence agency project files. All these initiatives were accompanied by highly controversial public debates and the institutional outcomes were the least common denominator of what is politically feasible. As long as the public threat perception is generally low, further attempts to strengthen homeland protection and counter terrorism capacities will remain a contentious issue.

The German system of disaster management was completely restructured after 09/11, setting up the Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance in 2004 as a federal body with coordinating and training functions for the respective Federal State actors. Moreover, the capacities for early warning and situational awareness were enhanced by installing the German Emergency Preparedness Information System (Deutsches Notfallvorsorge-Informationssystem) and the Joint Reporting and Information Centre (Gemeinsames Lagezentrum). Nevertheless, there is still a lack of coordination and response capacities for cases of large-scale disasters, especially at the interface of Federal and State actors.

These selected examples should suffice to demonstrate the progress towards more and better interagency coordination, coherence and effects based approaches. However, much needs to be done.

The different arenas need to be better intertwined, e.g. the linkage between international crisis response and the fight against terrorism is still a white spot. Interfaces and enhanced possibilities for cooperation between development and law enforcement actors in international crises and conflicts are not yet thoroughly understood. Institutional and practical requirements for better interagency coherence need to be tackled:

- in the field of situational awareness and knowledge development,
- in the area of training and exercises,
- in the domain of planning and conducting operations and projects,
- as well as with regard to review and evaluation.

But most importantly, the momentum of the described processes must be kept. Security policy in general does not "sell well". Therefore security issues should be proactively put high on the agenda and public debates should be encouraged. More political courage and strategic effort is needed to bring the different arenas together towards Networked Security. ■

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the Federal Republic of Germany,  
Mr Albrecht Broemme, President of  
the Federal Agency for Technical  
Relief and Technical Relief Workers  
who just recently came back from  
China and Myanmar.  
(Photo: BMI)*

