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GERMANY AND EXTERNAL TERRORISM

Since the 1960s, terrorist groups pursuing various goals have played an important role in international relations. After the Cold War ended, this component of the international power system has become stronger, mainly because of Islamist fanatics. Due to the above, the capacity and readiness to combat international terrorism has become a significant criterion in the assessment of the importance and power of particular states. It also applies to Germany whose ambiguous stance on terrorism raises serious questions.

For Germany, political terrorism is not a new phenomenon. Germany has already had to confront many leftist and rightist activities at home. In the second half of the 20th century, it also was a target of attacks organised from outside by the Palestinian movement and radical Kurdish organisations, especially the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which tried to transplant conflicts in Turkey to Germany. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the Federal Republic of Germany, like all Western countries, has also been a target of terrorist Islamist groups. The reason is that Germany is part of the West and it has joined the international "war on terrorism".

In the 20th century, external terrorism threatened Germany only indirectly but that was cumbersome nevertheless. Germany was not the main target of attacks. It was rather a substitute target, quite often randomly selected. The territory of Germany was used to carry out terrorist attacks and served as a logistics base. The situation changed after the "war on terrorism" was declared and German troops were deployed in Afghanistan. Germany became directly involved in the conflict, yet it remained a secondary target of terrorist attacks.

The objective of this article is to present Germany's struggle against external terrorism. How serious was the threat? What measures were adopted? Was a defined procedure followed? Or did Germans improvise temporarily modifying what was available to tackle emerging risks? Were actions taken effective and to what extent?

THE PALESTINIANS

The Munich massacre during the Summer Olympic Games on 5 September 1972, was the first act of external terrorism performed in Germany. It was carried out by the Palestinian Black September Organisation. The goal of the organisation, whose

name is derived from the violently stifled Palestinian uprising against King Hussein of Jordan that broke out in 1970, was to destroy Israel and establish a Palestinian state, which was also the aim of other Palestinian groups. In 1972, it was estimated that the organisation membership was between 300 and 500 people.[1] Members of the group formed a network, similarly as the entire Palestinian movement after being exiled from Jordan. The group was active not only in the Middle East, but also in Europe, North Africa and the United States. Attacks performed by the Black September Organisation were well-prepared, and its militants were well-acquainted with the situation and traditions characteristic of countries where they performed acts of terror. Suffice it to say that the leader of the Munich massacre studied at a German university.

Actually, Germany was not the target. The attack took place in Munich only because there the Olympic Games were held and the event was the perfect setting for a terrorist action. Of some relevance were also contacts established by the Red Army Faction, an extreme leftist German terrorist group, with the Palestinian movement.

The cruelty of the terrorists shocked not only Germans but the entire western world. The attack scenario was very different from what the German police experienced earlier. In the morning, eight Palestinian terrorists broke into bedrooms of Israeli sportspeople. Two were killed, and nine were taken hostage. Terrorists demanded that 236 Palestinians detained and held in Israel and five terrorists held in German prisons be released. Negotiations with the German police took very long, and ended in an apparent agreement. Terrorists and hostages were transported by helicopters from the Olympic village to the Fürstenfeldbeck Air Base. They were to depart to Egypt and a Lufthansa Boeing 727, ready for take-off, awaited them there. Two terrorists got off a helicopter to inspect the empty plane. When they were on their way back to the helicopters, police snipers opened fire. A shooting ensued during which one of the terrorists threw a grenade into a helicopter and the other shot the tied up hostages. Five terrorists were shot and three arrested. All hostages died.

The operation of the German police was a complete failure. As German researchers put it, everything what could have gone wrong at the Fürstenberg airport, did go wrong. There were only five police snipers against eight terrorists. They shot so badly that soldiers in the air base tower, who happened to watch, feared for their lives. Backup arrived when it was all over.[2]

As the attack took place during the Olympic Games and the media provided live coverage, the dilettantism of the German police was widely commented upon both in the Federal Republic of Germany and abroad. It was generally suggested that such operations should be conducted by professionals. In result, a counter-terrorism and special operations unit of the Federal Police was created. The GSG 9, a Border

[1] W. Dietl, K. Hirschmann, R. Tophoven (2006), *Das Terrorismus-Lexikon*, Frankfurt [Polish translation: *Terroryzm* (2009), Warsaw, p. 48.]

[2] *Ibid*., p. 50.

Protection Group, was formed at the initiative of then Minister of Internal Affairs Hans-Dietrich Genscher in October 1972.

For the first time in history, the attack revealed the huge supporting role mass media, and especially television live broadcasts, might play increasing the effectiveness of a terrorist attack. Although the attack was widely condemned, the television broadcast made it the terrorists' success. In the times of television and live coverage, it is not the effectiveness - understood as the attainment of set political or criminal goals - that matters but the pageantry of the attack.[3] It was also noted that terrorists might benefit from attacking a highly developed (industrialised) societies. Research on terrorism actually uses the term "elite nations" in reference to countries that attracted most media attention when attacked.[4] Western Germans, who lived in a wealthy and highly developed state, certainly belonged to that group.

Another Palestinian operation against the Federal Republic of Germany took place in the same month. A Lufthansa airplane flying from Beirut to Frankfurt am Main was hijacked. The hijackers demanded that the terrorists who survived the Munich attack be released. The demand was met almost immediately. The response of the federal government gave rise to numerous speculations. Some German media suggested that the hijacking could be part of some wide agreement between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Palestinian movement. In which case, the hijacking could have been staged only to provide an excuse for releasing the prisoners, in return of which the Palestinian movement would refrain from further actions in the territory of Germany.[5] It has yet to be confirmed whether those speculation were justified, however, they were highly probable. Further events confirmed that avoiding risks, ensuring that no pretext for an attack is provided and, simultaneously, saving face on the international arena at all costs, are most important elements of Germany's fight against external terrorism.

This strategy did not protect Germany against further actions by Palestinian terrorists. In the autumn of 1977, at the peak of terrorist violence, another Lufthansa plane was hijacked on its way from Mallorca. The plane with 86 passengers on board was hijacked on 13 October 1997 by Palestinian terrorists acting in concert with the leftist Red Army Faction (RAF). The attack was to increase pressure on the German government and force it to release detained leaders of the RAF. Another goal was to force the Israeli government to release detained Palestinian terrorists. When the plane landed in Aden in Yemen, the terrorists shot the pilot, Jürgen Schumann, dead and then took off for Somalia. On 17 October, the plane was recaptured at the Mogadishu airport. The passengers and the crew were freed by the German anti-terrorist GSG 9 unit. It was the first big operation performed by the GSG 9. It brought an end to Palestinian terrorist activities in the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany.

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[3] Cf. M. Tomczak (2010), *Ewolucja terroryzmu. Sprawcy - metody -finanse,* Poznań, p. 217.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] W. Dietl, K. Hirschmann, R. Tophoven (2006), *op.cit*., p. 50.

THE KURDS

Kurdish terrorism manifested itself in Germany after the reunification, in the 1990s. Attackers were *Gastarbeiters* brought to Germany from Turkey where the Kurdish minority was oppressed. Germany was an oasis of prosperity and a safe asylum for the newly-arrived. Problems started when the radical nationalist and leftist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) started to "import" the conflict between the Kurds and the Turkish government to Germany thanks to the PKK numerous members and adherents residing there.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party was founded by Abdullah Öcalan at the end of 1978. Ten years later, it started to fight an armed struggle first for the autonomy and then independence of Kurdistan. Its goal was to create an independent socialist Kurdish state on the territories inhabited by Kurds in modern Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran. At first, it pursued terrorist activities in Turkey. The response of the Turkish government was very firm. Special units entered Kurdish territories bringing havoc and death. Torture was commonplace and the victims were not only persons suspected of terrorism but also the uninvolved.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the PKK tried to negotiate a ceasefire. Yet its proposal was rejected by Turkish authorities and clashes between the PKK and Turkish troops continued. In 1993, the PKK attacked targets in Western Europe, in particular in the Federal Republic of Germany.[6] Its objective was to promote the Kurdish issue and make the Western public opinion aware that Kurds residing in Turkey were persecuted.

Germany was selected as a battleground for a number of reasons. One of them was a high number of Kurds residing in the Federal Republic of Germany. According to the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, in the mid-1990s, between 450,000 and 500,000 Kurds lived in Germany.[7] Another reason was that in November 1993, German authorities banned the PKK. For many Kurds, even those who did not accept the methods it used, the PKK was like a substitute of an independent Kurdish state. That is why the ban led to equating Germany with hostile Turkish and made Kurds more radical. The fact that Germany supplied Turkey with arms which, if only theoretically, could have been used to pacify the Kurds was also relevant.

First Kurdish terrorist attacks took place on 24 July 1993. PKK members occupied the Turkish consulate in Munich and took 23 hostages. At the same time, lesser actions against Turkish diplomatic outposts, airlines, travel agencies and banks were carried out across Germany (and in Europe). Motorways were blocked with burning tires, buildings were set on fire, assaults and clashes with police forces took

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[6] More on the PKK in e.g.: P. Ebbig, R. Fiedler, A. Wejkszner, S. Wojciechowski (2007), *Leksykon współczesnych organizacji terrorystycznych*, Poznań, , pp. 105-107.

[7] After: G. Gürbey (1998), *Von der Konfrontation zum Dialog. Perspektiven des Zusammenlebens von Kurden, Türken und Deutschen,* "Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik" 43, November, p. 1362.

place. Incidents of self-arson were reported. Attackers demanded that the federal government issued a statement supporting the so-called Kurdish issue, i.e. the idea of founding the independent state of Kurdistan.[8]

The massive operation carried out by the PKK in Germany was considered to be another fiasco of German security forces. The failure occurred despite warnings issued by the Federal Criminal Police Office of Germany and the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution that after 1992 the PKK was a growing threat. Also interviews with PKK members published in Germany, including one with Abdullah Öcalan, the PKK leader, clearly demonstrated that Kurds intended to expand their activities as it was increasingly difficult to operate in Turkey which fought the Kurds ruthlessly.[9]

Meanwhile, Kurdish militants could still freely travel in Germany, supported by other Kurdish nationals residing in the Federal Republic of Germany, who provided the militants with funds for the "fight for freedom". The German police estimated that the aggregated funds amounted to millions of marks.[10] Events which followed, revealed that German security forces were not prepared to cope with the challenge. The police also failed in the face of concrete threats. Four police officers guarding the Turkish consulate in Munich were incapable of stopping the assault, and the back-up arrived after an hour and a half.[11]

The then introduced anti-terrorist measures and mobilisation of security forces calmed the situation down temporarily. The situation worsened again in the end of 1998 and at the beginning of 1999 due to developments little connected to Germany. First, the PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, had to flee from Syria where he lived in hiding. Öcalan first fled to Russia and then to western Europe. In Italy, where he applied for asylum, he was arrested under a German arrest warrant. However, the SPD-Greens government withdrew the extradition request as it feared Kurdish protests which could lead to clashes between Kurdish and Turkish immigrants living in Germany. Cem Özdemir, then an MP of Turkish background representing the Green Party, in an interview published in the German "Focus" weekly, openly stated that the decision was influenced by German internal politics: "We want to prevent Kurds from committing self-arson, blocking motorways and taking revenge on Turkish fellow citizens in this country. The situation has been tense. A war between Turks and Kurds would break out in Germany".[12] The official explanation of the extradition request withdrawal vaguely pointed to possibly "serious consequences for the Federal Republic of Germany" and the wish to avoid them.[13]

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[8] "Focus" (German Magazine), No. 26/1993.

[9] Ç. Akkaya (1995), *Türken und Kurden in Deutschland,* "Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik" 40, September, p. 1046.

[10] Cf . "Focus" No. 12/1993.

[11] "Focus" No. 26/1993.

[12] "Focus" No. 49/1998.

[13] After: R. Scholzen (1999), *Der Fall Öcalan: In Grundfragen der inneren Sicherheit verlauft Schröder die Linien der alten Bundesregierung,* "Die politische Meinung" 44 (May) 354, p. 19.

After Öcalan was released from detention in Italy in mid-December 1998, he headed for Kenya. In Kenya, after he left the Greek Embassy, he was arrested in a joint operation of American, Turkish and Israeli secret services and transported to Turkey. The arrest took place on 15 February 1999 and was one of the reasons behind the riots of the Kurds all over Western Europe, especially in Germany. Kurdish militants attacked Greek and Kenyan Embassies, they also tried to barge into the Israeli Consulate General in Berlin where guards shot three of them dead. They took hostages and demolished Turkish shops and houses. Threats were also addressed to Germans. It was suggested that it would be better not to go on holiday for the PKK could organise attacks in holiday resorts. Spokespersons of the PKK advised against travelling to Turkey in particular.

German right-wing opposition argued at the time that massive Kurdish attacks were to an extent provoked by the federal government's opportunist stance. It was highlighted that the government should not show they feared Kurdish militants and that instead of giving up on Öcalan's extradition, Germans should have proved that they would not tolerate the import of conflicts on-going in Turkey to their country. Germany's firmness and determination were also to prevent Kurdish militants from making Germany their rebel base.[14]

Fortunately, later events did not confirm those fears. Öcalan was arrested and accused of high treason. To avoid death sentence in Turkey, he appealed to his supporters to stop violence. He also declared loyalty to Turkey. As a result, the PKK declared a ceasefire and cessation of violence, also on the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The PKK enfeeblement did not lead, however, to a complete disappearance of violence in relations between Kurds and Turks staying in Germany. Much seems to support the thesis that the German secret service tried to ignore this phenomenon if it was possible. This led to another embarrassment by the end of 2011. A German right-wing extremist organisation, the existence of which was revealed quite accidentally, claimed responsibility for killing 10 people over several years, while the police had been inclined to link the killings to the feud between Kurds and Turks staying in Germany. Clearly, the cases were not investigated carefully, probably under the assumption that basically they were not a German issue.

AL-QAEDA AND GLOBAL TERRORISM

The discussed above German experience of external terrorism was limited and thus most Germans did not treat external terrorism as a real threat to themselves and their country. One reason was that the victims were mostly foreigners staying in the FRG and not Germans. Operations of Al-Qaeda, a global Islamist organisation targeting the West - mainly the United States and Israel, have not changed this

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 20-22.

attitude. In the 1990s, Al-Qaeda carried out many spectacular attacks in Africa and the Middle East. Its deadly "professionalism" was distinctly proved by the attacks on 11 September, 2001, which targeted the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in the US. The attacks resulted in the deaths of nearly 3,000 people and caused material losses.

The world was deeply shocked with the violence that took place on 11/9. Germans, however, were still not ready to admit that global terrorism was a threat to them. That attitude remained unchanged despite the revealed information that a substantial part of the terrorist attacks of 11 September was prepared in Hamburg by Al-Qaeda members who were university students there and some of the hijackers were seemingly assimilated, unsuspected students who lived in Germany for years. A common opinion among Germans was that their country might be a base for terrorist activities but it would never be a target of another attack.

German authorities at all costs tried to calm down the situation. The threat was qualified as *abstrakt hoch*, which meant that terrorist attacks in the territory of the FRG were possible but unlikely as no concrete activities to that effect were reported.

This approach was not significantly changed by either the attacks in Madrid and London or serious indications that the FRG could also be an attack target. Such indications included information on an intensified activity of German Muslims and preparations of terrorist attacks detected and prevented by the German secret service. On the contrary, the failed attacks reassured Germans that competences and skills of German counter-terrorism forces were high and nothing bad could happen. The first situation like that happened in 2002, when a terrorist group planned attacks on Jewish facilities in Berlin and the Ruhr region. The plot was discovered and foiled. In 2004, a group of Iraqis planned to kill the interim Prime Minister of Iraq, Ayad Allawi, during his visit to Berlin. At that time, German counter-terrorism forces also rose to the challenge.

Even kidnappings of German civilians in war-torn Muslim countries did not have much effect. In November 2005, Suzanne Osthoff was kidnapped in Iraq. In January 2006, two engineers were kidnapped there: Rene Bräunlich and Thomas Nitzschke. In both cases neither motives nor intentions of the kidnappers were discovered. However, it is beyond doubt that to make their demands stronger, the kidnappers used Islamic symbols. In both cases, they demanded that the federal government immediately stopped supporting the Iraqi Government. The same operation pattern recurred later. In February 2007, in Afghanistan, a German woman and her son were kidnapped. For their release, the terrorists demanded that all German forces were withdrawn from Afghanistan.[15]

The feeling of security was somewhat disturbed in result of the 2006 attacks on German regional trains. On 31 July, two Lebanese men planted bombs in suitcases on two regional trains. One of the trains was from Aachen to Hamm, and the

[15] A. Beyer (2007), *Selbstmordanschläge als terroristisches Mittel*, "Jahrbuch Terrorismus" p. 170.

other one from Mönchengladbach to Koblenz. The attacks failed not because they were timely discovered and prevented, but because the assassins made a technical mistake. They were caught but that time, Germans believed that a real tragedy was a close call. That belief, however, did not hold long and, shortly, the previous self-confidence was restored.

The public feeling was not altered also in 2009, when video clips with explicit threats addressed at Germany were published on the Internet. The first clip of that sort was published in January, the second one in February and next three in autumn, just before German parliamentary elections. Four clips featured a German of Moroccan descent, Bekkay Harrach, one clip featured Ayman al-Zawahiri, a leader of Al-Qaeda. All videos referred to the presence of German troops in Afghanistan. The first two were rather vague and could have been interpreted as an attempt to persuade Germans that it was necessary to withdraw the troops but the next two clips uploaded right before the elections were an ultimatum. The demand was that German troops leave Afghanistan and that Germans make a electoral choice to radically change German foreign policy. Should that not happen, within two weeks after the elections, Germans were to experience an "unpleasant awakening"[16]. The threat was accompanied by an appeal to German Muslims to stay away from all public places for two weeks after the elections. They were also asked to take special care of their children.[17]

The videos were an attempt at influencing the result of democratic elections. Terrorists tried to intimidate Germans and determine the composition of German government. That was made clear especially in the video with al-Zawahiri which contained accusations against German Chancellor Angela Merkel. The film suggested that she kept misleading German public opinion about Afghanistan. It also distinctly emphasised that greatest enemies of Islamists were conservative parties like the German CDU. Former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, who objected to sending German troops to Iraq, was positively evaluated.[18] Contrary to Islamists' calculations, their actions neither influenced the result of the elections nor triggered panic.

In 2010, were warnings about a serious terrorist attack that might take place in a major country of Western Europe. In Germany, they did not cause much commotion. Germans remained calm even when, to the end of 2010, the possible place of the attack was narrowed down to two countries: Great Britain and Germany, and a specific date was mentioned: 22 December. Increased were only security measures at airports, railway and bus stations and places identified as probable targets, including popular in Germany Christmas markets and other places attracting crowds before Christmas.

Germans fought Islamic terrorism in Germany and on the international arena. Internally, they focused mostly on improving legislation and creating institutions able

[16] Cf. "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" 18.09.2009.
[17] "Bildzeitung" 23.09.2009.
[18] "Süddeutsche Zeitung" 24.09.2009.

to combat terrorism. External operations consisted in joining the "war on terror" and - at least in the beginning - in undertaking diplomatic initiatives. The most important of the latter was the first international conference on Afghanistan stabilisation held on 25 November – 2 December 2001 in the Petersberg Hotel near Bonn, after combat operations in Afghanistan ended. The meeting, which was attended by representatives of various Afghan organisations and political groups, contributed to setting the foundations for the new provisional government in Afghanistan. The greatest achievement was the Bonn Agreement, i.e. the Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government. The meeting was judged to be a great success of the FRG and Minister Fisher because it enhanced, both in Germany and on the international stage, the image of Germany as the state which valued political actions over military ones and, at the same time, was actively involved in combating terrorism.

The Afghan mission of the Bundeswehr also, though somewhat paradoxically, proved giving priority to political measures. It was composed of two elements: troops directly participating in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) led by Americans, and a much more numerous military-civilian contingent engaged in International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Operation Enduring Freedom was strictly a military mission. Germans' involvement was extremely modest and limited to 100 soldiers from Special Forces Unit (Kommando Spezialkräfte). Germans' role was much more significant in International Security Assistance Force operating under NATO command and aiming at ensuring stabilisation and rebuilding of Afghanistan. Their tasks included e.g. protecting civilian activities aiming at rebuilding the country, assisting in the construction of facilities improving living conditions for the population (e.g. building wells), supporting the reform of Afghan security sector (e.g. training police officers). The ISAF was also to combat extremist and destabilising forces such as the Taliban units.[19]

From the beginning it was assumed that the presence of Germans in Afghanistan would be more political than military in nature. That is why soldiers were poorly equipped. Experts pointed out that the armament of Bundeswehr soldiers was in many cases outdated and it was also not suitable for the conditions in the Hindu Kush region. Due to the lack of advanced equipment, German troops fell behind soldiers from other countries of comparable to Germany potential in almost all areas, i.e. communication, command, precision weapons, et cetera.[20]

Restrictions imposed on German soldiers by the federal government and parliament additionally impeded the situation. The German ISAF contingent was to be a peace contingent not conducting military operations. Various restrictions were, originally, supposed to reduce risk for German soldiers. One of them read that the

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[19] K. Eichhorst, H. Ahlers, F. Grubitzsch (2007-2008), *Der Afghanistaneinsatz der Bundeswehr,* "Jahrbuch Terrorismus" pp. 171-173.

[20] After: M. Rühle (2009), *Afghanistan, Deutschland und die NATO,* "Sicherheit und Frieden" No. 1, p. 5.

German contingent might operate only in Kabul and northern parts of Afghanistan. A special permission had to be given to deploy ISAF German soldiers in the south of the country and as it usually took quite a long time, it limited troops' mobility.

A restriction blocking any Bundeswehr actions against opium poppy and cannabis cultivation, drug production and trafficking, which largely finance subversive activities and is a true plague in Afghanistan, had a similar impeding effect. In 2003, German Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared at the Bundestag forum that combating drugs was not a Bundeswehr task. The objective of such an assumption was to protect the soldiers against possible retaliatory actions of the drug mafia. In Afghanistan, however, the drug business and politics form an inseparable whole and that restriction substantially hampered German operations. It also hampered the fight against the Taliban for whom opium has been the main source of income. The above was acknowledged by German experts.[21]

Safety of German soldiers was to be ensured also by the injunction to take members of the mobile medical unit on patrols. This led to reducing the number of patrols and limited the possibility of establishing contacts with local people by German soldiers.

Competences of German soldiers were also questioned in result of restricted use of firearms to necessary self-defence. If the attacker gave up the attack and decided to flee, a German soldier was not allowed either to chase or shoot the opponent. The extent to which this restriction limited operation capabilities of German troops was revealed during an operation of the Special Forces Unit which was part of the ISAF since 2005. The objective was to catch a local Taliban leader responsible for organising several attacks. The wanted man was located, however when he started running away, the operation had to be ended.[22]

In result of those restrictions, the Bundeswehr actually did not carry any offensive operations by spring 2009. It was the drastic increase in the number of attacks against German soldiers which eventually led to softening some of the restrictions. Then German troops managed to carry many combat actions which were successful. Heavy combat equipment and American air support were used. All that made strong German pacifist groups active.

Over time, the voice of German pacifists became increasingly stronger both on the political stage and in mass media. Reluctance of German political commentators toward "resorting to arms" grew as did their negative assessment of the United States which insisted on such solutions. Additionally, television coverage of fights in

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[21] In areas controlled by the Taliban, drug dealers paid the so called religious taxes which were estimated to generate income at the level from EUR 150 to 300 million annually. More in: Th. Gutscher (2009), *Treibstoff für Terrorismus: am Hindukusch tobt ein Opiumkrieg, doch Deutschland schaut weg,* "Internationale Politik" 64, No. 7-8. See also: F. Wätzel, J. Krause (2009), *Das deutsche Engagement in Nordafhganistan - eine Bilanz,* "Jahrbuch Terrorismus" p. 393.

[22] *Ibid.,* p. 330, 331.

Afghanistan and especially reports on incidentally killed civilians met with much response in Germany. NATO's intervention in Afghanistan was criticised and protests were widespread. At the time it became obvious that the most important motivation of German pacifists has not been the experience of the past but the fear for people's own safety. One can say that over time the Afghan war was perceived less as an element of the war on global terror and more as a factor increasing the risk of terrorist attacks against Germany. Therefore it was not surprising that the decision taken in 2010 to withdraw coalition troops from Afghanistan by 2014 was welcomed in Germany. It was a relief.

Another campaign carried as part of the "war on terror", which from the very beginning was not supported either by the German society or by the authorities that had so far loyally supported the Americans, caused more trouble. The German refusal to participate in the war in Iraq was explicitly justified by assigning priority to political and not military solutions. In his speech given on the occasion of the centenary of the American Chamber of Commerce in Berlin on 13 May 2003, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder said that "German caution toward military violence" should be respected and accepted and that Germans believed that consultations were better than confrontations. Schröder added that whenever violence would have to be used as the last resort in conflict resolutions a "thorough and informed approval of German public opinion" would be indispensable.[23]

The stance of German authorities on Iraq won substantial support in the country. There were voices expressing satisfaction and pride that finally German politicians had the courage to oppose the United States and make their own independent choice. One could have an impression that it was not the reunification but the refusal to participate in the Iraq campaign that was the turning point in the history of Germany - the moment of regaining "true" independence.

Characteristically, the absence of Bundeswehr soldiers in Iraq was quite widely recognised as an effective counter-terrorism measure. In 2006, Christian Ströbele and Hans Erlenmeyer wrote that absolute security did not exist. They argued that 80 to 90% of effective prevention depended on political measures and only 10 to 20% might be ensured by legislation and security services. "And thus, surely, the refusal to participate in the Iraq war protected Germany much more effectively against attacks of Islamist terrorists than most comprehensive legislation packages or better equipment of police and secret service would have. [...] There was information from the Islamist network that the opponents of the war - Germany and France - were not to be considered as attack targets. Militants in Iraq were actually supposed to apologise for the fact that in one of their attacks, two German civilian officers were killed".[24]

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[23] After: *Schröder betont gute US-Beziehungen trotz Irak-Streits*, "Handelsblatt" 21.05.2003.

[24] Ch. Ströbele, H. Erlenmeyer (2005), *Sicherheitspolitik nach dem 11.9,* "Sicherheit und Frieden" No. 4, p. 136.

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Summing up, Germany's defensive approach to the issue of external terrorism should be emphasised. The strategy, endorsed by social democrats but actually implemented – despite its criticism by right wing politicians and media - by all political parties, consists mainly in eliminating threats to Germany and its citizens. When it was believed that concessions would ease the situation and divert terrorists' attention to a different direction, the fight was abandoned. This strategy was applied consistently before as well as after the reunification, regardless of political costs. The way of proceeding was not changed even if, as in the case of renouncing Öcalan's extradition, it discredited Germany on the international stage, or, as in the case of "the war on terror", made the United States and other NATO allies undermine the FRG credibility.

It appears that a similar strategy was followed in the case of criminal actions affecting foreigners living in Germany. The case of the East German right wing militia group illustrates the point. The group operated all over Germany and their crimes were not effectively prosecuted because they were ascribed to feuds between various groups of foreigners. In this case it was believed that it would be better not to annoy anyone.

Authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany tried to rebuild trust and credibility in international relations allocating substantial funds to combating terrorism. Germany's reluctance to take more concrete actions was explained with references to history and the resulting pacifism of German society which opposed any military solutions.

It is beyond any doubt that the adopted strategy usually was effective. Apart from the Munich massacre, Germany did not become the target of external groups in spite of belonging to elite nations. However, it must be noted that the German approach worked only because, at the time, others strongly fought terrorism. Were it not for Americans, Israelis, the British and others, the German strategy would not be possible at all.

ABSTRACT

Political terrorism is not a new phenomenon for Germany, which has had to tackle numerous internal campaigns both left-wing and right-wing. In the mid-20th century, Germany became a target of attacks organised externally by foreign groups: the Palestinian movement and radical Kurd organisations. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the FRG, like all Western countries, has also become a target of terrorist acts carried by Islamist groups on grounds that Germany was part of the Western world and subsequently joined the international "war against terrorism". In all those cases a strategy was adopted that consisted in elimination of threats to Germany and its citizens. If it was thought that concessions would pacify the situation and direct terrorists' attention elsewhere, the fight was abandoned. This strategy usually proved to be efficient. Apart from the Munich massacre, Germany did not become the target of actions of external groups in spite of belonging to elite nations. However, it must be noted that such a way of proceeding was only possible because others were at the same time conducting a major fight against terrorism. Were it not for Americans, Israelis, the English and others, the German strategy would not be possible at all.