

NATO and the Afghanistan Mission: Lessons for the Alliance

By

Johnathon Saltasuk

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Abstract

NATO's second mission outside of its traditional area of operations, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, is nearing a decade in length. The mission has highlighted shortfalls in NATO's capabilities, challenged NATO's its relationships with countries across the globe, and shown that while ISAF may have been agreed to by consensus, there is no unity within NATO on how to execute the mission. This paper uses critical analysis to explore these issues facing ISAF and draws conclusions as to the probable long term implications they will have for NATO.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One provides a brief review of recent NATO history and how the ISAF mission has evolved. Chapter Two examines the evolution of ISAF and the capabilities that have been required for it to operate, and the capabilities the alliance is looking to pursue in the future. In particular, it examines several different aspects of the alliances' actions in Afghanistan, as well as actions taken by individual alliance members. The third chapter explores the issue of caveats placed on troop usage by alliance members and its implications on the alliance on several different dimensions. Chapter Four explores NATO as a political actor, not only with the Afghan government and its neighbours, but also its own internal politics and its dealings with the United Nations. The concluding chapter looks at the options facing the alliance as it prepares to withdraw from Afghanistan over the next several years.

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Introduction

Fighting for relevancy in a post Cold War world, NATO has undertaken radical transformation over the past two decades. It has shifted to operating in area's outside of its traditional area of operations, working in crisis management with other international organizations, and forging partnerships with countries around the globe. Regardless, the most successful alliance in modern history is at a turning point. The Afghanistan mission is in many ways a decision point where the alliance must decide on whether to evolve and move past its collective defence trappings, or cling to a security system that is stable but inflexible. NATO has already created new ways to generate war fighting capabilities, created new institutions to deal with emerging threats, and is working with countries in regions far removed from the waters of the northern Atlantic Ocean.

It would be incomplete, even in an abbreviated version of history, to talk about NATO in Afghanistan without going back to NATO's roots. Only by understanding NATO's history can we understand the potential impact that the Afghanistan mission will have in shaping the alliance for the future. Formed in 1949, NATO was envisioned to protect Western Europe from the predations of the Soviet Union by firmly linking Europe and North American security as one and the same. All members pledged to consider an attack against one member as an attack against all. They also pledged to maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack, enshrined the ability to expand the alliance, and to uphold the United Nations as the primary body for the maintenance of international peace and security for the globe.¹

¹ "The North Atlantic Treaty." NATO. Accessed March 11, 2010.
http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm

NATO forces would garrison West Germany throughout the Cold War and provide a conventional and nuclear counter-balance to the Warsaw Pact. The alliance would not fire a shot in anger for more than five decades leading many in the post-Cold War era to describe it as an institution without purpose. Yet NATO was and continues to be a political actor, as well as military organization, which faced many challenges in its time, including the withdrawal of France from NATO's military command structure in 1966. A plethora of other issues would beset the alliance for the next four decades, mainly how the alliance could respond to member states issues which were largely national in focus and not a threat to the entire alliance. These included the Suez Crisis, the Falklands War, and the decades long process of European powers losing their grasp on colonial possessions. Almost every one of these issues would, at some level, pit the alliances collective interests against member states extra regional interests. Certain academics such as Douglas Stuart and William Tow in *The Limits of Alliance* discuss issues like these as an intra-alliance dispute. Though NATO has never deployed to these areas in any capacity, despite actions such as NATO's declaration of support for French operations in Indochina against the Vietminh and NATO's response to Britain's Falkland Islands conflict with Argentina.

Stuart and Tow grouped these and other instances into 5 broad categories:

1. Situations in which NATO members have been concerned about the possibility of "guilt by association" with the out-of-area policies of another ally.
2. Situations in which one NATO member has seen another member's out-of-area actions as an infringement upon its domaine reserve in the Third World.
3. Situations in which a NATO member involved in an out-of area campaign has solicited the direct or indirect support of other alliance members and has been rebuffed.

4. Situations in which the out-of-area preoccupations of a NATO member are criticized by other allies on the grounds that they are diverting attention, energies, or resources away from the alliance.
5. Situations that highlight fundamental differences of opinion among NATO allies regarding the nature or implications of threats to the alliance or beyond the alliance treaty area.

Stuart and Tow make it clear that these five broad categories are not mutually exclusive and that each situation can touch on multiple categories in varying degrees.² Category 2, the domaine reserve of member states, has almost completely disappeared from NATO with the winding down of colonialism. All the other categories have multiple examples and either are currently happening or have the potential to happen in the future and affect the alliance.

NATO's "modern" history begins in November of 1989 when the Berlin Wall fell, followed by the reunification of Germany. In April of 1991 the Warsaw Pact was disbanded and by the end of that year, so too had the Soviet Union; the main reason for the creation of the alliance had disappeared. NATO would work to reorient itself and make major changes to its military structure. A new strategic concept emerged which created a multinational force structure (a large change from the dedicated national brigades and divisions posted to geographic area's of western Europe previously), which was much smaller and more flexible from a political standpoint. NATO reduced its state of readiness and reduced its training requirements, but still worked to retain the ability to generate large forces quickly. It began to move NATO away from its military focus and turn into a far more active political entity.

The late 1990's would see NATO work actively for peace and stability in the former Yugoslavia, culminating in NATO's first military actions in two separate

² Douglas Stuart and William Tow, *The Limits of Alliance*, (John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 12-19.

campaigns in the Balkans in order to stop ethnic conflicts. Operation Deliberate Force utilized a large number of alliance aircraft and after a short campaign, forced the withdrawal of Serbian troops, paving the way for NATO's first ground-mission in deploying a peacekeeping force to Bosnia and Herzegovina. This would be followed by Operation Allied Force in 1999 when NATO airstrikes brought a stop to Slobodan Milosevic's attempts to remove ethnic Albanians from Serbian territory.

At the same time, NATO welcomed new members into the alliance, proclaiming in 1994 that NATO was open to membership from other European countries. This brought the expansion of NATO through the inclusion of many former Warsaw Pact countries with the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland joining in 1999, and seven more countries joining the new Membership Action Plan. Those seven countries (all eastern European) gained full membership in 2004. From 2002 to 2008 there was also intense dialogue on the Ukraine (and to a lesser extent Georgia) joining NATO, with NATO proclaiming in 2008 that both will become members sometime in the future. Albania and Croatia joined NATO officially in 2009 meaning that virtually all of its former Warsaw Pact adversaries have already or are in the process of joining NATO.

Without delving into the long history of warfare in Afghanistan, which has perhaps the most sordid military history of any nation, the current war in Afghanistan was born out of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, which were supported by the Taliban government in Afghanistan. NATO ambassadors met on the evening of September 11th to discuss the events of the day. The unity of response by NATO was almost surprisingly. As one ambassador remarked: "Hell, this is an

Alliance," he said. "We've got Article 5."³ The response of the alliance was overwhelmingly supportive.

Despite the unity of the alliance, it was the United States' military and its closest allies which initially responded, only a matter of weeks after the 9/11 attacks, not NATO. U.S. President George W. Bush announced the beginning of military operations against the Taliban government in Afghanistan after its refusal to turn over leaders of Al-Qaeda, the terrorists responsible for the 9/11 attack, and close the terrorist training camps operating across the country. Operation Enduring Freedom began in earnest on October 7th, 2001 with a combination of air strikes from carrier and land-based strike aircraft and navel cruise missiles at key Taliban targets all across Afghanistan. This included aircraft from the United Kingdom, as well as B-1 and B-2 strategic bombers based in the continental United States. These strikes were facilitated by the insertion of Special Operations Forces, most of which were working in tandem with the Northern Alliance, a group of predominantly Tajik and Uzbek militia's who had been in conflict with the Pashtun dominated Taliban for years. Thirty one strikes were conducted in the first day, nullifying air fields, grounded aircraft, communication centers and troop concentrations. All of these strikes were guided by the United States' Central Command (CENTCOM), even though it was a coalition (not NATO) effort. Within a matter of days the Taliban could no longer effectively mass troops against Northern Alliance forces without fearing coalition airpower.

While the Taliban effectively lost control of Afghanistan, a great number of Taliban fighters were able to flee across the border into neighbouring Pakistan, despite

³ Edgar Buckley, "Invoking Article 5." *NATO Review*, Summer 2006. Accessed March 2, 2010. <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2006/issue2/english/art2.html>

previous promises from the Pakistani government to assist in capturing Taliban leaders made directly to the U.S. government in the days after 9/11. Pakistan supported the Taliban until 9/11, viewing them as a stabilizing force in Afghanistan, albeit one with a skewed view of Sharia law. The Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) had funneled weapons, fuel and food to the Taliban for years and Pakistan provided direct cash aid to the Taliban regime. While continued pressure from the United States (and the greater international community) would force Pakistan to take some actions against the Taliban in the months and years that followed, the United States was more concerned with the pursuit of Al Qaeda as part of its “war on terror,” than it was with the stabilization of Afghanistan. The Taliban continue to operate from Pakistan to present day.⁴

The International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) was established by the UN with Security Council Resolution 1386, with the United Kingdom taking the lead in commanding the initial ISAF group. It was given a six-month mandate to provide security in Kabul and surrounding area for the Afghan Interim Authority. The following year ISAF command was turned over to Major General Hilmi Akin Zorlu of Turkey. During this period Turkey increased its commitment in Afghanistan from 100 to 1,300 troops.

In February of 2002 the UN Security Council was briefed on the factional and ethnic conflicts occurring in the rural areas of Afghanistan, beyond the relative calm of Kabul. There was great reluctance from then U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to commit to nation-building in Afghanistan.⁵ At that time the U.S. Defence Department

⁴ Joint paper by the Government of Afghanistan, UNAMA, CFC-A, ISAF, Canada, Netherlands, United Kingdom and United States governments. *Assessment of Factors contributing to Insecurity in Afghanistan*. (Kabul: Government of Afghanistan, 2006), 1.

⁵ Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, (Viking books, 2008), 137.

controlled US reconstruction operations, as opposed to the U.S. State Department. International reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan were very limited during this period, with much of the focus being on rebuilding the capability of the Afghan government. As the six-month mandate of the Afghan government, as dictated by the Bonn Agreement, came to an end, the decision was made move forward with a transitional authority. This led to the *Loya Jirga* being held. The Loya Jirga, a meeting of more than a thousand tribal and regional Afghani leaders, elected Hamid Karzai as the leader of the transitional government. Karzai enjoyed support from potentially rival Pashtun's groups who were under-represented due to their prior ties to the Taliban, as well as support from other ethnic groups.⁶ In a nod to the realities of Afghanistan past the tribal system, forty five 'warlords' were also allowed to attend the Loya Jirga at the last minute. Karzai's broad appeal, as well as U.S. pressure on the exiled King to support Karzai, was enough for him to win the support of the Loya Jirga.⁷

As early as the fall of 2002, the beginnings of the Taliban insurgency could be seen and the need for greater security was recognized. NATO officially took the lead in Afghanistan in August of 2003, taking over control of ISAF from the United Nations. Originally ISAF was only mandated to provide security for the area around the city of Kabul, the seat of the Afghanistan government. In October 2003 the mission was expanded to cover the entire country; a daunting task for the 5,500 troops (the vast majority of which were already supplied from NATO countries) that were currently in the country when the expansion decision was made.⁸

⁶ Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A cultural and political history*. (Princeton University Press, 2010), 279.

⁷ Ibid, 297.

⁸ "NATO: Keeping the peace in Afghanistan." Council on Foreign Relations. Oct. 17, 2003. Accessed February 4, 2010. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/7712/nato.html#>

The number of NATO troops would soon be expanded after the Istanbul Summit in June of 2004. NATO expanded its commitment to Afghanistan, taking command of four provincial reconstruction teams as well as an increased deployment of troops to ensure security for national elections, though this security admittedly was not provided to much of the country at this time (only nine provinces out of a total of thirty). More importantly though, this signaled a shift in the roles NATO would be playing in Afghanistan; a role which U.S. Vice-President Cheney and many senior U.S. military officials had been trying to avoid - state building. NATO moved to support the provisional government in order to allow Afghanistan's first true democratic elections to be held.

At the same time, a shift had been occurring regarding NATO's opposition in Afghanistan. The Taliban had been chased out of the country in 2002 as a disorganized group, escaping into Pakistan. Security, especially in the northern provinces, saw steady improvement in 2002. Regrouping over the winter, the Taliban began a low-level insurgency, slowly shifting away from direct confrontation with western troops to the intimidation of local Afghans and use improvised explosive device (IED) attacks as they slowly rebuilt their base of support. Fighting in Afghanistan remained heavily dependent on the seasonal weather, with the summer months being full of fighting.

Political tensions within the alliance would flare into the public view in 2006, as British, Canadian, and to a lesser extent Dutch troops dealt with the most frequent and deadly attacks by the Taliban in the southern and eastern provinces of Afghanistan, while other countries, most notably the Germans, refused to move from the relatively secure and peaceful bases in the north of the country among the ethnic Uzbeks and others who

had supported the Northern Alliance. This issue would continue to play out at the Riga Summit in November of 2006. At Riga, the alliance reaffirmed its commitment to the Afghanistan mission, led by U.S. President George Bush as he spoke about the need for continued European commitment to Afghanistan.⁹ The Riga Summit was also another stepping stone in acknowledging the capabilities necessary to be able to respond to missions such as Afghanistan, which included quicker reaction times and improving the co-operation of forces between member countries. This also included increasing training between NATO and Partnership for Peace (PFP) countries, and increasing inter-operability.¹⁰

NATO would also expand its presence in Afghanistan in 2006, especially in the western provinces of Afghanistan with four more provincial reconstruction teams (PRT), bringing NATO's total to nine. 2006 would also see an escalation in fighting for NATO forces, especially as they expanded their role in the southern provinces, taking over from U.S. coalition forces. The Kandahar and Helmand provinces of Afghanistan would especially see increased fighting. Sweep and clear operations such as Operation Mountain Thrust and Operation Medusa would force Taliban fighters from the area, but there was not adequate government services and security in place to keep the insurgents from relocating outside of the immediate area of NATO operations. During this period ISAF forces approximately doubled from 10,000 to 20,000 troops.

⁹ NATO. "Address by the President of the United States George W. Bush to the participants of the Young Leaders Forum and of the Riga Conference." November 28, 2006. Accessed January 8, 2010. <http://www.rigasummit.lv/en/id/speechin/nid/51/>

¹⁰ The Partnership for Peace programme encourages bilateral cooperation between NATO and individual partner countries on defence related issues including joint training and capabilities, long term military transformation, and civil military matters. Currently there are 22 member countries in the program.

2007 was marked as a year of change and frustration for the Afghanistan mission. Several of the countries that had contributed from the beginning of the mission began to look at winding down their contributions, or preparing a time line for future withdrawals. This led to future requests from NATO for withdrawing countries to continue to contribute to the mission and instead shift their focus from combat to training and support of Afghan security forces. This would be a central issue when NATO Defence Ministers met in Budapest in 2008. Much of the talks were around force transformation within NATO; certainly a topic directly related to the Afghanistan mission. Much of the talks also centered directly on the Afghanistan mission and the requirements for increased troop levels. This period also marked increased calls from NATO members to begin shifting the security burden of the country onto the fledgling Afghan security forces.

A study of the Afghan security system, done by both the Afghan government and NATO countries, reflected the failure in the coalition to improve the security for vast swaths of the country. Coalition forces did not have the reach or resources to provide proper security, and the capabilities and discipline of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP) were extremely limited and growing slowly. Corruption within the ANP was widespread and from 2002 to 2005 there were three shifts in leadership in training the ANP; from Germany, to the U.S. State Department to the U.S. Defense Department.

Progress was also slow with regard to the ANA. The Brookings Institute's *Afghanistan Index* tracking of ANA recruits reflects the difficulty NATO had in improving the security situation. In 2003-04 there were 9,671 recruits, 15,790 in 2004-05, and then regressed to 11,845 in 2005-06. It wasn't until more resources were put into

building the ANA that recruitment figures climbed to 21,287 in 2006-07 and more than 32,000 in 2007-08. Still, as of 2008, re-enlistment for ANA soldiers was only 50%. Only one battalion (Kandak) and one HQ unit was deemed ready for operations without the support of international forces after two years of international forces working to develop the ANA. More significant growth occurred in 2008-09. The Brookings Institutes' last chart of ANA capability markers reflected a growth from one HQ or Kandak level unit being able to operate independently in May 2008, to twenty nine units in May 2009. Afghan security forces were estimated at 137,710 as of April 2008. With concentrated effort that number has grown to 239,000 as of August 2010. Even in 2008-09 ANA re-enlistment and absent without leave (AWOL) rates for soldiers has shown improvement, with approximately 60% of ANA soldiers now re-enlisting. This is a reflection of the increase of resources and focus NATO is putting into Afghanistan's security forces.

June 2009 saw the appointment of Gen. Stanley McChrystal as the head of ISAF. McChrystal was a vocal leader that pushed hard for the Obama Administration to put more troops into the Afghanistan mission. In September 2009 it became public that McChrystal was asking for 30-40,000 more U.S. troops in Afghanistan. This created a large amount of political pressure on the U.S. internally, as a "surge" had worked well in Iraq several years earlier. President Obama and his advisors finally came to an agreement to bring 30,000 more U.S. troops into Afghanistan quickly in order to destroy the momentum that many believed the Taliban had been gaining. Pressure was also brought upon NATO allies to increase troop levels to fulfill the numbers that military leaders felt they needed to succeed.¹¹ This came only months after NATO leader met at the

¹¹ Peter Baker, "How Obama came to plan for 'surge' in Afghanistan," *The New York Times*, December 6, 2009.

Strasbourg-Kehl Summit and agreed to send an additional 5,000 troops and trainers to Afghanistan, coming mainly from the U.S., Britain, France, Italy, Germany and Spain.¹² During the same time though, Hamid Karzai and other Afghan leaders were becoming more vocal about the withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan. Domestic pressure was forcing these requests, even though Karzai's government continued to rely on international support for financial and physical security.

The Strasbourg/Kehl Summit of 2009 would see a commitment to increase troops for Afghanistan, pushed for by the Obama administration, as well as another declaration of long-term commitment to Afghanistan by the alliance. The Summit also increased support in training the ANP.

As of October 2010 there were over 130,000 ISAF troops in Afghanistan (90,000 from the U.S.) from 46 countries. They have over-seen democratic elections (albeit ones that have been recognized as having various acts of fraud in them), and have made strides in providing basic services to its citizens. Security is still a challenge ISAF struggles with, especially in the east along the Pakistani border, where insurgents often cross freely and without interference from Pakistani border forces.

¹² "Extra NATO troops for Afghan Poll." BBC news online, April 4, 2009. Accessed January 7, 2010. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7982821.stm>

Chapter One

Capabilities

The Afghanistan mission has brought new focus on a myriad of issues plaguing the alliance, some which have been part of the alliance for decades and some that have newly been discovered during ISAF. One of the most important of those issues has been the capabilities (or lack thereof) certain member states are providing for the mission. Afghanistan has forced the alliance to recognize which members have the assets necessary to contribute properly to a war fighting mission and which members do not, as well as assess the value of its new alliance and Partnership for Peace (PFP) members. As Thomas Friedman wrote: "...we already saw in the Afghan war, most NATO countries have fallen so far behind the U.S. in their defense spending and modernization, they really can't fight alongside of us anymore anyway. So what the heck, let's invite everybody in."¹³

Some would simply dismiss this concern as a return to the 1990's, when many academics, politicians and military leaders were busily dissecting the defence spending of the entire alliance. Others may argue that the United States had out-spent itself from having allies that operate at the same level. Either way, defence spending is not an end in itself; it is just a barometer of resources being allocated and even with lower spending many smaller NATO countries have acquitted themselves with distinction during the course of ISAF. Nonetheless, the 1990's saw a dramatic drop in over-all defence investment by NATO members and more than a decade later it has clearly affected NATO's ability to conduct actual war fighting operations. NATO also began enlarging in the 1990's by allowing the entrance of eastern European countries. This started debate

¹³ Thomas L Friedman, "The New Club NATO." *New York Times*, November 17, 2002. Accessed March 3, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/17/opinion/the-new-club-nato.html>

on the potential usefulness of these new partners. Would these new partners, with newly embraced democracies and fragile economies, actually contribute to increased collective defence? What partners were bringing important capabilities to the table? Are they security consumers or security producers?

These questions were being asked not only when NATO was in the midst of a demanding out-of-area operation, but also at a time when NATO was in the midst of several initiatives to transform the alliance for the new challenges of the globalized world in the 21st century. NATO has taken several steps to transform and shape its military capabilities; it has established several centers of excellence to develop joint doctrine and best practices; it has established internal institutions to guide the military transformation of its forces, and it has developed a strategic concept for all members of the alliance to work from. While some of these issues have been ongoing prior to NATO taking over ISAF, the Afghanistan mission has been the major catalyst for these changes.

While the alliance may be facing these challenges together in Afghanistan, its members are not necessarily taking a uniform approach to them. First and foremost for many members is fiscal austerity, with a financial crisis looming or already arrived. The increasing costs of advanced capabilities are difficult for many NATO members to manage. With ample time and sample size thanks to the Afghanistan mission there are several questions which can be examined and answered. What capabilities has the Afghanistan mission demonstrated NATO needs to improve upon? What capabilities are NATO and its member countries currently pursuing and how have the capabilities required been fulfilled up to this point? These will range from the tactical level to the

strategic and serve to highlight the capabilities the alliance has allowed to lapse and what problems the alliance has encountered in its second out-of-area operation.

New Strategic Concept and National White Papers

Whatever its harshest critics may say, it is generally accepted that NATO is the primary military alliance of all its members, despite the rise of European Union as a security provider. The path that member countries take with regards to their future defensive actions have two primary considerations; one is the collective actions and documents produced by NATO and the second is their individual military planning. NATO's Strategic Concept and the planning that has taken place over the course of ISAF has made some fundamental changes to the alliance and its members. A country's individual planning is best represented by its defence White Papers, which are periodically produced.

NATO's newest push for capabilities began with the 2002 Prague summit, where the alliance put forward a plan for increased capabilities in eight distinct categories, established Allied Command Transformation to guide the alliance into a new generation of warfare, and created the NATO Response Force. *NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement*, was NATO's last report before the publication of its strategic concept, and probably offers more insight into the capability issues facing the alliance than the strategic concept itself. The recommendations were broad ranging and defined NATO's four future military missions as enforcing territorial integrity and security as per Article V, protecting against unconventional threats, deploying and sustaining expeditionary capabilities for operations beyond the treaty area when required, and helping to shape a more stable and peaceful international security environment.

The actual strategic concept itself recognizes that the threat of conventional attack against the alliance is low. With regards to capabilities, the new strategic concept “commits NATO to continuous reform towards a more effective, efficient and flexible Alliance, so that our taxpayers get the most security for the money they invest in defence.”¹⁴ The strategic concept lays out three core tasks for the alliance: collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security. Under the collective defence task NATO notes that it will act against emerging security challenges where they threaten the security of individual allies or the alliance as a whole. The cooperative security task also notes that NATO will partner with other countries and organizations outside the alliance, as well as continue to keep membership open to other European countries who meet NATO standards.

The ISAF mission, and NATO’s reasoning for being involved in Afghanistan, is explained through point 11 of the strategic concept: “Instability or conflict beyond NATO borders can directly threaten Alliance security, including by fostering extremism, terrorism, and trans-national illegal activities such as trafficking in arms, narcotics and people.”¹⁵ With regards to conventional capabilities the strategic concept notes that NATO will maintain the ability to sustain concurrent major joint operations and several smaller operations, “including at a strategic distance and...mobile and deployable conventional forces to carry out both our Article V responsibilities and the Alliance’s expeditionary operations...”¹⁶ With regard to specific outgrowths from the Afghanistan mission, the strategic concept notes that NATO must further its doctrine and capabilities

¹⁴ “Active Engagement, Modern Defence: Strategic Concept.” NATO, accessed March 1, 2010.
http://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/pdf/Strat_Concept_web_en.pdf

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

for counterinsurgency, stabilization and reconstruction operations, all of which lie at the heart of ISAF.

With an eye to the future, NATO members have agreed to work to maximize the deployability of its forces and ensure their “capability to sustain operations in the field,” an issue which certainly has faced many NATO countries in Afghanistan as they have struggled to sustain increasingly large deployments. NATO is also working to ensure coherence in defence planning, a reduction in duplication and a focus on modern requirements on the battlefield. In short, the strategic concept, at least from a capabilities perspective, promises for NATO to work together in order to be better prepared for the next operation it will face.

Several recent defence White Papers provide another means of viewing the changing military capabilities landscape in Europe. Britain and France are two of the largest countries in European NATO, and invest more resources into their militaries than most NATO members. They have the fiscal capabilities that out-class most other European NATO members and have long colonial histories which have leant themselves to long histories of expeditionary missions. Both have also published White Papers since NATO took over the ISAF mission and have had the opportunity to address their current inadequacies and plan for the future. Denmark and Lithuania can also be used as comparative studies with their defence White Papers. Both are relatively smaller military powers within the alliance, provide a contrast between the ‘old’ members who had been part of the alliance during the Cold War and the expanded ‘new’ members who have joined in the post-Cold War era, and also exhibit differences in defence spending from the much larger and more affluent France and Britain. Lithuania is one of NATO’s

smallest members and is still shifting away from its Soviet history. Much of its military equipment is still from the end of the Soviet era and is representative of many of the challenges facing the most recent additions to NATO.

Britain's latest White Paper asserts that the UK already has an emphasis on expeditionary forces, which is quite true relative to other European countries. It still maintains amphibious landing capabilities with the Royal Marines, long range strike aircraft, cruise missile equipped ships and submarines, and is planning to replace its now-retired aircraft carrier fleet. The Defence Paper explicitly states that "we also must maintain the capability to operate well beyond our shores and work with our allies wherever we need it."¹⁷ The Ministry of Defence recognizes that its forces need to become more flexible and adaptable, and is working to prepare its force structure to be able to sustain multiple operations concurrently.

Looking at Britain's land forces, it is currently considered a mix of 'heavy' and 'light' forces. The heavy forces, which are mostly made up of Britain's armoured cavalry units, have far superior firepower, mobility and protection than light forces, while light forces are more deployable. The Ministry of Defence has been seeking to find a middle ground by introducing a new 'medium' force, which would still have many of the advantages of heavy forces but with increased deployability, since 2003.¹⁸ At the beginning of ISAF those heavy forces would only have been deployable for Britain via sealift, since the majority of its strategic airlift is provided with C-130 aircraft and aging

¹⁷ Government of the United Kingdom, *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review*. London: 2010.
http://www.direct.gov.uk/prod_consum_dg/groups/dg_digitalassets/@dg/@en/documents/digitalasset/dg_191634.pdf (Accessed April 15, 2010).

¹⁸ Government of the United Kingdom, *Delivering Security in a changing world*. London: 2003.
<http://merln.ndu.edu/whitepapers/UnitedKingdom-2003.pdf> (Accessed April 15, 2010).

TriStar aircraft that cannot transport some heavy vehicles and equipment. The government is also planning for a large reduction of those ‘heavy’ forces, with a more recent announcement for a reduction of Challenger 2 main battle tanks (MBT) by about 40% and heavy artillery by approximately 35%. The British government recognizes a shifting role for MBT’s outside of conventional battle and the limited role for heavy artillery for fighting in built up areas. Instead precision ammunition will be utilized to minimize collateral damage and civilian casualties.¹⁹

The British government also recognizes the need for reinvestment in the Royal Air Force as well. Having been one of the most active participants in air campaigns (in both NATO and non-NATO missions) over the past two decades, the importance of the Ministry of Defence reinvesting in air capabilities is extremely important to NATO. Britain has a large number of modern strike aircraft which have been active in Afghanistan, as well as supporting Airborne Early Warning and Control and refueling aircraft. The British White Paper envisions a military, which will still be able to provide full air support to a large and continuous ground mission. There are several key parts to this strategy, which include new multi-role aircraft to replace Britain’s fleet of aging strike aircraft, as well as the reinvestment of strategic lift aircraft and the necessary helicopters to provide maneuverability on the modern battlefield.

The Royal Navy continues to emphasize its ability to deploy an at sea nuclear-deterrent as well as conventional intervention capabilities. The White Paper confirms a renewed ability for land attack capabilities through a submarine force, making the UK one of the few NATO countries with that capability. It also confirms the necessity for the

¹⁹ Government of the United Kingdom, *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review*.

UK to maintain a future aircraft carrier capability, with a longer range strike capability. It notes both France and the U.S. have used their naval aircraft assets in Afghanistan, while its current short range naval air assets are inadequate. The White Paper also emphasizes the future importance of interoperability between British, French and U.S. naval aircraft.²⁰

Britain's Strategic Defence and Security Review identified five concepts for the deployability of forces. Readiness was defined as having highly capable forces ready for deployment on short notice. Secondly, reconstitution in having several capabilities that will not be ready to be used in the short term, but available if there is some notice as to their need. Thirdly was reinforcement, the role of reserves for additional capacity which falls in line with most other NATO members. Fourthly, regeneration, the planning to retain technical expertise and skills in some capabilities even though they are no longer available for actual use, which will allow Britain to redevelop some capabilities over time without foreign support. Dependency, the final concept, speaks to Britain's reliance upon and provision of certain capabilities in concert with the UK's NATO partners.

The UK is obviously trying to do more with less. Despite the investment into future systems, it is also trying to address the heavy personnel costs that most European members of NATO have. By 2015 it plans to cut personnel by 17,000, with the Royal Navy being the hardest hit in percentage of reduction. The Ministry of Defence is also envisioning further reductions by 2020. Alongside this reduction in service personnel is a reduction by 25,000 members of the Ministry of Defence civil service.²¹ The reduction in

²⁰ Government of the United Kingdom, *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review*, p.5.

²¹ Ibid, p.32.

personnel costs may free funding for the UK to reinvest in its equipment and capabilities, focusing more at the “sharp end” of its military.

With these reductions and reorganization the question becomes, how much can the UK do with less? The White Paper notes that the recent high tempo of deployments in both Afghanistan and Iraq has strained both personnel and equipment. Yet its plan for the future is the ability to deploy 9,500 troops concurrently on up to three separate missions. It is likely not a coincidence that this is the same amount of troops deployed to ISAF in 2010, as that has been the high point of UK involvement in Afghanistan recently (see Table 1).

France’s White Paper also emphasizes conflict prevention and intervention capabilities, specifically targeting “a priority geographical axis from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, the Arab-Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. This axis corresponds to the areas where the risks related to the strategic interests of France and Europe are the highest.”²² The French White Paper outlines very quantitative goals for force projection. It advocates the ability to deploy 30,000 men within six months of notice and to have 5,000 troops on a permanent operational alert. It also sets a goal of having an overall intervention capability of 60,000 soldiers that are deployable for one year. It advocates the ability to deploy an aircraft carrier group and amphibious assets, as well as the ability to deploy seventy combat aircraft outside of French territory.²³ Of its fifteen prescriptions, five of its top six are dedicated to land combat capabilities, as well as the need for supporting drone aircraft, amphibious capabilities and various air and naval force projection projects.

²² French White Paper Commission, *The French White Paper on defence and national security*. Paris: 2008. http://merln.ndu.edu/whitepapers/France_English2008.pdf (Accessed April 15, 2010)

²³ Ibid.

What the White Paper defines as “key parameters” also seems to have been formed with France’s most recent NATO operations in mind. It expounds interoperability within multinational coalitions and the need for versatile mission capabilities. It also highlights the need for continued force protection, which is a point which had not been at the forefront of military (and political) considerations until the Afghanistan mission.²⁴ Force protection, including new technology for vehicles and equipment in anti-IED use, did not gain prominence within NATO until the Afghanistan mission simply due to the fact that it had not experienced a major asymmetric conflict of similar scale. There were few “lessons learned” to be passed on from UN and other low-intensity missions, but ISAF has made the French government realize it needs the resources in place to adapt quickly from feedback in the field.

Denmark’s report by the Danish Defence Commission in 2008 and the subsequent “Danish Defence Agreement 2010-2014” by several major political parties points to several important developments from the Afghanistan mission with an eye to future deployments with NATO. The 2010-2014 agreement notes that Denmark’s military is shifting into a modern, deployable defence force and needs to be able to deploy globally.²⁵

The Danish military, like most western European militaries, has been working to reduce the creeping ratio of increased support personnel at the expense of combat force size. Denmark set the goal in its White Paper to reduce support personnel from making

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Danish Ministry of Defence, *Danish Defence Agreement 2010-2014*.
<http://merln.ndu.edu/whitepapers/Denmark2010-2014English.pdf> (Accessed April 15, 2010)

up 60% of its entire force in 2004, to 40% by 2009.²⁶ The report also recognizes that Denmark had not met the NATO goal of 20% of its defence budget being invested in equipment. According to the Danish Defence Commission the importance of this statistic is its reflection of Denmark's "ability and willingness to contribute to sharing risk, burden, and security..."²⁷

Denmark's future ambition is the ability to deploy two battle groups (300-800 troops) simultaneously, though the report does not define whether this would be two battle groups in the same space or on separate missions in different geographical locations. Changes to create this ability would put Denmark well on the path to meeting its NATO commitment to have 50% of its land forces deployable and 8% of its force ready to sustain a prolonged deployment.

In terms of specific capabilities the Danish Defence Commission report has several points that relate directly to ISAF. One of these is that "Denmark should pursue multilateral cooperation arrangements concerning larger capabilities, including lift capabilities."²⁸ This has obvious implications to Denmark looking to the future with NATO organizations such as Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC) and Strategic Airlift Interim Solution (SALIS), which will be discussed shortly. In the short-term, Denmark will continue to rely upon chartering civilian transport aircraft to meet its needs. The report also notes the need for increased strategic maritime lift capability, with a current concept already underway to meet this need in Denmark's near future. Other specifics include the need for more specialized armoured vehicles, unmanned aerial vehicles

²⁶ Danish Defence Commission, *Summary Danish Defence Global Engagement*. Copenhagen: 2009.
[http://www.fmn.dk/gamlesites/Forsvarskommissionen/Documents/Summary%20-%20Report%20Danish%20Defence%20Commission%20\(June%202009\).pdf](http://www.fmn.dk/gamlesites/Forsvarskommissionen/Documents/Summary%20-%20Report%20Danish%20Defence%20Commission%20(June%202009).pdf) (Accessed April 15, 2010)

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Danish Defence Commission, *Summary Danish Defence Global Engagement*.

(UAVs) and increased surveillance and intelligence capabilities, all of which have been key components of ISAF.²⁹ The report also emphasizes the need to develop more capabilities that reduce damage to civilian populations, which means not only the procurement of more advanced weapon systems, but also advanced intelligence and surveillance capabilities. This might include not only ground based systems, but also air and naval assets. The report also questions the necessity for several existing capabilities, including anti-armour units and anti-aircraft capabilities. The *Danish Defence Agreement 2010-2014* also notes the reduction of main battle tank numbers in the Danish army, as well as reduction of its current fire-support systems.³⁰

Lithuania joined NATO in 2004 and has been active in ISAF and American-led operations in Iraq. One of the differences between the Lithuanian White Paper and many others is that the Lithuanian paper specifically notes the likelihood of future combat operations in the global fight against terrorism, whereas many others only reference future peace keeping and stabilization missions. The White Paper states that “no state or group of states, can pose a direct military threat to the alliance and thus, Lithuania.”³¹ This suggests that conventional threats are no longer the focus of the Lithuanian military. The document expounds the necessity of Lithuania being able to respond to crises anywhere in the world, both with NATO and as a member of the EU. It also notes five key tasks that every soldier “of NATO and Lithuania must be prepared to do”:

- Wage asymmetrical warfare with no front lines: this fight may take in real or virtual space; traditional deterrence methods do not affect the enemy; the enemy may be ready to employ weapons of mass destruction

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ministry of Defence, *Danish Defence Agreement 2010-2014*.

³¹ Ministry of National Defence, *Lithuanian Defence Policy White Paper*. Vilnius: 2006.
<http://merln.ndu.edu/whitepapers/Lithuania-2006.pdf> (Accessed April 15, 2010)

- React rapidly to any type of threat, participate in operations of any type and intensity, and be able to shift from combat to peacekeeping operations
- Act effectively as part of an Allied multinational force in international operations
- Be able to interact and cooperate with local communities despite a hostile environment in international operations
- Work effectively with civilian authorities and police structures within the country³²

The Lithuanian White Paper also urges its NATO allies to re-examine their organizational structures and invest in new military technologies. The paper reflects an increasing reliance on special operations forces and conventional military assets becoming increasingly mobile and flexible.

The Lithuanian White Paper has specific sections focusing on its NATO and EU membership. For the NATO section, it notes that given the relative speed with which contemporary threats need to be faced, Lithuania will work to make both its own national decision making process, and that of NATO, faster and more flexible. The White Paper also notes that Lithuania does not support a duplication of assets and capabilities for both NATO and the EU, and makes it clear that NATO is its primary defensive alliance. It also notes its continued support for the Vilnius Group within NATO³³.

The document often refers to the development of capabilities in a NATO-specific context, including meeting the 2002 Prague commitments, and even refers to disbanding those capabilities that only have a national defence (and not NATO) relevance. It also notes it will not seek to develop capabilities that the alliance already has in abundance. Instead Lithuania is training to specialize in several area's such as water purification,

³² Ibid.

³³ The Vilnius Group was created as a group of potential NATO member countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) in 2000 with the goal of increased military cooperation. The group continued to have practical cooperation even after several members gained full NATO membership in 2004.

mine counter measures and explosive ordnance disposal.³⁴ The end aim of the Lithuanian Armed Forces is to be able to sustain a combat battalion on international operations. Lithuania is working to modernize and improve its combat effectiveness, with 20-25 per cent of its budget going towards procurement. Interestingly, some of the specific weapons systems mentioned include anti-aircraft and anti-armour weapons, counter to the conclusions found in the Danish White Paper.³⁵

NATO's Internal Transformation Institutions

NATO's Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC) in 2002 noted several shortfalls among the alliance, and became the newest push in creating an expeditionary NATO. In terms of enabling capabilities it noted shortfalls in deployability and mobility, sustainability and logistics, survivability of forces against conventional and non-conventional weapons, effective engagement of forces that minimizes collateral damage, and consultation, command and control between allied forces.³⁶ All of these shortfalls were previously noted in NATO's Defence Capabilities Initiative in 1999 and North Atlantic Defence Council Ministers Report in 2001.³⁷ In 2010 the end report by NATO's group of experts could only characterize the success of the PCC as "mixed."³⁸ Some have noted that the European members of NATO have a unique challenge in developing new capabilities, as not only must member countries look to their internal needs in their national interests and the external demands of NATO, but also respond to the growing

³⁴Ministry of National Defence, *Lithuanian Defence Policy White Paper*.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ "Progress on the Prague Capability Commitments." NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Accessed April 18, 2010. <http://www.nato-pa.int/Default.asp?SHORTCUT=684>

³⁷ James Sperling, "Capabilities Traps and Gaps: Symptom or cause of a troubled transatlantic relationship?" in *Where is NATO going?*, ed. Martin Smith. (London: Taylor and Francis, 2006), 69.

³⁸ "NATO 2020: Assured security; dynamic engagement," NATO, accessed April 17, 2010. http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2010_05/20100517_100517_expertsreport.pdf

role of the European Union as a defence institution.³⁹ However the examination of the White Papers highlights that NATO countries are focusing on different issues than just the institutional competition between NATO and the European Union, but also the individual perception of threats by each country.

In 2002 NATO established Allied Command Transformation (ACT), which was tasked with transforming NATO's military structure, forces, capabilities and doctrine, as well as promoting interoperability among the alliance.⁴⁰ From 2002 to 2009 ACT was headed by American military commanders. This may have been an indication that the U.S. wanted the primary role in transforming the alliance, or in perhaps a more negative light, did not trust the position to its European partners until NATO's transformation path was set. NATO has just finished publishing a new strategic concept document which outlines in broad strokes where NATO must go to in order to operate in the new modern era, with several sections that adopt a very American standpoint. But as military leaders are quick to point out, transformation is not merely an application of new technology, but cultural and intellectual development as well.⁴¹

If one examines the ACT organization of NATO, its strategic objectives, while massive in scope, are startlingly loose:

- Provide appropriate support to NATO missions and operations.
- Lead NATO military transformation.
- Improve relationships, interaction and practical cooperation with partners, nations and international organizations.

³⁹ James Sperling, "Capabilities Traps and Gaps: Symptom or cause of a troubled transatlantic relationship?", 71.

⁴⁰ "Allied Command Transformation." NATO. Accessed April 18, 2010. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_52092.htm.

⁴¹ Brian MacDonald and David S. McDonough, Eds. *The New World of Robust international Peacekeeping operations: What roles for NATO and Canada*. (Toronto: Royal Canadian Military Institute, 2005), 102.

Looking at ACT's "news" is no better, with a sparse amount of announcements, most of which are visits by dignitaries and high ranking military officials. NATO centre's of excellence and military exchange programs are certainly a positive in keeping NATO moving forward, but transformation is coming faster from the battlefields of Afghanistan than anywhere else. For many NATO countries, their militaries have very few people with experience in several area's that ISAF has been forced to deal with, such as civil military cooperation, policing and explosive ordinance disposal. ACT's biggest success may have been the creation of 16 centers of excellence, which includes the Civilian Military Cooperation (CIMIC) Centre of Excellence that was established in the Netherlands in 2008, the NATO Command and Control Centre (2006), and a Counter Improvised Explosive Device Centre that was established in Spain in 2007.

During ACT's Chiefs of Transformation conference held in December of 2009 there was a shift away from focusing on capabilities and instead on building a 'comprehensive approach' focused on unifying national philosophies. In short, ACT believes that its primary challenges, in the short term at least, are "psychological/political, not technological."⁴² Notwithstanding the many area's where there has been a lack of progress, ACT is perhaps the best vehicle at NATO's disposal to have its members face its challenges together, streamlining NATO's capabilities and minimizing costs.

Many serving members of the Canadian Forces on early rotations to Afghanistan have commented on disparities in the abilities of partner countries. Planning, command,

⁴² "Chiefs of Transformation Roundtable After Action Review," Allied Command Transformation. Accessed 21 May, 210.
https://transnet.act.nato.int/WISE/Events/2009COTC/The2009COT3/2009COTRTA/file/_WFS/2009%20COT%20RT%20Analysis%20Report%20%28Final%29.pdf

and even basic communication were still problems between partner countries during their rotations, even though an increasing amount of resources and training are being put into alleviating these problems.⁴³ English often becomes the default language in most areas of operation in Afghanistan, with it being the 2nd or 3rd language of European officers (exacerbated by a general lack of 2nd languages by the English speaking alliance members). The end result is poor communication and frustration from non-English members, and English speaking countries assuming a disproportionately large leadership role. It highlights that there is much more work for ACT to do.

Operating out-of-area

Afghanistan is by far the biggest logistical test that NATO has ever faced. With NATO founded upon the premise of war in Europe, logistical capabilities were not initially a great concern for most members. When forces from the U.S. and Canada were deployed to Europe during the first three decades of the alliance, they were under their own command system and hosted by NATO allies.

Most categorize NATO's involvements in the Balkans as being out of NATO's traditional area of operations (as per Article VI of the NATO treaty). However from a logistical standpoint Afghanistan is NATO's first true out-of-area operation. The Balkans had many direct links to NATO countries with which to operate. Airbases to operate from and airspace to operate in was never an issue during the conflict in the Balkans. NATO never before has had to exercise political influence over neighboring countries to secure their cooperation in order for operations to move forward.

⁴³ Confidential author interviews, spring 2011.

To support ISAF, NATO is working with PFP countries (the Ukraine being an especially notable member⁴⁴), Russia, several former Soviet republics and Pakistan to get supplies to Afghanistan. Most heavy equipment and supplies are transported through Pakistani ports and must go through a long customs process before moving across rugged countryside to Afghanistan, where militants on both sides of the border have had great success in ambushing convoys and destroying NATO materials.

The change that has happened during ISAF is the stop-gap airlift solutions that have formed between NATO countries, such as SALIS and SAC.⁴⁵ SALIS (Strategic Airlift Interim Solution) is a consortium of 18 countries to charter Antonov transport aircraft on short notice for large strategic lifts. While this capability did not start in support of ISAF, for the last several years it has been the main mission of SALIS. This program is supposed to be an interim solution until more NATO members take possession of a new generation of strategic lift aircraft which are currently still in production. The success of this project, and any cost savings realized, may encourage smaller NATO countries to continue to rely on options other than actually owning their own aircraft.

SAC (Strategic Airlift Capability) is a partnership between 12 countries in operating three C-17 transport aircraft. The aircraft are operated by multinational aircrews, based out of Hungary. Most of the SAC members are eastern European NATO members, alongside the United States and two PFP countries. The new C-17 Globemaster is one of the two main purchases to renew NATO's heavy airlift capabilities, with

⁴⁴ U.S. Department of State. "State Foreign Policy Objectives – Europe." Accessed February 2, 2011. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/155992.pdf>

⁴⁵ "Strategic Airlift Interim Solution," NATO. Accessed January 12, 2011. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50106.htm

multiple units purchased by Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. Alternatively, most European NATO members have chosen the Airbus A400M transport aircraft. The purchase and successful long-term operation of such a capability between so many allies is a milestone for NATO and speaks to the quick integration of NATO's new members and the close ties forming between the alliance and its PFP nations.

One of the largest challenges facing NATO countries has been the ability to generate the necessary troops to sustain their presence in Afghanistan. Smaller countries such as Canada and the Netherlands have taken very large roles in the mission, which have strained their capabilities. Larger NATO countries such as the United States and Britain have also been strained to generate forces for the Afghanistan mission due to their involvement in Iraq. In fact, force generation has been a constant struggle ever since NATO took control of ISAF.

In 2006 NATO planners recognized a need for increased troops for Counter Insurgency (COIN) operations. At a force generation meeting in September no countries offered to increase their COIN operations by increasing their force levels.⁴⁶ U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has publicly asked allies for great troop contributions to ISAF each year since 2007. Earlier NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer also used the 2004 Istanbul summit as a platform from which to try and improve the alliances' force generation procedures, which made some small progress. It did not however, make a fundamental change in the two problems facing force generation which ISAF has demonstrated. The first problem is that the actual "sharp end" of most member countries militaries has shrunk to the point where increasing their contributions can be a real

⁴⁶ David Dombey et al., 'Poland is best Hope for Afghan Force,' *Financial Times*, 13 September 2006, accessed February 4, 2011. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/1d6883f2-4357-11db-9574-0000779e2340.html#axzz23kRGQdE1>

challenge, especially for smaller countries. The second problem is that force generation relies on the political will of individual alliance members.

Almost all NATO militaries are looking at or have already made reductions to their force structures, often including the number of troops at “the sharp end” of combat. This is due in part to the increase in ‘force multipliers’ becoming available. They range from more accurate delivery of strike munitions, improved reconnaissance ability thanks to UAV’s, improved communications and increased lethality and effectiveness in weapon systems. The end result means a battalion today has incredibly increased capability than its counter-part did twenty years ago and the amount of battle space that it can dominate has increased tremendously. While this is a positive development for NATO, it has led to problems in smaller countries trying to purchase all the modern tools necessary on today’s battlefield. However, it does open the door to niche contributions by members who cannot field capabilities across the spectrum. Many NATO countries are reviewing the idea of specializing their forces into certain niche roles, relying on NATO partners to supply other roles they cannot afford.

Spending requirements and personnel reductions have been seen as necessary for many European countries dealing with serious fiscal issues. France alone is looking at a reduction of 54,000 personnel.⁴⁷ The American media has recognized the burn-out facing U.S. military services with simultaneous missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, with many Army and Marine members doing multiple tours in both countries. This same problem faces smaller NATO countries, albeit on a much smaller scale, but with greater implications. Whereas the U.S. militaries size means it has the resources and capabilities

⁴⁷ International Institute of Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2009*. (London: IISS, 2009),106.

to continue regular operations while taking on a large burden like Afghanistan, smaller militaries do not.

Taking Canada as an example, its contribution to ISAF is a battle group formed around one infantry battalion (along with multiple attachments of support elements) totaling approximately 1,200 troops.⁴⁸ There are nine of these battalions across Canada.⁴⁹ Each deployment to Afghanistan requires personnel to be pulled from sister battalions, as well as reserve force (including the attached units external to the infantry battalion) members which can make up more than 20% of a rotations man-power. Canada's rotation length means troops are actually 'in country' for 6-9 months (dependent on conditions for handovers to the next rotation and personnel shortages). Work up training consumes another 12-18 months for any battalion preparing for ISAF deployment. Post-deployment can stretch anywhere from weeks to months for returning personnel. That puts troops out of their regular training and career cycle for approximately 2 years with every rotation. Canada's small military size means at least one battalion from each regiment is on work up training or actively serving in Afghanistan at any one time. Add to this hundreds of deployed naval and air element personnel in support roles and suddenly a large portion of the entire Canadian Forces is fully dedicated to the Afghanistan mission. It is not surprising that it has been stated repeatedly Canada cannot sustain this tempo of deployed forces. The British Defence White Paper similarly notes the overstretch that has struck its

⁴⁸ Department of National Defence, Land Forces Western Area, "New Commander for Canadian Battle Group." Accessed July 30, 2012. http://www.army.gc.ca/lfwa/tf309/feature_bg_toca-eng.asp

⁴⁹ Department of National Defence, "Alphabetical list of all units." Accessed July 30, 2012. <http://www.army.forces.gc.ca/land-terre/units-unites/index-eng.asp?offset=%3C&pos=10>

armed forces with dual deployments in Iraq and ISAF and the need for a pause in order to regain lost capabilities.⁵⁰

Table one compares the deployments of NATO countries from April of 2007 thru 2010, with April being the closest month to the beginning of the typical summer fighting season Afghanistan for which there is data for all four years. It highlights that the U.S. was relatively disengaged from ISAF earlier on. A variety of factors could be responsible for this including the separate Operation Enduring Freedom mission and a greater national focus on the Iraq war. U.S. deployments rose as forces in Iraq were drawn-down, but during the same period U.S. commanders also seemed to recognize that the mission was reaching some critical junctures in 2009 and 2010.

Certain countries with larger militaries have stayed away from the ISAF mission. Notably Greece, Hungary and Portugal have all kept their average contributions at a level where they on average have only 1-2 company sized numbers of troops deployed, which is very small relative to their overall military sizes.

⁵⁰ Government of the United Kingdom, *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review*.

TABLE 1
ISAF Deployments by Country

Country	2007	2008	2009	2010	4 Year average
Albania	30	140	140	250	140
Belgium	300	360	450	590	425
Bulgaria	100	400	820	525	461
Canada	2500	2500	2830	2830	2665
Croatia	130	210	280	280	225
Czech Republic	150	290	580	460	370
Denmark	400	690	700	750	635
Estonia	90	120	140	155	126
France	1000	1430	2780	3750	2240
Germany	3000	3490	3465	4665	3655
Greece	170	130	140	70	127
Hungary	180	250	370	335	284
Iceland	0	10	8	4	6
Italy	1950	2360	2350	3300	2490
Latvia	35	100	160	115	103
Lithuania	130	260	200	145	184
Luxemburg	10	9	9	9	9
Netherlands	2200	1730	1770	1885	1896
Norway	500	540	490	470	500
Poland	300	1020	1590	2515	1356
Portugal	150	170	30	105	114
Romania	750	530	860	1010	788
Slovakia	60	60	230	230	145
Slovenia	50	70	70	75	66
Spain	550	770	780	1270	842
Turkey	800	750	660	1795	1001
United Kingdom	5200	7750	8300	9500	7688
United States	15000	19000	26215	62415	30658

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⁵¹ ISAF Placemat Archives, 'April 2007.' NATO, Accessed September 20, 2011 http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/placemat_archive/isaf_placemat_070314.pdf
ISAF Placemat Archives, 'April 2008.' NATO, Accessed September 20, 2011. http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/placemat_archive/isaf_placemat_080206.pdf
ISAF Placemat Archives, 'April 2009.' NATO, Accessed September 20, 2011. http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/placemat_archive/isaf_placemat_090313.pdf

These numbers also raise questions to NATO's newest members and the security consumer versus producer debate. "Old" NATO, minus the United States, contributed on average 24,293 troops to ISAF annually, with the 12 recent enlargement countries providing 4,248 troops. If one removes the largest of NATO's countries and its North American members (removing the U.S., Canada, the U.K., Germany and France) on the basis as either non-europeans or that they are so much larger than other member countries that they would skew averages, and calculate a per country average, the 12 "Old" NATO countries are still contributing almost twice as many troops as the recently added countries (an average of 731 troops per country versus 354).

Capabilities Gap

When one discusses a capabilities gap in NATO, it would be easier to simply call it the difference in capabilities between the U.S. and the rest of the alliance. The gap has been growing for many years, and was starkly demonstrated in the Kosovo air campaign in 1999 when more than 70 percent of the firepower in that operation was delivered by the American aircraft, along with 90 percent of precision strikes. As Col. David Read points out: "America has become fascinated with the prospect of projecting military force through the exploitation of the technological capabilities offered from advanced civilian technology, even while most other Western countries have been preoccupied with the more mundane tasks of force reductions, the creation of professional forces, and restructuring."⁵²

ISAF Placemat Archives, 'April 2010.' NATO, Accessed September 20, 2011.
<http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/Placemats/Apr-16-2010-placemat.pdf>

⁵² Col. David W. Read. "The Revolution in military affairs: NATO's needs for a niche capability strategy." Canadian Military Journal, *Autumn 2000*, (2000), 15.

But these capability gaps range much further than just the ability to use smart munitions from advanced aircraft. The Afghanistan mission has raised serious questions in NATO's strategic airlift capabilities, its intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, special forces, and several other areas of war fighting capabilities. It is also undeniable that American fast air assets have become a standard for alliance forces in Afghanistan. As one American military commander stated: "As a rule, each battalion-sized task force should have constant unmanned aerial vehicle and close air support."⁵³ NATO simply does not have the resources to sustain air operations such as those that ISAF demands without U.S. leadership and assets. Most European NATO members do have aircraft that are capable of supporting ISAF ground forces, but only a few (notably the UK, Germany, France and Italy) have strike aircraft in numbers great enough to sustain their deployment. Unfortunately there are no numbers available that break down by country the number of strike sorties flown by NATO countries in support of ISAF. However, all indications suggest the ISAF's combat air support, and especially the delivery of precision-guided munitions, continues to be dominated by U.S. forces, much as NATO's air war was in the Balkans conflict a decade earlier.⁵⁴

ISAF has forced NATO to improve its war fighting capabilities across the modern spectrum. With every NATO member state being involved in the Afghanistan mission in some fashion (and the associated costs with those operations and rebuilding efforts), they have had to put much of their defence budgets into operational costs. In 2000 the alliance

⁵³ Christopher D. Kolenda, "How to Win in Afghanistan," *Weekly Standard*, Oct, 13, 2008. Accessed September 8, 2011. <http://staging.weeklystandard.com/author/christopher-d.-kolenda>

⁵⁴ This comes from responses with several interviews by the author with multiple Canadian Forces members who had been deployed with both in the Balkans and with ISAF. For more information on the capabilities gap between the U.S. and European forces in the Kosovo campaign, see "The NATO Capabilities Gap and the European Union," by David S. Yost, available at: <http://www.library.eiu.edu/ersvdocs/4296.pdf>

spent \$474 billion dollars U.S. on defence expenditures. By 2005 that had increase to \$766 billion. However in 2000 the United States accounted for 63% of that spending and by 2005 more than 65%. Besides the United States only nine alliance countries have had even a single year in that period where more than 20% of defence expenditures were dedicated to equipment between 2005 and 2009.⁵⁵ The International Institute of Strategic Studies' *Military Balance 2009* publication notes a trend of continually dropping military spending within NATO. Excluding US defence expenditures as a percentage of GDP, NATO's spending has dropped from 2.06 in 1998, to 1.88 in 2003, to 1.73 per cent in 2007.⁵⁶

Strategic airlift has been another huge capability issue the alliance has grappled with. NATO has worked hard to maintain supply lines through neighbouring Pakistan to the east and former Soviet republics in the north. Notwithstanding this, a huge amount of alliance materials (be that troops, supplies, or ground vehicles) are being delivered via aircraft, and most of that has been delivered by U.S. aircraft. It makes sense that the U.S. would have the largest airlift capacity, since it has both a robust foreign policy that has seen multiple interventions across the globe, and in the NATO context, because the concern has historically been the U.S. deploying to defend Europe, not vice versa.

NATO has seen some large changes in its strategic airlift capacity in the last decade and Afghanistan has been the impetus for many NATO countries to finally begin investing in their strategic airlift capabilities. Great Britain and Canada have purchased several C-17 Globemaster aircraft over the past 5 years, which has reduced their reliance on U.S. support. Several other NATO countries have orders for the Airbus A400M,

⁵⁵ "Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence." NATO, June 10, 2010. Accessed September 8, 2011. http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2010_06/20100610_PR_CP_2010_078.pdf

⁵⁶ International Institute of Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2009*. (London: IISS, 2009), 106.

which would seemingly meet most of NATO's strategic airlift capacity need for a generation. However, the 170-plus A400M's that are ordered are going to seven NATO countries, with the vast majority of those going to four countries, meaning that the bulk of the alliance has not invested in new or expanded airlift capabilities. This could be due to a multitude of factors, but the one that is most visible is cost. The original contract price in 2003 was 19.19 billion Euros, and since then the price has risen due to program cost overruns.⁵⁷ The program has already seen reductions in orders due to rising production costs, and that could continue to affect the staged delivery of the aircraft which could take over a decade.

Tactical airlift has also been an issue in Afghanistan. The threat of IEDs has forced NATO to shift more of its transportation needs into the air and few members have the airlift capabilities necessary to fulfill these needs. This has placed a strain on the air assets of the alliance, since many countries do not have medium and heavy tactical lift capabilities. Acquiring a medium lift helicopter capacity was one of the key recommendations of the Manley Report for Canada in 2008 in order to justify continued involvement in ISAF.⁵⁸ There are however, bright lights in some of these capability gaps. One of the most valuable capability contributions has been the HIP helicopter task force led by the Czech Republic. The task force was created in 2009 to help mitigate shortfalls in transport helicopter operations for NATO forces using Soviet era helicopters. With

⁵⁷ "A400M Cost Overrun Set at 10%." Defense News, Mar. 8, 2010. Accessed July 31, 2012. www.defensenews.com/article/20100308/DEFSECT01/3080303/A400M-Cost-Overrun-Set-10-

⁵⁸ Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan, Government of Canada. Accessed December 8, 2011. http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/collection_2008/dfait-maeci/FR5-20-1-2008E.pdf

assistance from NATO partners, countries like the Czech Republic and Hungary have been successful in deploying helicopters to Afghanistan.⁵⁹

Likewise with the aforementioned UAV support, which is part of the larger intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR), and air support picture in Afghanistan, most European members needed to rely on U.S. capabilities at the initial stages of the Afghanistan conflict. These air attack capabilities have become somewhat lessened after several civilian deaths due to NATO airstrikes, which prompted Gen. Stanley McChrystal to issue a strategic directive in 2009 which severely restrained the use of air strikes.

Even in 2002 NATO had an agreement with regards to the interoperability of alliance UAVs.⁶⁰ However the United States has been the key NATO member in pursuit of armed-UAVs in supporting ISAFs operations and attacking insurgents based in neighbouring Pakistan.⁶¹ Most ISAF forces utilize UAV strikes, but they are not from their own country, but U.S. vehicles.

Canada is a good example of the capabilities gap problem facing most of the alliance. It has faced multiple issues which *it*, not the alliance, has needed to rectify. When Canadian commanders on the ground recognized a need for heavier armored vehicles, Canadian tanks were brought in. These vehicles were totally inadequate to operate in the Afghanistan heat, with temperatures routinely reaching sixty degree's Celsius in the interior of the tanks.⁶² An emergency lease from Germany for surplus tanks

⁵⁹ Center for the study of the Presidency and Congress. "Mobilizing NATO for Afghanistan and Pakistan," 2010. Accessed September 22, 2011. http://www.thepresidency.org/storage/documents/Mobilizing_NATO_for_Afghanistan_and_Pakistan-An_Assessment_of_Alliance_Capabilities.pdf

⁶⁰ "NATO allies to ratify major agreement on interoperability of unmanned air vehicles (UAVs)." NATO, Sep. 16, 2002. Accessed September 10, 2011. <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2002/p02-106e.htm>

⁶¹ The UK has also been active in the use of its armed Reaper UAV fleet.

⁶² Meagen Fitzpatrick, "Troops to get 100 new tanks with air condition to fight Taliban; leasing 20 more." *National Post*, Apr. 13, 2007.

was required in order to keep the deployment viable. Likewise, an emergency lease of Chinook helicopters from the United States provided short-term access for Canadian troops to medium lift helicopters.

Yet the Afghanistan mission seems to have served as a catalyst for re-equipping NATO ground forces such as has not been seen in decades. Belgium has invested heavily since 2006 in new armoured personnel carriers; Denmark is purchasing forty five armoured infantry fighting vehicles; Germany has a bevy of new armoured vehicles in various stages of delivery; and the Netherlands has multiple orders of ground vehicles in order. In fact the International Institute for Strategic Studies 2009 edition of *The Military Balance* notes 18 of 23 NATO countries in Europe with significant investments in armoured vehicles. Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, and the United Kingdom have all entered contracts for the delivery of new armored personnel carriers since the start of the Afghanistan mission. Even more countries are re-investing in armored infantry fighting vehicles and Mine-Resistance Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles.

End Results

This brings us back to answering our original three questions and drawing some conclusions from them. ISAF has demonstrated many capability issues that NATO needs to address. Its ability to generate forces outside of the missions original mandate has been demonstrated as lacking and is one of the most striking problems facing the alliance. Despite the ability to achieve consensus on taking on further responsibilities for ISAF, the alliance has failed to take a uniform approach to generate the necessary forces to fill

those responsibilities. NATO has no pre-established force generation mechanisms for crisis response outside of the NATO rapid response force. The rapid change of technology has put an even bigger onus on the few countries, which have the entire spectrum of modern assets and can be deployed quickly. In the long term this may mean available capabilities and troop numbers define future missions, instead of the other way around. But ISAF has also demonstrated that even with a somewhat divided focus on a mission, the alliance can generate the necessary forces for a long-term mission outside its traditional area. The expansion of the alliance and success of the inclusion of PFP countries in ISAF has opened new avenues for force generation in the future.

Doctrinally, ACT and its centers of excellence point a path forward in the alliance internally improving upon very specific issues which it has identified as needing further development. Especially with an expanded NATO and many members who have not had the opportunity to work within the alliance framework and ingrain NATO doctrines for years, ACT and its centers of excellence have plenty of opportunity to improve and unite the alliance and transfer best practices across NATO.

On the technological and material front of capabilities ISAF has demonstrated that NATO can effectively operate out of NATO's traditional area of operations. The examination of the national White Papers demonstrated the importance most countries put on their involvement as a NATO member and that all are readying themselves for more out-of-area operations in the future. As Canadian Forces Col. Read noted: "A main American concern is that its pursuit of the RMA will create a situation in which the US is increasingly unable to operate with its allies because of their 'technological

backwardness.’’⁶³ Regardless of whether or not America has reached an RMA, a technological gap certainly has been realized that was quite visible during the early stages of ISAF. These capabilities, or lack thereof, may have opened some eyes across NATO capitals as to the severe degradation of militaries. With new purchases being made during ISAF, and an increase in co-operation amongst allies, ISAF has created a new generational investment in equipment for most NATO members. This includes large spending items such as new strategic lift capability. The creation of SAC has created a path forward for smaller members of the alliance to contribute in a meaningful manner to some of the more expensive capabilities in conducting future out-of-area operations. These developments point to the probability of more long-term partnerships between NATO members for some of their most expensive capabilities.

Some NATO members are still at a disagreement on what capabilities they feel they need to pursue, which has large implications, especially on NATO’s more fiscally restricted members and many countries are actively trying to avoid duplication of abilities already in existence within the alliance. Lithuania and Denmark are looking in opposite directions with regard to anti-armour and anti-aircraft capability, neither of which has come into play during the ISAF mission. This tells us that though ISAF has been the centerpiece of the alliance for more than half a decade, there are still other priorities for NATO members, and some countries still have an eye towards the Cold War period.

The increasing focus on niche capabilities is an issue which could propel or haunt NATO into the future. When the NATO rapid response brigade was deemed operational (during the Riga summit) there seemed to be an acceptance of NATO countries

⁶³ Col. David W. Read. “The Revolution in military affairs: NATO’s needs for a niche capability strategy.” *Canadian Military Journal*, *Autumn 2000*, (2000), 17. Accessed September 10, 2011. <http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vol1/no3/doc/15-24-eng.pdf>

contributing ‘niche’ capabilities to the alliance, and throughout the lifetime of ISAF a shift towards niche capabilities seems to be continuing. As U.S. ambassador Nicholas Burns said: “Not every ally can do everything, but every ally, whether big or small, can contribute something.”⁶⁴ In a cost-conscious NATO, niche capabilities may be the best way to maximize pressure defence dollars for the alliance. At the same time though, ISAF has proven that even mid-mission, not all members buy-in at the same level. If certain capabilities are only in the hands of a few members, the success of future missions may hang on the full engagement of those (even potentially all) partners.

This relates to the concerns of NATO members seeking to be able to reconstitute or expand capabilities in case of an emergency in the future; something that is quite prominent in Britain’s Defence White Paper. ISAF has clearly demonstrated the difficulties in quickly expanding the available pool of resources to NATO, be it material or personnel and military planners need to take ISAF’s difficulties into considerations for the future.

NATO is pursuing a more flexible, lighter military that will be more easily deployed in the future. An active ground combat mission has been the catalyst for a myriad of changes for the alliance and maybe more importantly, its member countries in the face of failing political will and dropping public support. It has been easier in the past for most middle and small power countries to focus on foreign aid and low-intensity conflicts via the United Nations instead of continuing to properly equip their militaries for full-on warfighting. The conflicts in the former Yugoslavia could not provide the necessary catalyst for most NATO countries. ISAF has forced them to reevaluate their

⁶⁴ R. Nicholas Burns, “Europe and Beyond: A Broader Mission for NATO,” *International Herald Tribune*, Dec. 8, 2003. Accessed September 21, 2011. <http://www.acronym.org.uk/docs/0312/doc15.htm>

capabilities and take a hard look at the future of the alliance. As former Secretary of Defence Robert Gates noted:

“the last few years have seen a dramatic evolution in NATO’s thinking and in its posture. With all the new capabilities we have forged in the heat of battle-and with new attitudes-we are seeing what it means to be expeditionary. What is required is to spread stability beyond our borders. We must now commit ourselves to institutionalize what we have learned and complete our transformation.”⁶⁵

In looking at how ISAFs most strenuous capabilities have been fulfilled, the broad answer is that once again, the United States has provided the bulk of advanced assets for its NATO allies. Some smaller countries have supplied entire battle groups or provincial reconstruction teams, but the United States makes up the bulk of NATO forces in ISAF and advanced war fighting capabilities, with many smaller members ending up as additions and supplements to American forces. However, despite having a divergent attitude to the U.S. on what should be the focus of ISAF and an aversion to combat, several western European NATO members have succeeded in handling the bulk of northern and western Afghanistan’s rebuilding efforts. If NATO can only succeed in war fighting with the U.S. in the lead, at the very least ISAF has demonstrated that it can succeed at stabilization and reconstruction efforts with multiple members taking a leading role.

This question also points to several other bright spots for NATO. ISAF has put to the test the interoperability of its newest members and should have put to rest questions of whether or not they are security producers or consumers. NATO’s internal partnerships to allow many of its new members fill the gaps in NATO’s capabilities with

⁶⁵ Robert Gates. “Speech to the 44th Munich Conference on Security Policy,” February 10, 2008. Accessed September 21, 2011. <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1214>

older assets can only be characterized as a success. The successful partnering between these new members with the more technologically advanced U.S. forces in southern and eastern Afghanistan makes the NATO enlargement experiment a success.

However, an increasing reliance on commercial and ‘off-the-shelf’ purchases of equipment and services could be setting a perilous precedent for the future. Commercial providers can not be guaranteed to provide capabilities far into the future and off-the-shelf purchases of equipment are still slow at best, expensive and dangerous at worst, for NATO forces. They often require expensive conversions and have short-falls from their deliberately ordered counterparts. Hopefully the title of SALIS holds true and commercial leasing it is not a long-term option under consideration by NATO.

ISAF has demonstrated that multinational and bilateral agreements will continue to be important within NATO. Not only have tighter bonds been formed between the countries doing the heavy lifting in southern and eastern Afghanistan, but the smaller and newer members of the alliance are increasing their connectivity. The Lithuanian notation of the importance of the Vilnius group, the participating countries in SAC, and the work done on the HIP helicopter task force all point to increasingly complex ties within the alliance. The answers that NATO members are coming up with to meet the challenges of Afghanistan have only increased the necessity for all of NATO to participate together fully in future out-of-area operations. Unfortunately all indications point to an alliance which will accept multiple tiers of involvement in the future.

Chapter Two

Caveats

One of the most contentious issues of the Afghanistan mission has been the caveats placed on the use of troops by certain countries. There are a plethora of restrictions that have been placed on troops by their respective national governments that include where their troops can operate, what kind of operations they can undertake and their justifiable use of force in defined situations. For the sake of operational security these caveats have never officially been made public, as knowing where or when certain NATO forces cannot engage in certain operations would be a huge advantage to insurgents. The best public information available on caveats is found by reviewing statements by former ISAF commanders and national contingent commanders. These caveats have varied over ISAF's lifetime due to changes in member state governments, available military capabilities, troop levels, and domestic support for the mission. Pressure from NATO and ISAF's major contributors has been placed on other members to become more fully involved and remove their caveats. Regardless of this pressure there were approximately 50 caveats in Afghanistan that impacted the operational ability of ISAF troops in 2006.⁶⁶ Since the Prague Summit in 2008 the relative number of caveats has declined. The issue of caveats has created a new dichotomy within NATO, and possibly shifted it towards a two-tier alliance where some allies are able to make the choice to sit on the sidelines.

⁶⁶ Gen. James Jones. "NATO's Role in Afghanistan." Council on Foreign Relations transcript, October 4, 2006. Accessed Oct. 13, 2011. <http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/natos-role-afghanistan-rush-transcript-federal-news-service/p11605>

A review of this issue should not be viewed as an endorsement for all of NATO to operate it the exact same style as U.S. forces, or even that NATO cannot go forward with future missions with caveats present. What is clear from ISAF though, is that internally it was never made clear that many countries had no willingness to engage in a combat role in Afghanistan, even though NATO agreed to take on ISAF. Regardless, the alliance became stuck in a mission with only a portion of its members fully committed, causing considerable internal turmoil.

In the summer of 2004 one of NATO's senior officials stated that "given the relatively small number of current operations, it is still possible to continue muddling through on a basis of ad hoc contributions and improvised solutions, much as the Alliance has been doing since launching its first peace-support mission...in Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 1995."⁶⁷ The model that worked in the Balkans more than eight years earlier was initially transferred to the Afghanistan mission. However the requirements of the Afghanistan mission and the issues surrounding it could not be more different from that of the 1995 mission. One could make a claim that the original 5,000 person contingent that had a mandate to provide security in Kabul was a far more simple than the subsequent mission facing ISAF, and therefore an ad hoc contribution process would work, with a simple rotation of national commanders coming in to lead the mission. However NATO's military commanders began to realize new challenges in Afghanistan, be it in war fighting or rebuilding and humanitarian efforts, and their new requests for assistance continued to be treated in the same ad hoc manner NATO had

⁶⁷ Adam Kobieracki, "NATO's evolving operations," in *NATO Review*, no. 2 (2004). Accessed Oct. 13, 2011. http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2004/issue2/english/art3_pr.html

grown accustomed to. This hodge-podge of contributions lent itself to caveats on troop contributions, especially inside ISAF's regional command structure, with countries placing restrictions on what their troops will do (or more importantly, will not do) while operating in Afghanistan. Through several rounds of ISAF expansion, NATO leaders have had to go through several rounds of matching force generation negotiations. The results have been less than ideal, forcing NATO commanders to accept limitations on forces offered to them.

These caveats can be defined as declared and undeclared. As NATO's Parliamentary Assembly resolution 336 explained:

“Recalling that national caveats may be both declared and known to commanders, or undeclared and therefore unknown to commanders until they actually assign a mission to a particular unit and discover that a caveat prevents that unit from performing that mission.”⁶⁸

A U.S. Congressional Report noted in 2010 that total caveats for ISAF forces actually increased from 57 to 58 in the previous year and this increase was attributed to two more countries joining the mission. The report also noted that those caveats are for 27 troop contributing partners in ISAF and that 20 of them (caveats) are restrictions on troop movement.⁶⁹ This is a positive trend. In 2006 U.S. General Jones, Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), reported 102 national caveats on far fewer participating countries, about 50 of which he deemed as ‘operationally significant.’⁷⁰ Several caveats have come out publicly over that time period, while others have only quietly been intimated. Nonetheless, especially early on in the mission caveats were becoming a

⁶⁸ “Resolution 336 on Reducing National Caveats.” NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Accessed November 8, 2011. www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=828

⁶⁹ “Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan.” U.S. Department of Defense (November 2010), 15. Accessed January 11, 2012. www.defense.gov/pubs/November_1230_Report_Final.pdf p.15

⁷⁰ U.S. Department of State, “Update on NATO operations in Afghanistan,” Foreign Press Centre Roundtable, Oct. 24, 2006. Accessed Oct 15, 2011. <http://2002-2009-fpc.state.gov/75030.htm>

dominating issue within the alliance. In 2006 the BBC reported that Spanish troops would rarely leave the security of their compounds and that German helicopters were only authorized to carry German troops.⁷¹ Other countries refused to authorize any helicopter missions which may expose pilots to combat. Another caveat disallowed one country's troops from combat operations at night.⁷² Germany was also very public in its refusal to shift forces from the relatively quiet north of Afghanistan into the more contested southern region. Germany also refused the use of their reconnaissance aircraft, most of which have modern strike capability and could be used in other functions, to collect data for any offensive operations associated with Operation Enduring Freedom, creating a very complicated split within ISAF as well. This meant countries participating in both ISAF and OEF did not have access to that information, making that data valuable to only a small group of NATO members. While it has been accepted that the United States is the main provider of combat fixed wing aircraft, it both highlights the unwillingness of several countries to buy-in fully to ISAF and its security mandate, and it also creates a necessity for the duplication of resources among allies. But the most numerous of caveats are of a geographical context. As part of the force generation process, many countries have defined the area of operations for their troops and refuse to be re-deployed into more dangerous areas. As former Canadian Chief of Defence Staff Rick Hillier stated in 2007: "There's only one caveat of consequence and that's whether allies will come south."⁷³

⁷¹ Ahmed Rashid, 'NATO's Afghanistan Troop Dilemma.' *BBC News*, 26 December 2005. Accessed December 13, 2011. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4526150.stm

⁷² Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan, Government of Canada. Accessed December 8, 2011. http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/collection_2008/dfait-maeci/FR5-20-1-2008E.pdf

⁷³ "Defence minister "pleased" with NATO presence in Afghanistan," Canwest News Service, February 17, 2007. Accessed December 8, 2011. www.canada.com/topics/news/national/story.html?id=358305d-e112-4d25-81fd-f296b02fd883

ISAF has a very isolated regional structure which has seen the bulk of casualties taken by a select few nations. For example RC East has five NATO members and three non-NATO countries operating in its fourteen provinces of responsibility. Besides the U.S., France is the only country that has a “major unit” dedicated to the area, but almost every other contributing nation in RC East has taken responsibility for taking the lead on a provincial reconstruction team (PRT), while the United States is the lead in eight provinces and is providing support in one other.⁷⁴ In the quieter RC West, a four province area, Italy is the lead nation. Besides staffing the regional command, it provides five of the eight major combat units, with one more coming from Spain and two from the U.S. PRTs are split between the U.S., Italy, Spain and Lithuania. In 2011 RC West had seventeen casualties, but nine of those came from non-combat incidents.

In the quiet but highly public RC North, a nine province area, twelve NATO nations and six non-NATO nations are contributing to the mission. Its combat units are a mix of U.S. and German (RC North is coincidentally the only RC which portrays its provincial reconstruction teams as “major units”) while each PRT is a joint effort of three or four different countries. Germany has taken 52 casualties (as of the summer of 2011) which should not be discounted. RC Capital operates solely in the Kabul area and is a joint effort of seven NATO nations and two non-NATO nations. RC South West is composed of two very active and dangerous provinces - Helmand and Nimroz. While RC South West officially has four NATO and five non-NATO contributors, all of its major combat forces are led by the United States and United Kingdom. RC South is the most

⁷⁴ As defined by ISAF RC East website www.isaf.nato.int/subordinate-commands/rc-east/index.php#Contributing%20Nations

active of all the NATO regions of Afghanistan, with 199 announced ISAF casualties in southern Afghanistan in 2011.⁷⁵

The deployment and casualty history of each regional command indicates two key points, which give credence to the importance of geographical caveats on ISAF. First, the casualties (and major security operations undertaken) in RC East and RC South are proof positive that they are far more active and dangerous areas of operation which continue to require an emphasis on security and warfighting capabilities as opposed to enhanced reconstruction efforts. Second, many NATO members have operated in the same area for their entire deployment, which is circumstantial evidence of refusals to deploy to more dangerous areas of the country after repeated pleas from more engaged members.

Even for countries which now operate without caveats, ISAF has not always been a flexible and smooth instrument. In 2004, the mission in Kabul was commanded by Canadian Brigadier General Lacroix, yet the Canadian colonel who had direct command over the Canadian contingent had the ability to veto Canadian involvement thanks to national guidance, which demanded National Defence Headquarters to sign-off on any operations with a perceived higher degree of risk. Deliberations at NDHQ could reportedly take more than a day.⁷⁶ An evolution over several years (and the introduction of new leadership) changed Canada into a far more flexible instrument for ISAF, which hastened response times and gave more authority to commanders on the ground.

⁷⁵ ISAF does not clarify if “Southern Afghanistan” includes RC South West. This figure includes all ISAF casualties described as having occurred in “Southern Afghanistan.” All figures taken from: www.isaf.nato.int/article/casualty-report/index.php

⁷⁶ David Auerswald and Stephen Saideman. “NATO at War: Understanding the Challenges of Caveats in Afghanistan.” Presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting September 2nd, 2009. Accessed April 14, 2010. www.aco.nato.int/resources/1/documents/NATO%20at%20War.pdf

Likewise, it was not until 2008 when Italy announced it was removing its geographic caveats on troop usage, which had required a 72-hour window for political leaders back home to give the go ahead for redeployment outside of Italy's regular area of operations. A U.S. diplomatic cable from 2008, released by Wikileaks, reported that Portuguese Quick Reaction Force (QRF) needed the approval of the Portuguese Chief of Defence before they could be deployed outside their standard area of operations. The cable referenced the removal of this caveat as of "marginal" importance due to the time frame the Portuguese QRF would be operating within ISAF.⁷⁷ Given the similar timing of these occurrences, it is reasonable to presume that quiet pressure was applied from the U.S. on Italian leaders to remove their caveats. Another cable from 2007 noted six key countries that the U.S. sought to remove caveats in the lead up to the Bucharest summit, and identified Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey as having caveats which needed to be removed.⁷⁸

NATO has made several major pushes to have its members reduce caveats on forces participating in ISAF. A 2005 resolution by the Defence and Security Committee noted the problems NATO forces in Kosovo faced due to restrictions on certain national contingents and urged member governments to eliminate caveats before the same issues became crippling for ISAF.⁷⁹ Multiple NATO parliamentary resolutions followed the 2005 resolution, and entire summits, such as Riga in 2006 and Bucharest in 2008 focused on the issue. The Riga summit was initially hailed as a great success because all allies

⁷⁷ Embassy Lisbon. 'Portugal's ISAF Caveats.' Wikileaks, Accessed January 12, 2012. <http://dazzlepod.com/cable/08LISBON35/>

⁷⁸ "NATO-Afghanistan: Pressing Allies on ISAF Force Generation." Nov. 19, 2007. Wikileaks, Accessed January 18, 2012. <http://leaks.hohesc.us/?view=07USNATO610>

⁷⁹ "Resolution 336 on REDUCING NATIONAL CAVEATS." NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Accessed February 12, 2012. www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=828

agreed “to remove national caveats on how, when and where forces can be used to further strengthen the effectiveness of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force. NATO leaders also reconfirmed that, regardless of the remaining caveats, in an emergency situation every Ally will come to the aid of the forces that require assistance.”⁸⁰ Besides those official summits there have been numerous smaller meetings between NATO officials and national defence ministers. The United States and United Kingdom’s leaders have been especially aggressive in pushing for a reduction in caveats, as have current and former NATO officials.

Debunking unnecessary caveats

Some academics have raised the term ‘unnecessary caveat’ to describe members of ISAF who have placed caveats on troop usage due to capability shortfalls. For example, a country may make a particular function a caveat simply because they do not possess the capability to perform the role, which becomes controversial when there is no effort made to develop the capability in question.”⁸¹ Nonetheless, caveats in the Afghanistan mission context have largely been characterized as a ‘choice’ by political decision makers on how their country will or will not participate in ISAF. If there are capability shortfalls then these ‘unacceptable’ caveats may in fact be the only “acceptable” caveats that should be imposed from a military standpoint. Capability shortfalls, no matter what their root cause, are first recognized by military officials, not political representatives, who make recommendations to their political leaders. There are no NATO members today who do not have the professional military leadership available

⁸⁰ “NATO after Riga.” NATO public policy division. Accessed February 12, 2012.
http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120118_nato_after_riga_en.pdf

⁸¹ Jennifer Medcalf, *Going Global or going nowhere?*, (Peter Lang AG, Bern: 2008), 181.

to recognize the requirements of ISAF and understand their own (and their counterpart's) shortfalls. In the planning stages of ISAF expansions, or as Medcalf notes, when operational requirements emerge while already engaged in a mission, military and political leaders are engaged in a system of negotiation in where and how different countries' troops will operate. If a country makes no further attempts to rectify the shortfall, it is a reflection of the continuing battle that has happened within NATO since the end of the Cold War, and is more a question of burden-sharing, because some countries refuse to reinvest in their own capabilities. If the political will is available, military organizations can overcome capability shortfalls in a very short amount of time (e.g. Canadian rental of ground equipment and helicopters or NATO's extra efforts to utilize former Warsaw Pact helicopters for ISAF). One of the earliest caveats on German troops was a restriction on night action due to a lack of night vision equipment. A similar issue faced Canadian Forces earlier on during ISAF, with virtually every piece of night vision goggles and low-light equipment in the Canadian arsenal being shipped to Afghanistan for operational use.⁸² More equipment was quickly purchased and brought in. It was a question of political will to deal with an issue expediently.

"Unnecessary" caveats may be a continuation of problems that faced the alliance prior to the mission, but is still an issue that should be recognized and respected. Those countries and their political leaders who have agreed to send troops without what is deemed as necessary capabilities may be forced to add new caveats to their usage mid-mission or worse yet, be putting ill-equipped troops into harm's way. With such a strong aversion to casualties, the losses and mistakes of one member can have a negative effect on the entire alliance. Yet the thirst for more troops from ISAF commanders, and

⁸² Confidential author interview, July 2011.

NATO's most willing members also being some of its least capable, may translate into troops taking on roles they should not.

Afghanistan is also a case of NATO operating without external caveats from other organizations, a development which separates it from its earlier military operations such as the Balkans. Despite ISAF coming under NATO direction at the behest of the UN through Security Council resolution, the UN has not interfered with NATO's decisions and actions. In 1993 and 1994 the UN held a veto by virtue of a "dual-key" system with NATO with regard to air strikes, effectively hand-cuffing NATO to the wider political world.⁸³ UN and NATO commanders both had to agree before air operations, the main tool of force projection, could commence. The Afghanistan mission in contrast has been a strictly NATO run affair that has received its fair share of criticism on the application of force, but has not seen any interference from the UN

There were several points where it seemed likely that the UN might step in, or at least publicly condemn NATO's military actions. Numerous times civilians have been caught in the cross-fire between NATO and Taliban forces, and several civilian activities have been hit by NATO aircraft causing casualties. ISAF and other pro-government forces accounted for 39% of all civilian casualties in Afghanistan in 2008 to a total of 828 persons. Airstrikes accounted for 552 (64%) of those casualties, while overly aggressive night raids, force protection and other inherently dangerous operations were cited as major causes of casualties.⁸⁴ However NATO has shown itself responsive to these issues, which is also cited in the same UN reports. In 2008 a civilian casualty tracking cell was

⁸³ Ryan Hendrickson, *Diplomacy and war at NATO*, (University of Missouri Press, 2006), 78.

⁸⁴ United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan. "Annual report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, 2008." Accessed March 21, 2010.
http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/UNAMA_09february-Annual%20Report_PoC%202008_FINAL_11Feb09.pdf

created which investigated all claims of ISAF created civilian casualties. In July of 2009 Gen. Stanley McChrystal, head of the ISAF mission at the time, issued a tactical directive which severely limited the use of air strikes, artillery and other indirect fire weapons. Although this was not the first such tactical directive made by ISAF command that attempted to ensure air strikes were used effectively, it may have been the most restrictive.⁸⁵

One of the possible interpretations of this development is that NATO has developed a degree of international legitimacy that many of its leaders were concerned about in the Balkans in the 1990's. The UN has not interfered, even in the wake of several unfortunate incidents which resulted in civilian deaths or questionable instances of prisoner abuse. This could pave the way for a clear transition or hand-off from the UN to other regional security institutions such as NATO, the Arab League or the African Union in future situations. NATO now has a track record of delivering both security and reconstruction efforts thanks to the efforts of its PRT teams and efforts to improve the Afghan government. Its actions are beginning to blur the line between it and the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA).

The wider NATO framework, with its partnership for peace program and the special relationships it has fostered with countries such as Australia, Japan and South Korea numbers nearly 50 countries now and has also granted NATO increased international legitimacy. NATO's all-inclusive consensus based approach makes it a better vehicle for U.S. military involvement outside of the UN, as it allows member countries to put limits on their involvement in missions. Coupled with an increasing UN

⁸⁵ NATO. "ISAF Tactical directive." July 2, 2009. Accessed January 17, 2012. http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official_texts/Tactical_Directive_090706.pdf

acceptance for regional institutions to intervene in fragile situations, NATO has a wider acceptability and international backing than ever in its history.

New Blood, fewer caveats

In the short term for NATO, the list of who has not introduced caveats into their participation on ISAF may be more important than who has. While the full list of caveats is not public knowledge, many of NATO's newest members have been the United States' closest allies within the alliance with regard to committing new combat troops to ISAF caveat free. Countries such as Lithuania, Hungary and Norway have effectively agreed to operate with no caveats since the Riga Summit in 2006.

In another context, referring back to previous debates on new NATO members being security consumers as opposed to security producers, most of the eastern European partners have been far more willing to contribute to the Afghanistan mission, proving their worth as security producers. Poland for example, has taken a lead role in the warfighting and COIN operations in Ghazni province, with no national caveats holding their troops back from joining in operations.⁸⁶ Its government, despite a lack of public support which rivals any other public opinion amongst NATO member states, has been quick to respond to requests for troop increases in ISAF, with a pledge to have more troops ready on short notice should emergencies arise. As the Polish Minister of Defense stated in 2010:

"I have defended the principle that the government can send troops on missions abroad without the need for extended parliamentary debates...When our allies are

⁸⁶ Beata Gorka-Winter and Marek Madej. "NATO Member States and the New Strategic Concept: An Overview." Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw, May 2010. Accessed September 17, 2011. <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots736=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&ots627=fce62fe0-528d-4884-9cdf-283c282cf0b2&id=116768>

in need they don't expect long debates. They want troops. That is what we would expect from our allies if we were in need."⁸⁷

This demonstrates a willingness to be involved that far outstrips most of the other European members of NATO. Coupled with instances such as Poland lending two helicopters to Canadian troops shortly after the Manley report was published, which demanded more helicopter capability, it is also proof of Poland's ability to contribute to more advanced capabilities and is directly in contrast to the German caveat not to allow partners to hitch a ride on its helicopters.⁸⁸

Poland joined NATO in 1999 and supported the United States war in Iraq, which drew it much closer to US foreign policy during the Bush Administration and won praise from then US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. This has continued, with the US Vice-President lavishing praise on the job Polish troops are doing in Afghanistan. This is despite a large portion (more than three-quarters) of the population being against national involvement in Afghanistan.⁸⁹ Possibly more importantly, Poland is one of the few members which publically supports the U.S.-led position to remove caveats. As Poland's Foreign Minister stated:

"I've coined the phrase 'Who gives without caveats gives double', and I think we need a mechanism for fair burden sharing, both within NATO and the EU. If countries can't commit troops then they should contribute money because these operations are very expensive."⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Polish Minister of Defence Radek Sikorski, "Poland ready to increase Afghan troops." *The Telegraph*, Jan. 17, 2010. Accessed November 3, 2011.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/poland/7011289/Poland-ready-to-increase-Afghan-troops.html>

⁸⁸ "Poland Offers helicopters, Political support for Canada's Afghan demands," *The Ottawa Citizen*, February 4, 2008. Accessed September 24, 2011.

<http://www.canada.com/globaltv/national/story.html?id=57807e7d-d810-47cd-a459-22000eb32916>

⁸⁹ Jan Sienski, "Why Poland has soured on Afghanistan," *Global Post*, May 30, 2010. Accessed September 24, 2011. <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/poland/091103/poland-afghanistan>

⁹⁰ Matthew Day, "Poland ready to increase Afghan troops," *The Telegraph*, January 17, 2010. Accessed September 24, 2011. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/poland/7011289/Poland-ready-to-increase-Afghan-troops.html>

This comment leads back to several issues already discussed. It highlights a growing divide between members, especially when a ‘new’ member of NATO is chiding its older partners. Second, it reaffirms the issue of burden sharing within the alliance. Poland does not have the economic and financial resources to deploy tens of thousands of troops to Afghanistan; but many of its allies do and have not put forward reasoning to their refusal to remove caveats or shift their areas of operation. If NATO cannot force its members to forgo caveats and operate effectively, internally at least the alliance should work to shift resources, monetary or otherwise, to its members who are willing to.

Romania is another new NATO member that operates without caveats on its troops. Romania joined the United States in its initial operations in Afghanistan in 2002 and has slowly increased its contributions to ISAF in recent years while operating in the southern areas of the country. Albania, Macedonia and Croatia are working jointly on a medical team in ISAF without any reported caveats.⁹¹ Albania and Croatia officially joined NATO in 2009, while Macedonia continues to lobby for its membership to the alliance. Even smaller, less developed countries such as Montenegro have managed to find the financial ability to donate equipment and money to the training of Afghan security forces.⁹²

Georgia, a non-member contributor to ISAF, but a possible member of NATO in the future, also operates without caveats in Afghanistan, reaching an agreement for a long-term combat deployment within ISAF.⁹³ Georgia has aspired to be a NATO member

⁹¹ U.S. Department of State. “State Foreign Policy Objectives – Europe.” February 2nd, 2011. Accessed March 3, 2012. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/155992.pdf>

⁹² Ibid, 21.

⁹³ U.S. Department of State. “State Foreign Policy Objectives – Europe.” (February 2nd, 2011), 13. Accessed March 3, 2012. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/155992.pdf>

for quite some time, with intensified dialogue with NATO beginning in 2006. The Russian-Georgian conflict over south Ossetia in 2008 complicated the issue, but at the Bucharest Summit it was confirmed that Georgia (and the Ukraine) would be future members of NATO and supported their membership application plans. Since that time Georgia has deployed an infantry battalion to the hotly contested Helmand province in southern Afghanistan. More recently Georgia has pledged to send another infantry battalion to Afghanistan as well, which would make it the largest non-member contributor to ISAF, surpassing what has traditionally been Australia. Georgia has not contributed much relative to many other countries with regard to material donations and direct dollar aid to Afghanistan, which can be attributed to a lack of financial resources, much like Poland.

Likewise, ISAF has benefited from NATO's partnership with several countries outside the alliance and these countries have thrown themselves into the thick of the mission, taking casualties and conducting aggressive warfighting operations that many full-fledged NATO members have shirked from. For some countries this could be seen as a prelude to finally becoming members to NATO, such as Finland and Sweden. For others, their end goal outside of a stable Afghanistan at least, is unclear. Australia has been operating without caveats for years now, and has consistently had more troops deployed to Afghanistan than most NATO members. As NATO's Gen. Ray Heanult remarked in 2007:

“With more than 1,000 troops in Southern Afghanistan, operating in a volatile area, without caveats, Australia is doing more heavy lifting than some of our own Allies.”⁹⁴

⁹⁴ NATO International military staff. “Chairman of the NATO Military Committee visits Australia,” September 12, 2007. Accessed October 26, 2011. www.nato.int/ims/news/2007/n070912e.html

Support from outside countries, such as Japan, have been seen as a welcome bonus by many within NATO. Japan, with a history and constitution which severely limits its actions of foreign soil, announced \$5 billion in aid for Afghanistan in 2009. Correspondence between a reporter and U.S. (retired) General Barry McCafferey reflected on Japan in ISAF:

“The Japanese commitment of \$5 billion in aid to Afghanistan coming just prior to President Obama’s visit to Tokyo is a welcome signal of financial support for Washington...The Japanese constitution and their political legacy from WWII make them literally worthless as a deployed ground combat military force. In Iraq they were incapable of even defending themselves with their modest troop commitment. Therefore, this significant financial support during a Japanese financial recession is a positive outreach for this critical ally.”⁹⁵

There is obviously then a great appreciation in some circles for support other than just troops and equipment. NATO has joined in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, whether many of its members prefer to refer to it as purely a defensive organization still or not. It has branched out, which is a natural progression in a world where asymmetric warfare has become the new norm. Contributions that are purely financial or contribute in other non-military manners obviously are viewed in a positive manner. There must be a higher standard for NATO members during ISAF though. ISAF inherently is meant to provide security to Afghanistan and the consensus agreement to take on the mission means all members must have agreed to shoulder the risk, including the risk to their personnel in trying to bring order to Afghanistan. NATO members must take ownership of the mission they agreed to and no amount of dollars can equate to that level of risk taking.

⁹⁵ Michael Yon. “Japanese Aid to Afghanistan.” *National Review Online*, Nov. 11, 2009. Accessed October 26, 2011. <http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/190039/japanese-aid-afghanistan/michael-yon>

The general response to new partners being more willing participants in combat operations is that they are seeking to align themselves closer to the United States in order to improve their bilateral relationships. A cursory review of U.S. foreign aid and assistance programs, however, shows no discernable pattern or benefit from the U.S. to eastern European NATO or Partnership for Peace members who have been major contributors to ISAF. There seems to be no material benefit for their stalwart support of the mission. Neither should any fear of the security consumers versus security producers' debate affect Eastern Europe's contributions to the alliance; the countries are full members of NATO (with the exception of Georgia and the Ukraine) and their removal or acceptance within NATO is no longer in question. So the question then becomes, why are the new members contributing more (or at least being more flexible and less restricted in their contributions) than much of 'old' NATO?

The actual war fighting waged by ISAF has seen the majority of its work done in the southern area of the country with the U.S., U.K., Netherlands and Canada having done the bulk of this work. While all of these countries are risk (casualty) averse, they have been able to re-organize their roles' in ISAF (such as Canada is currently doing) almost unilaterally during their tenure there. Most of these countries were participants in Operation Enduring Freedom and realized that actual war fighting would be a part of any involvement in Afghanistan. Germany, France, Italy and the bulk of European NATO have instead focused on stabilization efforts in Afghanistan. Instead of putting troops into harm's way in southern Afghanistan, they have resisted becoming integrated into the war fighting operations which marked the beginning of western involvement in Afghanistan. Even when NATO achieved "consensus" to allow more offensive operations, these

countries agreed in principal but have added in “special remarks” which absolve them from much of the actual offensive operations.⁹⁶ Instead other efforts such as the Afghan National Army trust fund, which has the stated goal of helping to equip, train and pay the Afghan National Army, or the Italian specialization in reforming the Afghan judicial system have been utilized as an outlet for those countries trying to avoid combat to still provide meaningful contributions to ISAF, especially for those countries which may have been judged to have a greater ability to contribute to the mission, such as Germany.

⁹⁶ David Auerswald and Stephen Saideman, “NATO at War: Understanding the challenges of caveats in Afghanistan.” Presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Toronto, CA, September 2-5, 2009. Accessed November 27, 2011.
<http://www.aco.nato.int/resources/1/documents/NATO%20at%20War.pdf>

TABLE 2
ISAF Donations to Afghanistan Security Forces⁹⁷

Country	ANA trust contribution since 2007	NATO Equip Donation Program (Monetary Only)	Post Operation Emergency Relief Fund
Australia	€ 87,873,462.00	€ 315,375.00	€ 315,375.00
Bulgaria	\$160,000	0	€ 170,000.00
Czech Republic	€ 389,023.00	0	€ 370,640.00
Denmark	€ 4,250,000.00	0	0
Estonia	€ 210,000.00	0	€ 124,895.00
Finland	€ 1,700,000.00	0	€ 100,000.00
Germany	€ 124,130,000.00	0	0
Hungary	0	0	€ 42,000.00
Iceland	0	0	€ 150,000.00
Italy	€ 7,400,000.00	0	€ 300,000.00
Lithuania	€ 40,000.00	0	€ 63,763.00
Luxembourg	€ 15,976,000.00	0	€ 100,000.00
Netherlands	€ 37,255,357.00	0	€ 300,000.00
Norway	€ 6,808,622.00	0	0
Poland	0	0	€ 150,000.00
Republic of Korea	€ 21,968,365.00	0	0
Slovenia	€ 230,000.00	0	0
Spain	€ 4,000,000.00	0	0
Sweden	€ 3,226,782.00	0	0
Turkey	€ 1,500,000.00	0	0
United Arab Emirates	€ 7,322,788.00	0	0
United Kingdom	€ 4,104,295.00	0	0
United States	0	0	\$ 1,300,000.00

⁹⁷ Figures taken from ISAF's "Troop Numbers and Contributions." Accessed March 2, 2012.
<http://www.isaf.nato.int/troop-numbers-and-contributions/index.php>

The United States is by far the largest security provider in Afghanistan, spending billions in war fighting costs. It has also been repeatedly stated that the United States wants Afghan security forces to take over more responsibility in their own country. It would therefore follow that the United States, which spent more than \$14 billion in 2003 and more than \$118 billion in 2011 on Afghanistan, would be the greatest contributor to ANA trust fund. However Table 2 shows a remarkably different story. But what is more surprising is that there is not a greater influx of money from countries that have resisted NATO's military role in Afghanistan (countries such as Germany, Spain, France and Italy) which have strong financial resources, but an aversion to warfighting. One would assume that these countries, who want Afghanistan to take responsibility for its own security faster, would push more resources into areas such as the ANA trust fund. Instead, that lack of involvement and support may indicate a general disengagement from the entire ISAF mission.

Progress and Outcomes

With caveats being an issue for ISAF almost since its inception, progress on removing caveats can only be described as slow. The amount of pressure that NATO as an institution, and many of its individual members, have put on its caveat encumbered members has been tremendous, but has only achieved mixed results. The very existence of these caveats continues to draw deep divisions in the alliance that will take a long time after Afghanistan to erase. With the bulk of NATO's European members resisting full involvement in ISAF, the idea of an anglo-bloc within NATO continues to grow and will likely increase divisions within the alliance. This could be especially dangerous for NATO if the EU continues to evolve as its own defence institution. NATO was once

described as having a purpose to “Keep the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans down.” Without a galvanizing force like the Soviet Union to impress the need to have the United States as a partner, many European defence leaders will be questioning if the EU is perhaps the preferential institution to operate through. For those countries actively involved in ISAF and that are pushing for NATO to continue to operate out-of-area, the issue becomes a judgment of the importance of allies who don’t share the same vision. ISAF has highlighted the increasing shift that American leaders may see as a simplified path forward by just ignoring most of Europe completely. In 2008 it took the threat of Canada pulling out its contributions from ISAF following a particularly long and bloody summer of fighting before there was enough of a catalyst to force the hand of several other member countries into adding to their contributions. If it takes a game of brinksmanship to get allies to commit fully to a joint venture, questions on the value of the institution surely follow.

These divisions may end up slowing down future NATO expansion in two different manners. First, if U.S. leaders continue to cultivate disdain for certain members of the alliance, alongside the inherent challenges of working with them within the alliance framework, it is likely the U.S. will work to establish stronger bilateral ties with many potential new NATO countries, as opposed to fully committing their support to the expansion of the Partnership for Peace program or working for their inclusion within NATO. Instead a new emphasis might be placed on forming ad hoc ‘coalitions of the willing.’ Second, potential new members (and global partners) to NATO may continue to keep a distance from NATO and only increase ties when it is deemed prudent by its home government, based on public support, much in the fashion that NATO members commit

to missions. The added benefit to those countries would be reduced international pressure when they are not a full member of NATO and increased flexibility in how they respond to international crisis which do not directly threaten them.

However, having all of NATO (and its PFP allies) involved, even with smaller contributions encumbered by caveats, may also be the best of a bad situation. By having more partners involved, consulting and at least in principle voicing their solidarity, may be a benefit to the alliance.⁹⁸ As George Liska noted on alliances in the 1960's: "The major ally garners some advantage from multilateralism when collective and, as it were, anonymous allied pressure lessens resentment against any one partner."⁹⁹ The United States is well aware of the international opposition it faces when conducting international operations. It comes down to timing and U.S. public opinion on how important that opposition is.

The United States also realizes that caveats, in some way, shape or form, are a reality in all modern military operations. With the advent of the 24-hour news cycle, embedded reporters and the concept of the 'strategic corporal', militaries have put more responsibility on rank and file soldiers than ever before. This has evolved into rules of engagement (ROE), which differ for virtually every country involved in ISAF. ROEs are not caveats per se, but they are the outline in how NATO troops operate in Afghanistan. They outline, for example, what a nation's troops will and will not do, and how and when they will employ force. As restrictive as they may or can be in many cases, the converse is the United States has hurt stabilization efforts by having a too free ROE for troops to follow, forcing situations like the issuing of Gen. McChrystal's 2009 tactical directive

⁹⁸George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press: 1962), 68.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 123

limiting air strikes and in-direct fire. As several Canadian Forces members noted when asked what American ROE's were compared to their own, the reply was: "Shoot everything."¹⁰⁰ The differences in these ROE's has led to a large discrepancy in how NATO forces act, even during joint operations. Multiple accounts have come out of Afghanistan on which nations' forces work well together and which are viewed as second-tier partners due to their limitations. One U.S. commander noted U.S. troops have taken to mocking ISAF as an acronym for "I Suck At Fighting."¹⁰¹

The long-term threat to the alliance in placing caveats on troop usage is that NATO will devolve into a two-tier alliance: one tier of members who are willing to go into combat operations and another who are not. As former U.S. Secretary of Defence Robert Gates said in his speech to the Munich Conference on Security Policy:

"In the past, I've worried openly about NATO turning into a two-tiered alliance: Between members who specialize in "soft" humanitarian, development, peacekeeping, and talking tasks, and those conducting the "hard" combat missions. Between those willing and able to pay the price and bear the burdens of alliance commitments, and those who enjoy the benefits of NATO membership – be they security guarantees or headquarters billets – but don't want to share the risks and the costs. This is no longer a hypothetical worry. We are there today. And it is unacceptable."¹⁰²

The caveats placed upon troop usage in Afghanistan have transformed the relationships within NATO, both at the political and military levels. These splits are also

¹⁰⁰ Confidential author interviews, July 2011.

¹⁰¹ Col. Douglas Mastriano, "Faust and the Padsha Sphinx: Reshaping the NATO alliance to win in Afghanistan." U.S. Army War College. February 24, 2010, 5. Accessed March 7, 2012.
<http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA518150&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>

¹⁰² U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. "Reflections on the status and future of the transatlantic alliance." Presented at the Security and Defense Agenda forum on June 10, 2011, Brussels. Accessed November 21, 2011.
<http://www.securitydefenceagenda.org/Contentnavigation/Activities/Activitiesoverview/tabid/1292/EventType/EventView/EventId/1070/EventDateID/1087/PageID/5141/Reflectionsonthestatusandfutureofthetransatlanticalliance.aspx>

noted inside the rank and file of militaries.¹⁰³ There are multiple accounts by senior officers of several NATO countries, which are “good to go” or were otherwise described as being reliable partners. As former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said during the opening of America’s war in Afghanistan, “the mission will determine the coalition...the coalition must not determine the mission.”¹⁰⁴ The ISAF experience has made clear whom the willing partners are, and who does not want to be involved in out of area operations. Several U.S. commanders have noted from a purely operational and tactical level that NATO coalitions are cumbersome when compared to U.S. led coalitions, which is lent credence by the U.S. undertaking Operation Enduring Freedom with only a handful of its allies.¹⁰⁵ Others (both Anglo and European military members) have noted the existence of CANUKAUS (Canada-UK-Australia-US) and a stronger relationship between those countries leadership in Afghanistan. In short, the caveats in ISAF have made it clear what alliance members are prepared and ready to operate in full blown warfighting out of area operations, and which countries have no will to participate in such operations at present.

The lesson that must be taken away from the ISAF experience is not that NATO members must all act and operate like U.S. forces, or even that they are necessarily prepared to commit their troops to any kind of situation (as previously stated, military commanders have the ability to recognize the limitations of their own and their allies troops). But NATO members must be upfront and clear about their level of commitment

¹⁰³ Confidential author interviews, July 2011.

¹⁰⁴ Jeremy Bransten, “2002 in review: Seven new members end false balance of fear,” *Radio Free Europe*, December 12, 2002. Accessed November 26, 2011. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1101651.html>

¹⁰⁵ Col. Douglas Mastriano. “Faust and the Padsha Sphinx: Reshaping the NATO alliance to win in Afghanistan.”

and willingness to conduct warfighting operations before NATO begins another out of area operation.

Chapter Three **NATO as a Political Actor**

The trials of ISAF, approaching a decade in length now, have certainly brought and pushed together NATO's members in varying ways and has forced NATO to evolve faster than ever before. Where NATO had the luxury of time to figure out a path forward in the post-Cold War world of the 1990's, the threats and crisis of Afghanistan have made for a relatively fast evolution. NATO is now the de facto leader of an international coalition with partners from across the globe, under a UN Security Council mandate in what is likely that most volatile region of the world; the results of which will have serious ramifications on Afghanistan's neighbours for decades to come. The Afghanistan mission cannot be viewed in a purely security or defence focused lens. It has allowed NATO to extend its partnerships around the globe in several different ways, develop its own unique foreign policy past that of its member countries, to begin to work with the United Nations on the future relationship between the two organizations and forced NATO to begin looking at developing tools outside of force of arms.

ISAF has tied NATO's PFP allies closer to it than ever before, and in some NATO military planners eyes these new partners have been more valuable than many full alliance members. They have earned a voice at the NATO table and have created stronger external ties to NATO than the institution has ever had in its history. NATO has also become comfortable with the role of 'subcontractor' to the UN on missions that suit its purpose. This has meant NATO has had to have a closer working relationship with

NGO's and other international institutions over the past decade than ever before in working together to create economic, social and political solutions to the problems facing Afghanistan. NATO leaders have said themselves that Afghanistan requires political solutions in order for ISAF to be successful. With NATO forces embracing the concept of the 3-block war, does NATO now need to create a more robust political toolbox to work alongside its military apparatus?

The Afghanistan mission has also forced NATO to become a political actor in a new region of the world; a region, which is already hostile to many of its members. Two of the key countries to the success of both ISAF and Afghanistan in the short and long-term are Pakistan and Iran. NATO's relationships with both these countries were already dominated by the United States, its 'war of terror', and long-standing U.S. opposition to the ruling regime in Iran. Now NATO is working to balance its need for logistical cooperation from Pakistan with its acceptance of Al-Qaeda and other terrorist forces within its borders to the east of Afghanistan, and deal with the covert support Iran is providing insurgents within Afghanistan from the west. While NATO has managed to build strong relations in other regions around Afghanistan (the former Soviet Republics most notably), it raises the question of NATO needing to become more engaged at the international political level.

ISAF: The new global NATO

The largest change for NATO is that the Afghanistan mission is the first time it has led a coalition of both NATO and non-NATO members on an out-of-area operation on such a large scale. Both New Zealand and Australia (two of the largest combat force

providers to ISAF) were already involved in Afghanistan as partners with the United States in Operation Enduring Freedom and continued their support by transferring their commands into ISAF. Many non-NATO countries have become key contributors to ISAF's success and as such, have earned themselves a place at NATO's table and are already building for a future relationship past ISAF's lifetime. This has included meetings such as the Istanbul Conference on Afghanistan held in 2010, with all contributing ISAF countries' defence ministers having an "informal meeting." ISAF has also increased many countries experience in multilateral operations, laying the groundwork for their ability to contribute quickly in the future.

NATO already demonstrated the ability to incorporate outside forces into its operations during its intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina when eastern European countries (some of which would later become NATO members) joined that mission. Since the end of the Cold War NATO has made great strides in forging ties with countries across the globe; the Afghanistan mission may be the culmination of this. NATO used the Istanbul summit of 2004 as an opportunity to begin further reaching out to partners around the globe, specifically with its seven partner Mediterranean Dialogue (several of which contribute to ISAF) and the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council in the Middle East. This increased dialogue gave those countries a voice within NATO and gave NATO stronger contacts within these regions, building the foundation for future cooperation. Several academics have also noted the importance of Turkey, the only predominantly Muslim country within the alliance, for NATO operating in the Muslim world. Partnership with other Muslim countries will only serve to increase the international acceptance of NATO in future out of area operations and give NATO

important potential partners, not just from a capabilities standpoint, but also for political and societal acceptance in the Muslim world for future missions.

NATO has already been using the NATO/PFP trust fund as a means to affect change and reforms to PFP members by eliminating stockpiles of outdated or unethical weapons and improving training for foreign military members. NATO is developing its PFP allies into 'military model citizens' of the western world, much as it did previously with perspective Eastern European members 'roadmap to accession' programs. NATO has used ISAF to build a wider coalition of countries around its organization and become its own global entity in having a dialogue with different regions, effectively laying the groundwork for its vision of future operations. As the 2010 Strategic Concept noted:

“The promotion of Euro-Atlantic security is best assured through a wide network of partner relationships with countries and organizations around the globe. These partnerships make a concrete and valued contribution to the success of NATO’s fundamental tasks.”¹⁰⁶

This change is not without opposition within the alliance. Former French Defence Minister Michele Alliot-Marie wrote about a proposed expansion of NATO with several countries beyond Europe:

“It would be desirable to improve the practical modalities of their association with NATO operations without changing the essence of the organization, which I believe should remain a European-Atlantic military alliance. The development of a global partnership could in fact...dilute the natural solidarity between Europeans and North Americans in a vague ensemble.”¹⁰⁷

That natural solidarity that Alliot-Marie references has already been diluted though. There is no shortage of opinion polls which show the bulk of Europeans having a

¹⁰⁶ “Strategic Concept: Active Engagement, Modern Defence,” NATO. Accessed January 18, 2011. http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120214_strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf

¹⁰⁷ Michele Alliot-Marie, “Don’t Diminish NATO’s Effectiveness,” *The Washington Times*, Oct. 20, 2006. Accessed January 14, 2012. <http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/Michele-Alliot-Marie-s-writes-in.html>

negative view on several aspects of U.S. foreign policy and leadership in Afghanistan. The fact is that several of these global partner countries that Minister Alliot-Marie is referencing have been better partners to NATO in Afghanistan than his own country has been, providing a higher proportion of their military forces to ISAF with fewer caveats on their use. If European members were worried about NATO turning into a vague alliance from around the globe, their concerns were likely out-weighted by the benefits of these countries solid military support, allowing them to lower their own contributions and avoid domestic political damage.

NATO and the UN

The UN has always been very prominent in NATO's history. The Preamble of the North Atlantic Treaty states: "The Parties to this treaty reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations." Despite the close relationship that has evolved between the two organizations and the importance that NATO places on the UN, NATO has taken the stance that the alliance is not subordinate to the UN Security Council with respect to the right of collective self-defence under Article 51 of the UN charter.

NATO/UN operations in the past have seen a huge amount of oversight by the UN over NATO-led military actions. From a NATO standpoint the worst of these instances were operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992-1995 with the 'dual-key' system where NATO needed UN permission in order to launch any air strikes. The mishandling of that situation by the two organizations ensured that NATO leaders would demand freedom of action from the UN and separated the roles of the two organizations in missions to date. This disdain has not only created complications between the two

organizations, but an increasing distrust between the United States and the security organizations it supports. According to one author, former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld sentiment after 9/11 was that “we will never let anyone tell us who we can and can’t bomb again.”¹⁰⁸

In this fashion, the UN has left NATO to find security solutions in Afghanistan and has not spoken out about civilian casualties in the prosecution of the war in Afghanistan (despite the publication of multiple reports which note high civilian casualties and make suggestions to mitigate them). NATO has been left free to do what it was originally intended to do - fight a war. Instead, the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan by both organizations have become intertwined, as the UNAMA and NATO Provincial Reconstruction Teams cover common areas across Afghanistan.

ISAF is authorized through several UN Security Council resolutions that have been passed over several years. NATO’s comprehensive political guidance and almost every supporting NATO document makes it clear that NATO is preparing for more out of area operations. What the UN’s opinion is of NATO operating across a large portion of the globe, in area’s where other regional organizations already exist, is not yet clear. In Africa, the African Union has developed to a point where it has been able to handle some security operations on its own. Russia is the driver of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which encompasses much of the former soviet republics relative to the Commonwealth of Independent States. Some of these organizations have already voiced concern about NATO expanding its area and partnerships across the globe. It is clear that the majority of UN members would like to see NATO continue to work under the UN Security Council, but not outside of it. Even tacit allowance for NATO to do as it

¹⁰⁸ Sarwar Kashmeri, *NATO 2.0 Reboot or Delete?*, (Washington: Potomac Books, 2011), 73.

pleases outside of the UN could have serious repercussions, especially concerning the growth of regional security alliances among other members of the UN Security Council. Mr. Zhang Yishan, the spokesperson for China offered these thoughts at a UN meeting in 2004:

“...the Charter of the United Nations confers on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Council is thus at the core of the international collective security machinery. Regional organizations too can contribute to the peaceful settlement of disputes...let me underscore in particular Article 53, which states that ‘no enforcement action shall be taken under regional arrangements or by regional agencies without the authorization of the Security Council.’”¹⁰⁹

The Russian Federation representative in the same meeting also reinforced the importance of organizations acting under Chapter VIII of the UN charter. However the NATO representative at the same meeting declared: “Although the alliance does not consider itself formally a regional organization under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, NATO’s transition from a purely collective-defence organization into a security manager in a broad sense has enabled it to act in the same spirit, first in Europe and now beyond.”¹¹⁰ By 2010, in a continuation of the UN Security Council meeting on regional organizations, the Russian Federation delegate spoke about the CSTO, its recent actions in developing into a more mature organization, and how “it has been established that the CSTO can implement peacekeeping operations both autonomously and as part of peacekeeping operations under a Security Council mandate.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ United Nations Security Council, *Cooperation between the United Nations and Regional Organizations in stabilization processes*, July 20, 2004. Accessed May 5, 2012.

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.5007

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 25

¹¹¹ United Nations Security Council, *Cooperation between the UN and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security*, January 13, 2010. Accessed May 5, 2012.

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.6257

In 2001 the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty tabled a report at the request of then United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The report noted:

“Military action can be legitimate as an anticipatory measure in response to clear evidence of likely large scale killing. Without this possibility of anticipatory action, the international community would be placed in the morally untenable position of being required to wait until genocide begins, before being able to take action to stop it...Every diplomatic and non-military avenue for the prevention or peaceful resolution of the humanitarian crisis must have been explored...This does not necessarily mean that every such option must literally have been tried and failed: often there will simply not be the time for that process to work itself out. But it does mean that there must be reasonable grounds for believing that, in all the circumstances, if the measure had been attempted it would not have succeeded.”¹¹²

With NATO’s membership making up a large portion of the UN (and most of its most affluent members) and a ‘balancing’ of the United States willingness to seek military solutions with European reluctance for the same, the political acceptance of NATO taking military action is relatively high. Where regional organizations stand within the UN has certainly been clouded by NATO, despite the relatively clear structure of the UN Charter. Some academics, such as David Yost in his book *NATO and International Organizations*, have explored the two ideas under which NATO can operate; those being independent of UN mandates and as a sort of ‘subcontractor’ for the United Nations. ISAF would fall into this second category, operating under a UN Security Council mandate.

Whatever the future relationship may be, past experiences have taught NATO not to agree to a ‘two-key’ system of shared military control with the UN, and it is unlikely that a return to that system will happen in any future missions. The comments by NATO

¹¹² International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect*, December 2001, 33. United Nations. Accessed March 11, 2012.
<http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/ICISS%20Report.pdf>

representatives to the UN regarding its status under Chapter VIII show that NATO is still working to keep the former option of independent action open. However the obvious concern and opposition from some permanent members of the Security Council is NATO acting as it chooses, virtually nullifying the Security Council and its role as a global legitimizer for the use of force. Furthermore, if NATO does act in the future without a UN mandate, it may open a Pandora's box for other regional institutions in claiming their right to self defence.

Pakistan and Iran

Pakistan is the country most intertwined in the battle for Afghanistan. Pakistan and Afghanistan share a huge border, many ethnic groups, and common security concerns. Pakistan's tribal regions have a long history of being used by Afghan groups in the 1980's against the Soviet Union and today against NATO forces. U.S. military commanders believe approximately one third of attacks on ISAF forces in Afghanistan are done by insurgents based out of Pakistan.¹¹³ Pakistan, Afghanistan and NATO have refused to come to a unified understanding on dealing with the security concerns of Afghanistan's eastern border and Pakistan's tribal area. The failure of Pakistan to deal with extremism on its side of the border has added to the security difficulties facing Afghanistan. NATO forces operating along the border regularly receive fire from groups operating on the Pakistani side of the border, even reportedly from Pakistani military outposts. US forces have responded with deadly force, including air strikes, which have caused Pakistani military casualties, and outrage among Pakistani officials.

¹¹³ NATO Parliamentary Assembly Committee reports, *181 PCTR 09 E rev 1 – Pakistan: A Test of Transatlantic Co-operation*, 2009. Accessed March 27, 2012, www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=1775

Yet NATO's relationship with Pakistan extends little past security (a tripartite commission between NATO, the Afghan government and Pakistan) agreements for the eastern part of Afghanistan and supply transport agreements for NATO forces in Afghanistan. Instead the NATO-Pakistan political relationship has been dominated by the United States. The US war on terror has frequently expanded to the tribal regions of Pakistan, and even into major centres such as the U.S. raid which killed 9/11 mastermind Osama Bin Laden. This has dominated Pakistan's relationship with western countries, resulting in supply route closures by the Pakistani government several times.

Pakistan's importance as a supply route to NATO is mirrored by many former Soviet Socialist Republics, notably Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. NATO created a special representative to the Caucasus and Central Asia, who has worked to strengthen NATO ties in the region. This has included the creation of Individual Partnership Action Plans with NATO, defence education and reforms, as well as civil emergency planning.¹¹⁴ However the United States beat NATO to the punch by creating agreements and joint exercises with countries in the region during the mid-1990's, facilitating NATO's progress today.¹¹⁵

The failure for NATO to affect a proper security arrangement between itself, Pakistan and Afghanistan may well be NATO's largest diplomatic failure in its time in Afghanistan. The situation has been drastically complicated by the United States continuing unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks in Pakistan on militant groups. But even this issue is further clouded by reports of American aircraft operating out of

¹¹⁴ "NATO's relations with the Kyrgyz Republic," NATO. Accessed March 24, 2012.

http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49607.htm

¹¹⁵ Benjamin Lambeth, *Air Power Against Terror: America's Conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom*, (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2006), 70.

Pakistani airbases and American economic and military aid to Pakistan, with military aid surpassing the \$2.5 billion mark in 2010.¹¹⁶ Deciphering which groups of Pakistan's government actually support the United States military operations in their country, and which want to remove that influence is difficult. Either way, the action of the United States in Pakistan has been designed to support its war on terror, not its operations in creating a stable Afghanistan. In short, the United States has put its foreign policy of eliminating extremists in several Middle Eastern countries ahead of NATO's foreign policy of working with Pakistan to ensure regional security.

Former Afghan Interior Minister Ali Jalali noted that Afghanistan and Pakistan have taken differing views on their respective insurgencies; Pakistan as a local issue which can be handled through military, political and developmental means; Afghanistan as a national issue which challenges the legitimacy of the central government.¹¹⁷ As one Pakistani general noted, the Pakistani government has taken a 'long-term approach' against the Taliban, believing their innate views will alienate the population. In effect, taking a hands off approach to this terrorist challenge is simply giving the Taliban "enough 'rope to hang themselves.'"¹¹⁸ NATO has been in obvious disagreement with this strategy, and has watched with growing concern as the Pakistani government has failed to address its insurgent issue. The Pakistan government coming to an agreement with the Taliban in the Swat region (albeit a brief agreement) and its continued failure to capture Taliban leaders has made NATO question Pakistan's commitment to dealing with the Taliban threat.

¹¹⁶ Claire Provost, "Sixty Years of US aid to Pakistan," *The Guardian*. July 11, 2011. Accessed February 19, 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/jul/11/us-aid-to-pakistan>

¹¹⁷ Ali Jalali, "Winning in Afghanistan." *Parameters*, (Spring 2009), 18.

¹¹⁸ Brigadier Malik Zafar Iqbal. "An Appraisal of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Strategy to Counter Terrorism," *Parameters*, (Summer 2010), 18.

In 2009 the United States put forward its strategy on dealing both with Afghanistan and Pakistan in a comprehensive manner. US President Obama created a trilateral dialogue between Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States, which covered not just security concerns, but economic issues. NATO, despite being involved in the region for nearly a decade, has yet to be able to create a comprehensive strategy on the same scale. Instead a 2009 NATO report suggested a 3-point strategy for dealing with Pakistan: a regional approach to stability, which includes not just Pakistan but Afghanistan and India; stronger support for democracy in Pakistan, and continued support for the Pakistani military.¹¹⁹ The same report suggests that NATO should not become involved directly in the India-Pakistan rivalry, but recognizes Pakistan's stability involves its dispute with India and recommends the encouragement of continued bilateral talks. The fact that the same NATO report suggests this as an avenue for increased EU involvement is also cause for concern. It would suggest that NATO, despite its large potential capacity outside of the military realm, does not feel comfortable engaging in the international political realm. More importantly, the EU has not deemed that its interests are at stake in the region.

The original NATO members spent considerable time trying to instill liberal values into Eastern Europe when it first began considering expansion. NATO has always promoted democracy and liberal social values and it is with countries that hold these same values where it has found the most co-operation in the past. If Pakistan is the external linchpin to Afghanistan, in a region where NATO expects it may be operating

¹¹⁹ NATO Parliamentary Assembly Committee reports, *181 PCTR 09 E rev 1 – Pakistan: A Test of Transatlantic Co-operation*, 2009. Accessed March 27, 2012, www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=1775

again in near future, it is worthwhile for NATO to invest in shaping Pakistan to develop more common values and interests with Europe. If NATO can offer Pakistan some help from its military toolbox (training and education in various military disciplines), it would be even more effective by having a political toolbox to offer to Pakistan as well. NATO already has civil tools and experience thanks to the reconstruction and management of the fledgling Afghan government. There is no reason why several of these tools and skills would not be valued by Pakistan, even if Pakistan has a far more mature government and structure than Afghanistan.

Iran is arguably the 2nd largest regional influence on Afghanistan today, but has a very different dynamic with NATO, largely due to its relationship with the United States and its recent actions in enriching uranium. NATO has completely supported UN Security Council Resolutions on the issue and its members have implemented varying levels of sanctions against Iran. But much as the United States supplied weapons to the Mujahideen in Afghanistan during the Soviet conflict in the 1980's, Iran now covertly supplies weapons and supplies to the Taliban and other groups in conflict with NATO's presence in Afghanistan. In fact, NATO has been dealing with Iran supplying Afghan insurgent groups with weapons for most of ISAFs lifetime.¹²⁰ Iran has consistently protested the presence of NATO forces in the neighbouring country, while still blaming NATO for not managing to improve Afghanistan's security situation more.

“It is not acceptable that some who are several thousands of kilometres away from the Middle East would send their troops for military intervention and of spreading war, bloodshed, aggression, terror and intimidation in the whole region while

¹²⁰ John Anderson, “Arms Seized in Afghanistan Sent from Iran, NATO says,” *The Washington Post*, September 21, 2007. Accessed March 24, 2012. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/20/AR2007092001236.html>

blaming the protests of nations in the region, that are concerned about their fate and their national security, as a move against peace and as interference in others' affairs. Look at the situations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It is no longer possible to bring a country under military occupation in the name of fight against terrorism and drug trafficking while the production of illicit drugs has multiplied, terrorism has widened its dimensions and has tightened its grips, thousands of innocent people have been killed, injured or displaced, infrastructures have been destroyed and regional security has been seriously jeopardized;...

It is not acceptable that the military budget of some governments exceeds far larger than those of the entire countries of the world. They export billions of dollars of arms every year, stockpile chemical and biological weapons, establish military bases or have military presence in other countries while accusing others of militarism...It is not acceptable that the United Nations and the Security Council, whose decisions must represent all nations and governments by the application of the most democratic methods in their decision making processes, be dominated by a few governments and serve their interests."¹²¹

Iran has also made public calls for new alliances in the Middle East in an effort to counteract NATO's global reach.¹²²

As in the case of Iran, the issue of NATO being defined by some of its member's foreign policies is one that has plagued NATO throughout its lifetime. During the 1950's and 1960's it was more of an issue for NATO to deal with the issues surrounding Britain and France's former colonial holdings. Today America's virtually global presence is a diplomatic issue for NATO to deal with. In almost every conceivable region where NATO might go in the near future, there are countries and regimes that will be against certain members (likely the United States) of NATO. While NATO has internal mechanisms to keep the alliance from being pulled into the conflicts of its members, it has very limited ability to present itself to a region as a separate entity or organization. NATO has more global outreach than ever before, but it may be time for NATO to

¹²¹ President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, "Address to UN General Assembly," 23 Sept, 2009. Accessed March 25, 2012. http://www.un.org/en/ga/64/generaldebate/pdf/IR_en.pdf

¹²² "Iran calls for regional alliance to counter NATO," *Reuters*, August 5, 2010. Accessed March 23, 2012. <http://www.haaretz.com/news/world/iran-calls-for-regional-alliance-to-counter-nato-1.306267>

expand this and try to separate the foreign policy of its members from the foreign policy of the alliance.

NATO's Political Toolbox

Afghanistan is one of the most complex operations in modern military history. Though the United States Operation Enduring Freedom, which removed the Taliban government, began as a strictly military affair, and NATO's subsequent first iteration of ISAF in 2003 was very limited, ISAF today is a full-blown nation-building effort which has led to a discussion on whether Afghanistan falls more under NATO's Article IV or Article V. NATO has not only had to rely upon the input of the international community, but also in many cases seek such input, in order to see progress in Afghanistan. But what are the political tools that NATO could possibly look to implement in the future?

According to NATO's comprehensive political guidance document, NATO looks to rely on unity of effort with other members of the international community, most notably the UN and the EU. This is understandable in two contexts. First, the UN remains the primary stabilization and reconstruction organization and is the best suited organization for marshalling international resources for these efforts. Second, the EU has taken a wider mandate than NATO for stabilization and civilian led efforts, and with a huge overlap within NATO's area of operations it makes sense to work closely with it. However the EU is quickly becoming a NATO minus the United States as a sharing of military organization and resources is giving the EU many of NATO's capabilities with a majority of the same members. It only makes sense for NATO to work to bring the EU's civilian capabilities into its organization as well. Gen. McChrystal, then-commander of

ISAF, noted in 2010 the importance of new civilian staff that was introduced with new ISAF initiatives.¹²³ During the same conference NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen noted that the transition of security in Afghanistan would be dependent on conditions both “political and military.”¹²⁴ It has taken several years, but it has become clear to some NATO leaders that the failures in governance and corruption in Afghanistan preclude any real success in the security situation.

NATO needs to be prepared if it does not wish to be beholden to other organizations for these conditions to be met. NATO has so far lacked the ability to even try and carry out its own recommendation of forging a regional security agreement around Afghanistan. At the same time NATO is obviously making a concerted effort not to allow the organization to grow away from its original purpose; into an organization that attempts to do too much and spreads itself too thin. The North Atlantic Council recognized early on, during its support of the United States war of terror, that the UN had a role to play that NATO did not wish to fill; “...military tools alone are not sufficient to combat terrorism effectively. The response must be multi-faceted and comprehensive. In that regard, we support the efforts of the United Nations and its central role in this field, and undertake fully implement UN Security Council Resolution 1373.”¹²⁵ As well, NATO’s comprehensive political guidance gave clear direction that NATO’s forays into humanitarian aid and reconstruction would not delve into the civilian area, but would stay as military support:

¹²³ Gen. Stanley McChrystal, “Press roundtable with Gen. McChrystal in Istanbul, Turkey.” February 4, 2010. U.S. department of defence. Accessed March 25, 2012.

<http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4559>

¹²⁴ NATO, “Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen,” Feb. 5, 2010. Accessed March 24, 2012. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_61389.htm

¹²⁵ NATO, “NATO’s response to terrorism,” press release, Dec. 6, 2001. Accessed March 26, 2012. <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2001/p01-159e.htm>

“the ability to bring military support to stabilisation operations and reconstruction efforts across all phases of a crisis, including to establish a safe and secure environment, within the full range of missions; military support to reconstruction efforts will be provided to the extent to which conditions in the theatre of operations prevent other actors with primary responsibilities in this field from carrying out their tasks. This should embrace the ability to support security sector reform, including demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration, and to bring military support, within available means and capabilities, to humanitarian relief operations;”¹²⁶

When ISAF began there seemed to be a clear separation of responsibilities between NATO and the UN. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan worked to co-ordinate humanitarian efforts, the rule of law, human rights and the reconciliation of groups within the country. ISAF was charged with ensuring a secure environment for rebuilding and reconstruction to take place. However security and reconstruction have been tied closer together than even military planners originally thought. NATO commanders on the ground conduct consultations (Shuras) with tribal and community elders on a regular basis as they conduct security operations; NATO deals with the corruption of government officials and Afghan security forces more than any other agency, and NATO Provincial Reconstruction Teams have been instrumental in Afghan rebuilding, especially in area's where the security situation is more tentative. All of these acts have been undertaken without better co-ordination within NATO on accomplishing these tasks, and externally with the UNAMA and non-governmental agencies operating in Afghanistan. These are examples of NATO working with local and regional government, building government capacity, and bringing basic services to area's where the security situation is still unstable. All of these are valuable examples of tools NATO

¹²⁶ NATO, “Comprehensive Political Guidance,” November 29, 2006. Accessed April 7, 2012, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_56425.htm

could offer in future missions, alongside a growing political engagement at the state and regional level.

It is not clear at this time if the United States is in agreement with keeping NATO from creating more civilian tools within the organization, if it is the organization itself, or the EU members of NATO. NATO's comprehensive political guidance was ratified in 2006 and was intended to set the path for the alliance for the next 10-15 years. Former French Defence Minister Michele Alliot-Marie noted:

“Reconstruction missions must necessarily fall under the authority of competent organizations, particularly the United Nations and the European Union. Transforming NATO into an organization whose mission is to rebuild both democracy and a nation's economy corresponds neither to its legitimate mandate nor to its means. We must be very careful not to dilute the alliance through poorly defined missions in which it would lose both its soul and its effectiveness.”¹²⁷

NATO countries are the same ones that provide most of the reconstruction resources to the UN and EU. As the EU can borrow NATO's military capabilities, the same logic should allow NATO to borrow the capabilities of the EU in order to achieve its goals. NATO is already a political actor on the world stage, and French misgivings of a new global NATO being seen as a western alliance of countries against those who do not share its views is a ship that has already sailed in much of the world (one need only look to recent commentary from the leaders of Syria, Iran and North Korea to see that). If NATO does stand firm and keep itself firmly away from any civilian capabilities or new political tools, it will be interesting to see how NATO and the EU compare in another decade. If NATO continues to resist operating in anything but a strictly military context, then (in perhaps a situation that would be preferable to countries such as France) NATO will be forced to partner with organizations such as the UN and EU in order to

¹²⁷ Michele Alliot-Marie, “Don't Diminish NATO's Effectiveness,” *The Washington Times*, October 20, 2006. Accessed April 27th, 2012. <http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/Michele-Alliot-Marie-s-writes-in.html>

accomplish its missions. Just as likely though are coalitions of countries willing to create capabilities on the fly to accomplish missions of mutual interest on an ad hoc basis.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

George Liska wrote in 1962: “Cooperation in alliances is in large part the consequence of conflicts with adversaries and may submerge only temporarily the conflicts of allies.”¹²⁸ The events of 9/11 were a catalyst that ensured the United States would be involved militarily in Afghanistan, with or without its allies. It was damning when the United States chose to forgo the bulk of its allies in prosecuting the removal of the Taliban, instead of turning to NATO. Fighting for relevancy in a post-Cold War world, NATO needed to respond to the largest attack in recent history against its premier member. Much as Liska wrote fifty years ago, the camaraderie and solidarity that NATO enjoyed through the early years of the mission gave way over time to frustrations that have spilled out into the public forum. ISAF has dealt with capability short-falls, a lack of co-ordination between both members and with other organizations, and a resistance to developing the new tools it needs to operate effectively in an asymmetric environment.

NATO’s lack of capabilities in Afghanistan can be greatly attributed to the lack of investment by its members in the decade prior; the alliance was unprepared to deal with large scale asymmetric warfare. This has forced the few members who do have the necessary capabilities to bear a disproportional amount of the burden. ISAF has seen NATO members withhold capabilities from each other and agree in principle to expanding the mission without being prepared to contribute to it. This has exacerbated

¹²⁸ George Liska, “Nations in Alliance.”, p.13

the difficulties between allies and heightened the threat of an internal split in NATO negating its work to become relevant again with out of area operations.

There are capability positives from ISAF which NATO will retain for the medium and long term. NATO and the bulk of its members are now prepared with the necessary training and equipment for modern asymmetric warfare, with most of its members having the capabilities they need to conduct out of area operations. The internal co-operation on achieving certain capabilities such as SAC, SALIS and the Hip helicopter program are positive developments, which should be encouraged to continue, as they allow members to contribute to high cost capabilities they might otherwise not afford. ISAF should also silence those who questioned the value of NATO's newest members as security providers. But countries that are developing niche capabilities to save money means that future missions will require either a complete buy-in from the alliance in order to muster the necessary capabilities, or the continued leadership of the United States to bring all the necessary capabilities to the table.

As Stuart and Tow surmised, there are disputes within NATO today that are playing out perhaps not directly on the battlefields of Afghanistan, but certainly impacting the soldiers on those fields for the long term. There are concerns about NATO being viewed as another tool of United States foreign policy and not all members are on the same page about the importance of ISAF succeeding. There are still concerns from some corners of NATO about its role expanding, though it is clear from their national White Papers and other defence documents that NATO countries have bought in to the new strategic concept and are preparing for future multinational missions outside of NATO's traditional area. NATO will continue to utilize its resources to bring its newest

members and PFP allies closer to its standards, paving the way for future partnerships. This will also likely serve to prepare many of these countries for coalition missions outside of NATO. ISAF will stand as a testament that the alliance can achieve sustained operations outside its traditional area of operations. But NATO still has obstacles in the path of developing the diplomatic and civilian tools necessary to pursue fully an out of area operation without support from external agencies. While some resist the continued expansion of NATO or closer ties to distant potential partners for fear of being seen as reaching too far and being seen as a global entity, NATO is already viewed as such by some countries. Afghanistan's other neighbour, Iran, already views ISAF as an American incursion in its regional sphere and there is little NATO can do to remove that label. NATO itself will not let the UN box it in as a regional organization, and that choice means other organizations will be watching its actions warily. In a globalized world and technology allowing threats to be located further and further away, it is only a matter of time until NATO once again considers action in another region of the globe, and it is unlikely it will be the relatively clean conventional warfare that some members still seem to think would be easier to deal with.

The push for NATO to have a role in Afghanistan confirmed a willingness to operate out of its traditional area. Its successful partnership in managing the conflict and reconstruction efforts alongside the United Nations may have solidified NATO as a subcontractor for the UN when the situation fits the needs of both organizations. The inertia of developing a full set of tools to deal with modern asymmetric warfare is perhaps the last hurdle for a NATO to step away from its original Cold War purpose and transform into a more modern and flexible organization. It should have been implicit in

its agreement to expand ISAF from its original mandate and to begin operating its Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan that NATO was stepping outside its role as a pure security provider. It is completely understandable that many would fear NATO taking this step, fundamentally altering it forever. However, as long as NATO remains an organization based on consensus there is always the ability for countries to put the brakes on NATO's actions and block new missions. In the long term the best decision for NATO may be inaction instead of some members being weakly committed to NATO's next mission.

The caveats that exist today in ISAF are the gravest threat facing NATO since its purpose came into question at the end of the Cold War. NATO is built upon consensus, and its decision to take on ISAF was no exception. The mission has grown and expanded, but has not received the support necessary from NATO members. ISAF's original importance was to make NATO relevant when the United States chose the alternative of creating Operation Enduring Freedom to remove the Taliban. Having a large portion of the alliance choose during the mission to give less than full participation has undermined the solidarity and importance the alliance was seeking to recreate. If NATO devolves into a two-tiered alliance there is no reason for its existence, as the threat necessitating its collective defence has long passed, and coalitions of the willing can be more effective and flexible.

Afghanistan has been an all consuming affair for most NATO militaries. There is no shortage of examples of military leadership which have done multiple tours in Afghanistan. But the Warrant Officers, Captains, Majors and Colonels of today will become the senior leadership of their militaries tomorrow. Much as the current generation

of military leaders was shaped through multiple UN peacekeeping missions, the crisis of the former Yugoslavia and the 1991 Iraq conflict, these new leaders will be primarily shaped by the Afghanistan mission. Their experience as a part of ISAF is one that could cement a positive or negative view of NATO for a generation. One can only hope that these leaders will remember the lessons learned in Afghanistan and work to fix the issues facing their own countries militaries in order to build a stronger alliance in the future.

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