

AFGHANISTAN: A STRESS TEST FOR TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY COOPERATION

Stephen Flanagan, *Senior Vice President and Henry A. Kissinger Chair, CSIS*; T.J. Cipoletti, *Research Associate, Henry A. Kissinger Chair, CSIS*; and Amanda Tuninetti, *Former Intern, Henry A. Kissinger Chair,²² CSIS*

Introduction

Afghanistan has become a stress test for transatlantic cooperation in maintaining global stability. European solidarity with the United States in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001 was strong. However, differences between Washington and most European governments on the nature of the threat, strategy, and the goals of Western engagement have emerged. The mission in Afghanistan has become more demanding and complex than envisioned at the outset. After nine years of engagement, with limited gains in Afghan security and development, growing human and financial costs, and enduring doubts about the capacity of the Karzai government, commitment on both sides of the Atlantic is waning. NATO has pursued a more effective and better resourced strategy since early 2009 and the Alliance and its partners in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) have declared an “Enduring Partnership” with Afghanistan stretching to 2015 and beyond. All these factors and the success of the current strategy will influence the durability of this pledge and future transatlantic engagement in stabilization and reconstruction operations.

This paper examines U.S. and European strategic assessments and commitment, the convergence of their efforts, variables that will influence outcomes in Afghanistan, and the impact that possible denouements will have on the broader U.S-EU security relationship. While this case-study focuses on lessons of the Afghanistan mission for relations between the United States and the European Union and its member states, given that the preponderance of transatlantic engagement in the country is through NATO ISAF, this paper also examines relevant elements of European-American relations within NATO and NATO-EU relations.

Evolution of Transatlantic Engagement in Afghanistan

About a month after the attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States launched Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Working with the Northern Alliance and other anti-Taliban groups, this ad hoc coalition, comprised of several European states, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, easily

routed the Taliban and following intense fighting in December, a majority of al Qaeda and many Taliban leaders fled into neighboring Pakistan. The United States and European governments supported United Nations-hosted talks on the country's future leading to the Bonn Agreement, which established a provisional government in Kabul backed by a UN-mandated security force. In August 2003, with encouragement from the United States and other European governments, NATO agreed to assume command, coordination, and planning of ISAF. Transatlantic engagement has deepened since.

Current State/Strategic Approach

Over the past nine years, U.S. and European engagement have helped the Afghan government enhance security, governance, and economic development in several sectors.

The Afghan security forces, particularly the Army, have grown in numbers and effectiveness. In August, the Afghan National Army (ANA) fielded 138,200 soldiers—exceeding its 2010 headline goal of 134,000 troops three months ahead of schedule—and aims for a force of 171,000 by October 2011. Afghan forces have assumed lead responsibility for security in Kabul province since August 2008, and have become involved in combined operations with ISAF around the country. The Afghan National Police (ANP) has also exceeded its 2010 goal, reaching 120,500 personnel in September 2010. The ANP hopes to grow to a force of 134,000 by October 2011, but continues to suffer for shortages of qualified personnel and corruption. The ANP's paramilitary civil-order forces (ANCOP) have recounted themselves well in preserving order in major cities and assisting local police in high-threat areas during emergencies.

ISAF and Afghan government planners have focused counterinsurgency and development efforts on 80 key districts where the majority of Afghans live and that include centers of economic productivity and key infrastructure and commercial links to the wider world. The 27 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and about 40 of their subordinate District Support Teams (DSTs) are focused on these key districts and 41 other areas of interest.²³

The pace of improvements in Afghan governance, rule of law, and development has been very slow. In addition to the security problem, rampant corruption has limited the central government's effectiveness and credibility in many provinces and districts. With encouragement from Washington and EU governments, the Karzai government has formed a Peace Council in an effort to begin a dialogue with the elements of the Taliban and other insurgents who renounce violence and are willing to abide by the Afghan constitution. However, the effectiveness of the leaders of the Afghan government's Peace Consultative Jirga to engage with the insurgency has been questioned and finding credible interlocutors among the fighters has proven difficult. Planning for reconciliation and reintegration of fighters as part of a peace settlement has not matured.

The Afghan economy has rebounded somewhat since 2001, but is heavily dependent on foreign assistance. There have been gains in the agriculture sector, due to enhanced access to internal and international markets via new roads, as well as a revival of the service sector. The importance of private sector growth for Afghan development was underscored at the London Conference in January 2010 where the international community endorsed the Integrated Plan for Economic Development proposed by the Afghan Government. Opium remains the largest cash crop in Afghanistan and production, focused in the south and southeast, has increased since 2001. About 12 percent of the

population is involved in opium poppy cultivation, and the UN estimates that the total value of the opium harvest to farmers, laboratory owners, and traffickers was about \$4 billion in 2007, equivalent to 44 percent of the licit GDP.²⁴

Before the late 2009 surge in military and civilian personnel, Afghanistan was slowly deteriorating in nearly every available metric. The trends in violence were up sharply in 2009 from 2007 levels, and civilian casualties were the highest on record since 2001. Ninety-five percent of Afghans said corruption was a problem in their area (up 23 points since 2007), and about 80 percent of Afghans live in rural areas and in poor conditions.²⁵ Winning government support among the population remains a major challenge. Still, the fragile gains from the campaigns in the Taliban strongholds of Marja and Kandahar as part of the implementation of the new strategy have led to mounting doubts about both the strategy and goals of international engagement in Afghanistan.

Comparison of U.S. and European Commitments

United States

Threat assessment

After the 9/11 attacks, American leaders saw al-Qa'ida, given its global reach, messianic ideology, and interest in acquiring weapons of mass destruction (WMD), as an overarching, existential threat to the United States, its democratic allies, and many partners around the world. President George W. Bush declared a “War on Terror,” with the Afghanistan campaign as a central element of that war.

Strategy

U.S. strategy was widely perceived in Europe as overly militarized with little regard to international law and norms. The Bush administration’s decision to conduct the initial stages of the Afghanistan campaign as a “coalition of the willing” left many European governments doubting Washington’s commitment to NATO. After achieving a rapid defeat of the Taliban, U.S. strategy was to continue to pursue al-Qa'ida and other extremists in the region, and to work with the international community to provide humanitarian and other assistance necessary to rebuild Afghanistan and prevent it from serving again as a safe haven for terrorists. However, the Iraq War soon dominated political attention and drained military and development assistance resources. In 2006 the administration affirmed that Afghanistan and Iraq were the front lines of the “War on Terrorism,” but it was then looking to NATO allies, the European Union, and other international partners to take on a larger role.

President Obama came to office in 2009 arguing that the Iraq War was a diversion and that Afghanistan is the “central front” in the struggle against violent extremism. Obama committed 17,000 additional troops to Afghanistan within a month of taking office, and articulated a comprehensive new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan on March 27. This new strategy narrowed the mission to focus on efforts, “to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda” through increased aid to Pakistan, establishing a better way to measure progress in combating terrorists, and ramping up efforts to train the Afghan army and police force with the deployment of an additional 4,000 trainers.²⁶ The Obama strategy also placed a new emphasis on civilian capacity-building, which European governments

found appealing. Obama named General Stanley McChrystal, known for pioneering the U.S. Army's counterinsurgency concepts in Iraq, as commander of the ISAF mission.

As security continued to deteriorate over the course of 2009 and General McChrystal submitted his assessment of the conditions on the ground, the Obama administration again raised the stakes. After a lengthy policy review, President Obama refined his strategy in December and decided to send 30,000 additional troops to the region. Obama also announced that the transfer of American forces out of Afghanistan would begin in July 2011—the first American withdrawal timeline of the war. This new strategy includes three main elements designed to turn the tide: 1) U.S. and ISAF partners working to target the insurgency where it is concentrated, secure key population centers, and enhance capabilities of Afghan security forces; 2) Work with partners to improve accountable and effective Afghan governance at the national, regional, and local level, and focus assistance on areas that can have an immediate and enduring impact; 3) Forge a strategic partnership with Pakistan. This plan called for more robust counterinsurgency efforts to protect Afghans living in Taliban strongholds in the south and east of the country, as well as an escalation of targeted military strikes against al Qa'ida, Taliban, and other insurgent leaders in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.²⁷

U.S. relations with the Karzai government have become strained due to its general lack of capacity, continued allegations of corruption, and questions about the fairness of the August 2009 presidential elections. These doubts about the Karzai government have complicated execution of the Obama administration's strategy and efforts to maintain Congressional and public support.

The most vexing element of the strategy remains relations with Pakistan. Despite good relations and expanded assistance to the Zardari government, cooperation between elements of the Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence agency (ISI) and radical extremists, including al Qa'ida appears to persist. This relationship, coupled with Pakistan's reluctance to commit sufficient resources to gain control of its frontier regions along the Afghan border, provide Afghan insurgents with valuable safe havens.

Resource Commitments

The United States is shouldering the bulk of the burdens for maintaining security in Afghanistan and training of their security forces. As of November 2010, the United States fielded about 90,000 troops as part of ISAF and an additional 10,000 operating independently of the NATO mission. Total U.S. force levels in Afghanistan are expected to remain constant at the 100,000 level through mid-2011. Washington provides 76 of the 150 OMLTs (Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams) for training the ANA and 279 Police Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (POMLTs) for the ANP; NATO as a whole currently only fields 38 POMLTs.

The United States has provided approximately \$13.4 billion between 2002 and 2010 in non-military assistance to Afghanistan.²⁸ These resources have supported programs to strengthen Afghan governance, infrastructure, economic development, education, rule of law, and counter-narcotics programs. The Obama administration has increased U.S. civilian assistance to Afghanistan and Pakistan over the past two years, with a focus on new alternative development programs, strengthening the rule of law, and short-term job creation programs, in the south and east of Afghanistan and the frontier regions of Pakistan. The United States has also initiated an "uplift" of civilian personnel in Afghanistan to help stabilize key regions and manage expanded assistance

programs. The U.S. civilian presence in Afghanistan has grown from about 360 to 1,100 personnel between January 2009 and the end of 2010, but given security and other operational limitations, only about 400 of those personnel are working with PRTs and DSTs in regions outside Kabul. The civilian uplift goal is to place 1,500 personnel in country by January 2012.²⁹

Political Support

After nine years of engagement, with an expanding presence and mounting casualties, American legislators and citizens increasingly want assurance that their investments are producing tangible results. A Bloomberg poll in October 2010 revealed that only 40 percent of respondents believed that it was worth it to keep fighting, and an earlier Newsweek poll found that only 26 percent of Americans believe the U.S. is winning the war. Only 33 percent believe that it is even possible to achieve stability in the region. Nonetheless, sizable majorities of Americans remain convinced that stabilization of Afghanistan will improve U.S. security and that eliminating the terrorists' bases there is worth the commitment of U.S. military forces.³⁰

European and EU Commitments

Threat assessment

Most EU governments accept that the 9/11 attacks demonstrated the potential for catastrophic terrorism and that extremist safe havens in Afghanistan and Pakistan threaten regional and transatlantic security. Many European leaders don't, however, subscribe to President Obama's contention that Afghanistan is "the central front" in the struggle against terrorism and have had strong reservations about U.S. strategy and calls for greater resource commitments. European governments opposed Taliban rule and agree that its return to power would be damaging to Afghan civil liberties and regional stability. Without a sense of global commitment and existential urgency, European involvement in Afghanistan has been more fragmented and hesitant than that of the United States.

Strategy

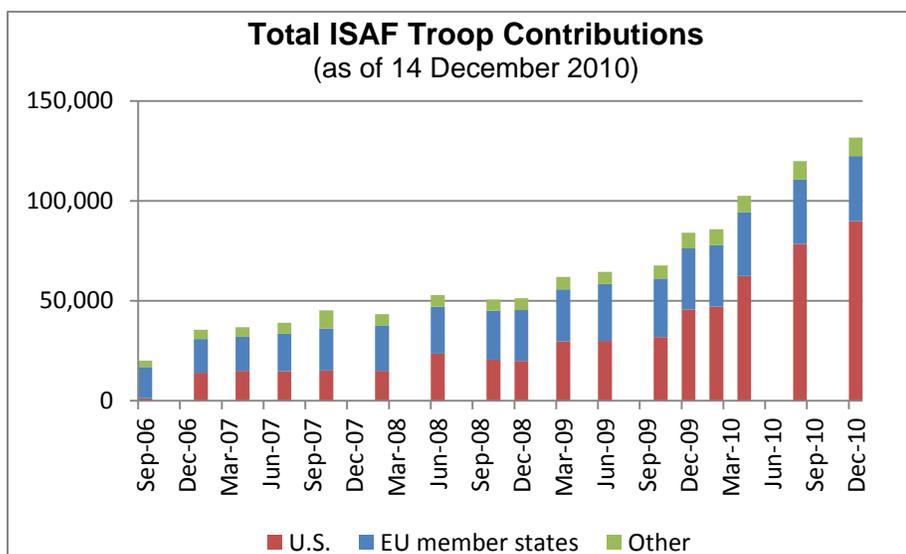
The initial intervention in Afghanistan came after the first-ever invocation of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, and was strongly supported by individual European states. However, Europeans objected to what they saw as the overly militarized nature of U.S. strategy in OEF. Europeans have felt that the threat is better addressed by the security services and law enforcement authorities, coupled with enhanced development assistance and other support to the Afghan government. Differences with the Bush administration over the initiation and conduct of the Iraq War further strained relations. Washington convinced hesitant European governments to agree to a NATO takeover of ISAF and expansion of the mission with assurances that the insurgency was largely defeated and that this would be a challenging peacekeeping mission. As the Taliban regained strength and mounted widespread attacks after 2006, many European governments and publics grew uncomfortable with the mission and mounting pressures from the U.S. and other allies to adopt more aggressive rules of engagement

and counterinsurgency tactics. Few accepted that Europe’s security needed to be defended at the Hindu Kush.

Most European governments are reticent to employ their military forces overseas other than in UN-mandated peacekeeping or humanitarian operations. U.S. Defense Secretary Gates has publicly lamented the “demilitarization of Europe.”³¹ In many EU countries the debate over whether or not to label the Afghan conflict a “war” still rages. President Sarkozy and others heralded the NATO strategy embraced in April 2009 as a triumph of the European vision with more focus on “building Afghan capabilities than on killing the Taliban.” Most European leaders still do not share the depth of the U.S. conviction that the ongoing counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan are essential to preventing future terrorist strikes on the West.

Resource commitments: Contributions to NATO operations

The differences in threat perceptions and thin public support have resulted in European human and financial commitments in Afghanistan considerably smaller than those of the United States. With the exception of Cyprus and Malta, all EU member states have contributed troops to ISAF, with the UK, Germany, France, and Italy providing the largest European contributions. EU member states have slowly, but consistently, increased their troop contributions to ISAF since 2006. Securing the deployment of these forces, however, required major internal battles and concerted transatlantic diplomacy. Following President Obama’s December 2009 announcement that the U.S. would deploy 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan, several EU member states pledged about 7,000 additional troops. As of December 2010, EU member states’ troop contributions to ISAF totaled 32,481 and represented 25 percent of the total ISAF troop count. These totals include about 1,200 trainers and responsibility for 48 OMLTs out of a total of 150. Not all European countries have committed personnel to NTM-A, and many have provided fewer troops than promised, leading to significant gaps in trainers and mentors that have been or will be filled by U.S. and Canadian forces.



Source: ISAF Placemat, 14 December 2010.³²

EU member states have also contributed to civilian security efforts through NATO. In March 2009, the member nations of the European Gendarmerie Force (EUROGENDFOR)—France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, and Spain—agreed to a French proposal to conduct police training in Afghanistan. EUROGENDFOR personnel have partnered with NTM-A (NATO Training Mission Afghanistan) to fill about 200 of the mission’s 609 positions for gendarmerie trainers, including contributions to POMLTs and have the lead for training and mentoring ANCOF forces at Regional Training Center-North. Poland, Spain, the UK, and Denmark also contribute to POMLTs.

Resource commitments under CSDP

The EU has also undertaken communitarian efforts in Afghanistan as part of CSDP. In 2005, the EU and Afghanistan issued a joint declaration on an EU-Afghanistan partnership based on shared priorities such as the establishment of strong and accountable institutions, security and justice sector reform, counter-narcotics, and development and reconstruction. The EU has since made strengthening the rule of law in Afghanistan through the development of a strong police force and justice system its key priority. The Country Strategy Paper outlines the EU’s commitment to Afghanistan until 2013, citing rural development, governance, and health as its three focal areas. The EU has posted a Special Representative in Kabul since early 2002 to liaise with the Afghan government and the international community, and the incumbent, Vygaudas Ušackas, has authority to advise on EU Afghanistan policy, coordinate its implementation, and negotiate on behalf of the Union.³³

Germany agreed to take on the task of police training in Afghanistan, but after the project suffered from poor recruitment and performance, NATO asked the EU to take control and EUPOL was established in June 2007. EUPOL works to develop and execute training techniques for the Afghan Police, as well as other civilian officials in the Afghan government. EUPOL comprises the bulk of the EU civilian presence in country. EUPOL was authorized to deploy 400 police officers, but had 301 international staff and about 172 local employees as of November 2010.³⁴ EU governments have had difficulty recruiting for the Afghan mission, in part because sizable numbers of active duty and retired European police officers are currently serving in the missions in Bosnia and Kosovo. The lack of an EU agreement with NATO on sharing classified information has somewhat restricted EUPOL’s situational awareness and operations in dangerous operating environments. In terms of effect, experts on security sector reform have questioned whether the European “community policing” model can be successfully applied in Afghanistan.

The EU (European Community and member states combined) have committed some €8 billion in assistance to Afghanistan for the period 2002-2010. Of this amount, over €1.3 billion has been contributed through the EC budget covering a range of activities, including governance, support to the ANP and justice sector reform, alternative livelihoods, health, and border management. EU budget assistance is slated to rise to €200 million a year for the period 2011-13, with focus on the priority programs identified by the Afghan government at the Kabul Conference.

Political support

Political leaders and citizens in most European countries have been largely unenthusiastic about the international engagement in Afghanistan. While public support for the Afghan war in Europe has

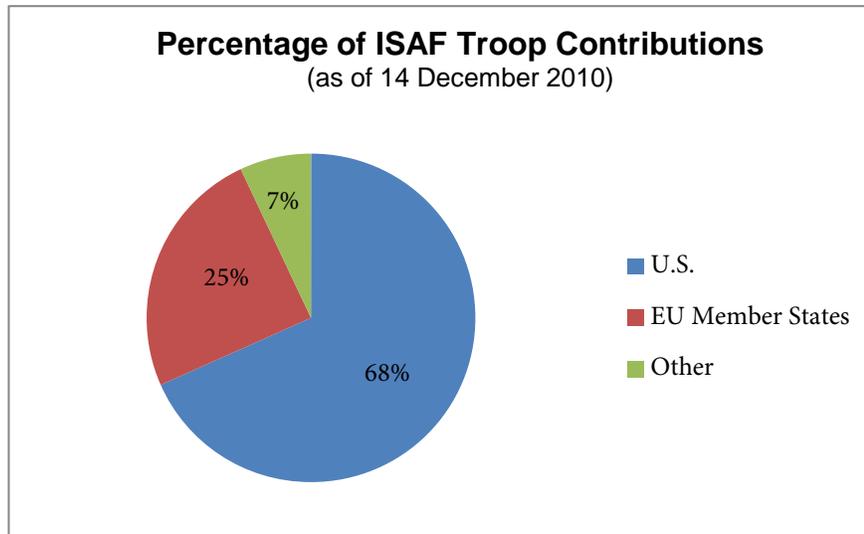
recovered slightly from the all-time lows of fall 2009, anti-terror efforts and the war in general have received much less public support in Europe than in the United States.³⁵ In France 70 percent of adults polled are either completely or mostly opposed to the mission. In Germany 35 percent of the public want their troops removed immediately, and 44 percent want them to return by the end of 2011, conditions permitting.^{36,37} As the number of British soldiers killed in Afghanistan approached (and has since surpassed) 300 in April 2010, public support for the war was at an all-time low, with only 32 percent of those polled in favor of the military operation and 55 percent opposed, a number that has since increased to 60 percent.³⁸ European leaders who do support continuation of the international presence often cite that it prevents a return of Taliban rule, which would have abhorrent consequences for human rights.

Increased casualties since 2009 have re-energized public opposition to the war in most European countries. Prime Minister Balkenende's effort to extend the deployment of 1,950 Dutch troops to the end of 2010 led to the collapse of his government, and Dutch forces began withdrawing in August 2010. A number of other European governments have begun discussing withdrawal dates including Germany, Italy, Poland, Denmark, and even the UK.

Convergence of Effort?

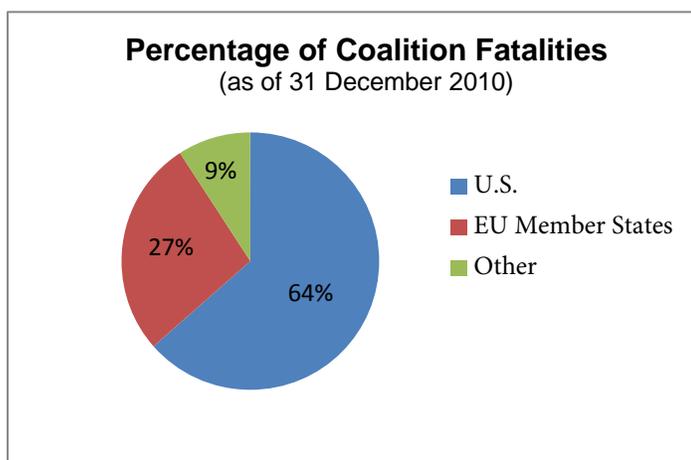
Despite the many setbacks and disagreements between Washington and various European capitals over strategy, military operations, and resource commitments, there has been considerable convergence in political engagement with the Afghan government and civilian assistance efforts. Overall convergence of effort has grown during the Obama administration. European governments and publics have generally welcomed Obama's decisions to narrow the objectives, increase the civilian role in stabilization programs, and set July 2011 as a target date for military disengagement. While these developments have led to improvements in transatlantic security cooperation concerning Afghanistan, the U.S. and Europe still disagree on important policy and operational matters. There are also shortcomings in the overall coordination and integration of military and civilian stabilization and reconstruction efforts.

Washington has expressed frustration for several years with imbalances in both the level of U.S. and European military contributions and the risks to which they have been exposed. Europe was slow to provide forces for the initial rounds of ISAF. However, European governments were also dismayed by Washington's decision to opt out of that mission, preferring to focus its efforts on OEF. U.S. contributions to ISAF began to grow after 2006, but at the time President Obama came to office, European and partner governments were still providing 43 percent of total ISAF forces and had incurred about 35 percent of the casualties. The Obama administration has used subsequent U.S. troop 'surges' to pressure European allies to also increase their contributions, but with limited success. President Obama called the modest allied pledges following the Strasbourg/Kehl Summit a "down payment." Obama's inability to secure more substantial allied commitments, at a time when he enjoyed enormous popularity in Europe, led critics in Congress and the media to contend that his new strategy and style of leadership were no more effective than those of President Bush and reinforced the sense in U.S. political circles that Europe is unwilling to pull its weight in safeguarding transatlantic security from global threats.



Source: ISAF Placemat, 14 December 2010.³⁹

Differences in doctrine, capabilities, and national “caveats”—which restrict the operational or geographic activities of most European military forces in Afghanistan—have long perturbed U.S. and NATO military commanders. Several NATO allies did relax their national caveats somewhat following the 2006 Riga Summit to allow deployment in “emergency” situations, and France dropped nearly all operational restrictions on its troops. However, the refusal of about half of European governments and parliaments to modify these restrictions has exacerbated divisions both across the Atlantic and among European NATO members over the increasingly evident inequities in risk-sharing, as well as burden-sharing, in Afghanistan. Public complaints by U.S. officials and commanders about the caveats and other shortcomings of European forces have sometimes been counterproductive with European politicians already bucking domestic opposition. In addition, incidents of unintended Afghan civilian casualties, as happened when German forces called in a U.S. airstrike on a tanker convoy near Kunduz in September 2009, have reinforced European concerns about less restrictive rules of engagement.



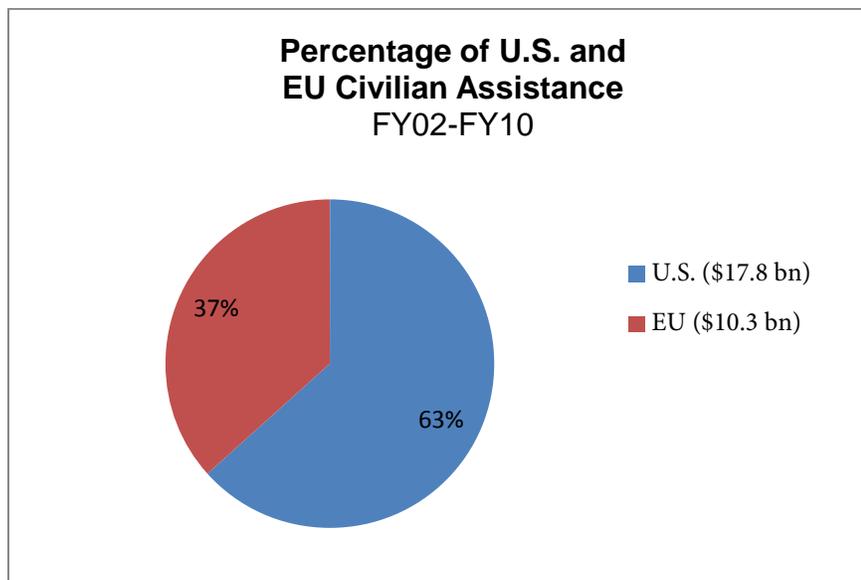
Source: iCasualties.org.⁴⁰

The lack of a common NATO counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine and failure of most European militaries to embrace COIN tactics has also constrained integration of European and American military operations and cultural differences may well make it hard to achieve. The Alliance has made progress in doctrinal, training, and operational issues, particularly with the development of the NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ). However, many European governments remain wary about the conduct of counterinsurgency operations and some are subject to legal and/or parliamentary restrictions due to lingering negative political connotations associated with the strategy.

Most European governments are reluctant to undertake or lack a mandate for military counterterrorist operations, including the targeted killing of key al Qaeda and Taliban insurgents. Operational reports disclosed by Wikileaks in July 2010 strengthened parliamentary objections. The expanded U.S. use of drones in Afghanistan and Pakistan for these operations has also become controversial in some European countries.

Washington has lamented the failure of several EU member states and the EU to meet commitments to support police training, rule of law, and judicial reform programs in Afghanistan. The modest size of EUPOL, coupled with logistical and other complications, have limited the EU contribution in this area. Harmonization of U.S. and European efforts in security assistance and training programs has also been problematic. Multiple and sometimes conflicting inputs from different contributors and stakeholders (NATO, EU, UN, and national governments) have often led to a disjointed and confusing approach to police training. This led to the creation of the International Police Coordination Board and various subgroups, which are designed to ensure more effective integration of various police training activities and provide policing advice to military leaders and the Afghan government. NATO has had a Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan since 2003 to liaise with the Afghan government and international organizations. In January 2010, former UK Ambassador to Afghanistan Mark Sedwill was appointed to the post, with a mandate to assume a greater role in coordinating the delivery of international civil support to the ISAF campaign.

While U.S. officials have been disappointed with the scope of engagement by the EU and its member states in civilian assistance, there appears to be considerable complementarity in transatlantic efforts. This has been achieved through coordination with respect to the planning for and implementation of plans flowing from various assistance conferences, beginning with the Bonn Conference in 2001 and up through the 2010 London and Kabul conferences. U.S. civilian assistance has focused heavily on infrastructure projects (roads and power), economic development, education, and alternative (agricultural) development/counter narcotics programs. The European assistance priorities of governance, justice/rule of law, and health seem largely complementary. Nonetheless, there is still not an effective executive-level mechanism in Kabul for coordination of the civilian assistance of the international community—both official and non-governmental—with the priorities of the Afghan government.



Sources: EU Engagement in Afghanistan Factsheet⁴¹ and U.S. Foreign Operations Congressional Budget Justifications, 2002-2011.⁴²

Factors/Variables Influencing the Outcome

Several major factors will influence the outcome of U.S. and European engagement and 2011 will be a decisive year. Rising casualties and the limited success of the campaigns in Marja and Kandahar, coupled with the need to reduce governmental spending in the midst of the enduring financial crisis, have increased pressures on both sides of the Atlantic to meet the targets for transition to an Afghan lead in security between 2011 and 2014. A number of European governments are right on the edge of acceptable levels of casualties and many have seen the fall of the Dutch government in 2010 as a cautionary note.

The strength of the insurgency and the ability of the Afghan government to take on increased responsibility for security are also key variables impacting U.S. and European commitment. There are signs that U.S. counterterrorism operations against key al Qaeda and Taliban fighters are increasingly eroding insurgent morale and recruitment. The Afghan government has launched its reintegration campaign to convince mid- and lower-level Taliban fighters to lay down their arms. If these efforts, coupled with the development of a political dialogue with Taliban leaders, are successful, the strength of the insurgency could begin to wane. The progress of efforts by the Pakistani government to cut its ties with the Taliban and gain control over its frontier areas will be another major factor in diminishing the strength of the insurgency. The capacity of the Afghan government to enhance governance, deliver essential services, combat corruption, and implement effective justice and rule of law will also be decisive.

Dramatic developments in the region, such as further political instability in Pakistan, or the emergence of another major international crisis (Iran or North Korea), could also have an impact on political attention and commitment to the mission.

Scenarios

There are a number of scenarios that one can envision for Afghanistan. Three seem most plausible:

1. A continuation of current trends through 2011, with limited success against the insurgents, modest gains in Afghan governance, and mounting public disaffection with the mission in Europe and the United States.
2. Dramatic breakthroughs in the security situation in Afghanistan or Pakistan, including a collapse of the insurgency and some form of reconciliation with elements of the Taliban and reintegration of some insurgents.
3. A major setback such as the collapse of the Karzai government or of the counterinsurgency campaign in the south and east, perhaps as a result of a catastrophic attack on ISAF forces or a base (something akin to the 1993 ambush of U.S. forces in Mogadishu or the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut).

Pressures for withdrawal would build under the first and the third scenarios, with many objectives of transatlantic engagement incomplete or even undone. Transatlantic engagement through 2014 and beyond can probably be sustained under scenario one, but would be far more likely under scenario two.

U.S. and European leaders have found it difficult to articulate what would comprise success of transatlantic engagement in Afghanistan. The 2001 Bonn agreement and the 2004 Afghan constitution envisioned a highly-centralized democracy. President Karzai's government has tried to make this model work, with some devolution of authority to local officials. However, it is unlikely it can be sustained given the limited legitimacy and capacity of the central government, as well as Afghanistan's political culture and history. Much less ambitious end states could safeguard transatlantic strategic interests. A decentralized model, which retained national control over foreign policy, the armed forces, customs, and counter-narcotics operations, but granted provincial and local

governments considerable latitude in economic, social, and law enforcement policies, would be more likely to engender the support of the country's various ethnic and sectarian groups, as well as reformed elements of the insurgency.⁴³ Most European governments appear comfortable with this end state.

Mixed-sovereignty would be a more radical move away from the post-2001 governance model, but Afghanistan functioned under this model in relative stability for much of the 20th century. It would acknowledge the de facto arrangements that have seen several provincial governors leverage their own security forces and power bases to reach *modi vivendi* with the central government. It could preserve transatlantic strategic interests if the United States and other members of the international community were willing to support the central government in enforcing this power sharing arrangement with regional warlords through the threat of punitive military actions and allocation of foreign assistance. This outcome would require more substantial U.S. and possibly European engagement in Afghanistan and neighboring countries to ensure regional stability.

A number of other outcomes for Afghanistan are possible that would threaten transatlantic security interests. De facto partition between the Pashtun-dominated south under Taliban control and the largely Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara areas in the north and west of the country, or into a number of mini states, is one scenario that some experts on the region envision. This outcome could result from a political settlement or a reconciliation deal wherein the central government gave the Taliban too much autonomy in the south. It could lead to further internal conflict in Afghanistan and provide the Taliban with safe havens for cross-border operations designed to destabilize Pakistan with much larger strategic consequences—including the emergence of a “Talibanistan” armed with nuclear weapons.

If the Karzai government collapses, Afghanistan could revert to the kind of anarchy and civil strife of the 1990s that set the stage for the Taliban’s rise to power. Afghanistan would likely reemerge as a lawless and ungoverned space and an ideal base for extremist groups to plan terrorist strikes and destabilize Pakistan and other neighbors. It would be seen as a complete failure of engagement by the United States, NATO, the United Nations, the European Union, and other elements of the international community, with global repercussions.

Impact of the Afghan Engagement on the EU/U.S. Security Relationship

The Afghanistan case illustrates a number of difficulties in transatlantic security cooperation on emerging global challenges. Differences in conceptual understanding of the conflict and the nature of the mission have led to asymmetrical and incompatible human and financial contributions, threatening not only the goal of stabilizing Afghanistan, but also the future of EU-U.S. security cooperation.

The envisioned NATO-EU division of labor in which NATO does the fighting and establishes a secure environment and the EU then takes responsibility for reconstruction is not working. The Afghan engagement has highlighted the limits of the EU as an actor in semi-permissive environments and exposed its lack of doctrine and capacity in security sector reform. At the same time, NATO has

consistently underperformed in this field as well, and the lack of civilian capacity in NATO is well known. As both institutions now consider how best to develop these capabilities, this opens new opportunities for cooperation, particularly in light of enduring fiscal constraints.

It is hard to envision another transatlantic undertaking in the security area on the scale and scope of the current engagement in Afghanistan in the near future. However, irregular warfare and regional instability are likely to remain among the leading threats to transatlantic security in the coming decade. The new NATO Strategic Concept and Lisbon Summit Declaration reaffirm that enhanced cooperation with the EU and other partners is essential to successful implementation of the comprehensive political, civilian, and military approach to crisis management and response. NATO leaders have also agreed to develop a modest civilian capability to interface more effectively with partners in stabilization and reconstruction missions. The revised ISAF strategy may provide guidelines for ensuring better integration of NATO and EU efforts at the outset of future interventions in weak and post-conflict states.

While NATO-EU cooperation in Afghanistan has not provided a template for future engagements, it has advanced the transformation of European armed forces. European governments have been required to restructure their forces to meet expeditionary requirements. Even though they still lag behind U.S. forces in such missions, Europe has the most combat-experienced and capable forces they have fielded in a long time.

Several policy recommendations emerge from this case:

- The EU countries need to expand their commitment to training the Afghan national security forces, particularly the police, and support to the development of the rule of law, in order to ensure the success of the transition plans agreed to at the Lisbon ISAF-Afghanistan Summit.
- Concerted efforts should be undertaken to augment funding and staffing for the EU's crisis response capabilities, including the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability, and that those capabilities be better integrated with the development of NATO's comprehensive approach and new civilian planning capability to ensure more effective and efficient transatlantic civil-military management of future complex contingencies.
- An EU-NATO security agreement should be concluded to allow for easy exchange of classified information and overcome other operational limitations in the field that are diminishing the security and effectiveness of EU personnel in the field and the success of combined EU-NATO missions. Ad hoc arrangements are no longer adequate.

Given the complexity of the global environment and diverse national interests, common European and American strategic assessments may again prove difficult to attain in various future crises. In such cases, leaders on both sides of the Atlantic should strive to bridge those differences at the outset of a mission by articulating agreed goals and clear divisions of labor.