



NATO Defense Ministers and counterparts from non-NATO nations that contribute troops to ISAF discuss process of training Afghan forces

NATO

# ISAF and Afghanistan

## The Impact of Failure on NATO's Future

By TARN D. WARREN

*There is only one thing worse than fighting with allies, and that is fighting without them.<sup>1</sup>*

—Winston Churchill

**A**lliances are difficult. They are an imperfect form of collective statecraft that often directly affects the security and well-being of the majority of the world's population. Although specific alliances often morph or fail, the practice of alliance persists. In fact, alliances have been alive and well at least since the Delian League in Greece in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. There have always been a need and a reason to form one.<sup>2</sup>

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is no exception. Signed on April 4, 1949, the Alliance was “conceived in fear and born in a fatigued Europe”<sup>3</sup> and has survived for over 60 years. Since inception, its membership has grown, its focus has transformed, and its reason for existing has come under intense assault. Yet it still exists.

More recently and under United Nations (UN) mandate, NATO has assumed leadership of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan with a charter that includes providing security, governance, and reconstruction and development.<sup>4</sup> This was NATO's first “out of area” mission, and the stakes were (and still are) high. Many international scholars, leaders, and diplomats claim that ISAF is on shaky ground, and if it fails in Afghanistan, NATO may suffer a fatal blow. On balance, however, and despite its imperfections and occasional inefficiency, NATO will survive even if ISAF fails. Although aspects of them will be mentioned, the focus herein is not an examination of ISAF operations per se, but rather the persistent resiliency of an imperfect NATO Alliance. In the end, members simply have more to lose than to gain by allowing NATO to disintegrate.

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U.S. Air Force (Bradley Lall)

GEN Petraeus speaks to forces at Counterinsurgency Training Center, Camp Julien, Afghanistan

### NATO Resiliency

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, many understandably questioned the need for NATO. After all, history tends to show that alliances form against threats, and when the threat disappears, the alliance often does as well.<sup>5</sup> The U.S.-Soviet alliance in World War II is an example. There was also a “peace dividend” to be had. The Cold War was immensely expensive for the stakeholders. Once it was over, there was widespread sentiment on both sides of the Atlantic to reduce defense spending. Indeed, many in Congress pressured President George H.W. Bush to consider disbanding NATO and reduce the U.S. debt that had accumulated in the 1980s largely due to military expenditures.<sup>6</sup> Even in Europe, ground zero for NATO’s original purpose, many wanted to escape American dominance and looked for ways that the European Union (EU) could supplant NATO politically and militarily.<sup>7</sup> Hence, why would NATO be different enough to defy trends found throughout history?

Several factors were at work that helped preserve the Alliance just after the end of the Cold War. First, the elimination of the Warsaw Pact created a large power vacuum in Central and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, nobody could really predict the intentions of the “new” Russia, especially considering how it historically treated its “near abroad.” The Bush administration recognized this problem and, with strong Western European support, began to strengthen political and military ties with the newly independent Central and Eastern European states. His policy goal was to foster a Europe “whole and free,” and NATO was the catalyst.<sup>8</sup> Another factor was a moral one. Some stated that the United States “owed”

NATO membership to the former Warsaw Pact nations for the “sellout” at Yalta in 1944.<sup>9</sup> To them, it was simply the right thing to do.

Initial NATO transformation was slow and laborious. Shifting focus, policy, procurement, and training programs from a known 40-year threat to a new and ambiguous environment would take time. NATO needed a problem to solve to remind the doubters of its worth and to prove its resiliency. It got two, both in the 1990s: Bosnia and Kosovo. Bosnia was an ethno-political mess—not something America was eager to jump into. The United States had just completed Operation *Desert Storm*, had a huge debt, wanted to benefit from the aforementioned “peace dividend,” and was reducing its military footprint in Europe. The dominant U.S. policy position was that the Europeans would have to solve the Bosnia imbroglio. But after 3 years and the introduction of ethnic cleansing, pressure mounted. Although the United States did not want to get dragged into another Vietnam-like quagmire, it became evident that the Europeans would

NATO still had a conventional high-intensity war mindset, and, although all the stakeholders agreed transformation was needed, the Alliance was not structurally prepared to conduct expeditionary operations, peacekeeping, or peace enforcement. Nevertheless, NATO successfully adapted in stride to get a grip on both Bosnia and Kosovo, learned as an organization, and gradually improved its effectiveness.<sup>13</sup> In fact, it could be argued that the crises in Bosnia and Kosovo helped save NATO in the otherwise uncertain 1990s.<sup>14</sup> The Alliance showed resilience under strain.

Aside from the significance of Bosnia and Kosovo, the debate over transformation added friction to the diplomatic, military, and bureaucratic machinery within NATO. Most of the stakeholders realized that the Alliance had to change to meet the new realities of the post-Cold War world, but how, where, and why? As mentioned already, the “what” had largely been settled, at least in the decade after the Cold War; in some form, NATO was still the only guarantor of collective security for

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not be able to handle the issue alone. Furthermore, this conflict showed that even with U.S. political support, NATO military operations were not going to happen without direct American involvement and leadership.<sup>10</sup>

In the end, U.S. leadership and military involvement proved vital. The resulting Dayton Accords exposed just how vital the United States was to post-Cold War NATO.<sup>11</sup> Kosovo showed similar problems for the Alliance. With the United Nations unable to reach agreement in the Security Council, the task again fell on NATO to solve. Even with political consensus in the North Atlantic Council concerning what had to be done, bureaucratic hurdles inhibited efficiency during execution. For example, basic conventional targeting of the enemy became, according to one observer, a comic exercise. Each target had to be approved by every foreign nation involved prior to execution.<sup>12</sup> This is hardly the way the most capable security alliance in the world is expected to perform.

But we must remember that NATO is also a political alliance, requiring consensus as a sine qua non for legitimacy. Furthermore, scar tissue from the Cold War remained:

its members, and it felt intuitively comforting to keep this arrangement. Others saw the new NATO as an expensive enterprise in desperate search of a lasting threat. But that threat was in neither the transatlantic nor the European areas. As the debate intensified, cooler heads prevailed who realized that emerging threats to stability, such as humanitarian crises and transnational terrorism, could affect the West from a great distance. Facilitated by modern technology and mass media, the world got smaller, and as a result, NATO would gradually have to go global. According to one expert, although NATO’s core mission of collective security has not changed, the location has. NATO would have to become expeditionary.<sup>15</sup>

NATO survived the trials and turbulence of the post-Cold War 1990s; expanded membership to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic; and, in 1999, delivered a new strategic concept for the use of its forces in contingencies outside of Europe.<sup>16</sup> This new concept included a deployable NATO Response Force and the formation of a new expeditionary command and control headquarters similar in capability to a U.S. three-star joint forces land component command.

Unfortunately, the events of the next decade would test the resiliency and coherence of NATO at levels never seen before.

### The Birth of ISAF

The 9/11 attacks triggered a chain of events that inevitably and directly involved NATO. It seemed the tidy days of nation-state wars were over. Fighting transnational terrorism required new thinking and new responses. By 2002, the American response to the events of 9/11 was clear and in progress. And for the first time in the history of NATO, the members unanimously invoked the core principle of the Alliance: Article V, which clearly states that an attack on one member shall be considered an attack on all and that each member nation has an obligation to assist the attacked member by any means possible.<sup>17</sup> While “by any means possible” deliberately affords maximum political and military flexibility to its members, the symbolism of this act showed true solidarity. Figuratively, NATO flexed its collective muscles and showed resolve to aid its wounded strongest member. But how long would this resolve last?

Conceived during the December 2001 Bonn Conference and created on December 20, 2001, by United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1386, the International Security Assistance Force was the UN response to the situation in Afghanistan.<sup>18</sup> Restricted to the capital, Kabul, the intent was for ISAF to provide security to facilitate the progress of the nascent and fragile Afghan Transitional Authority and UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps inevitably and because of the need to maintain relevance, NATO took over the mission on August 11, 2003.<sup>20</sup> Simultaneously and particularly in the southern and eastern regions of Afghanistan, the U.S.-led Operation *Enduring Freedom* conducted largely counterterrorism operations.

While ISAF and *Enduring Freedom* amicably coexisted, their operations were not well synchronized due to significant differences in purpose, geography, and technical compatibility. But on the surface during these early days in theater, it did not seem to matter. Indeed, the United States initially resisted the idea of expanding ISAF’s mandate beyond Kabul, a position that would later be problematic for U.S. pleas to increase NATO’s mission in the country.<sup>21</sup> Also, many argue that the U.S. invasion of Iraq caused a hard split within NATO over Afghanistan and that

nations such as France, Germany, and Turkey refused to offer more timely help to ISAF because of it.<sup>22</sup> As a result, the United States pursued its counterterrorism (soon changing to counterinsurgency [COIN]) mission with a coalition of the willing, largely absent NATO. But with the unremitting gravitational pull of Iraq, America had to reconsider its Afghan policies. The United States needed more help.

That help came in late 2003 in the form of UNSCR 1510, which permitted ISAF, under NATO command and control, to expand

consensus and legitimacy. Simply put, ISAF operates with a peace-enforcement mandate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that NATO was the executive agent spoke well for its legitimacy and resiliency.

ISAF’s expansion in Afghanistan was a four-stage process that began in late 2003 and ended in October 2006 when NATO completed its fourth and final phase of expansion into the eastern part of the country.<sup>25</sup> Like the south, this region had been under

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beyond Kabul. It also reaffirmed that the ISAF mission was operationally restricted to providing a secure environment so that the Afghan authorities and international organizations could continue nationbuilding and strengthening the reach of the central government.<sup>23</sup> The differences in the *Enduring Freedom* and ISAF missions were gradually becoming more salient. They would not be as thorny in the largely peaceful north but

U.S. control for the previous 4 years and was another hotbed of insurgent activity. Unlike the south, the east consisted (and still consists) almost exclusively of U.S. forces. ISAF was now responsible for security in a country about the size of France with over 30 million people.<sup>26</sup> In addition to thousands of troops and commensurate equipment, ISAF was also responsible for the operation and effectiveness of 26 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)



Afghan National Army and ISAF regional commanders participate in first-ever combined staff meeting, July 2010

would, as we shall see, cause more serious issues as ISAF expanded to the south and east. To be fair, neither UNSCR 1510 nor the ISAF mission statement specifically forbade NATO forces from conducting offensive combat operations. The wording simply had to remain vague enough for consensus passage and to allow national flexibility during execution. While ambiguity is frustrating to some, it is not unique to ISAF, NATO, or the UN. Alliances through history have had to deal with vague or diluted language as the price of

scattered in key cities throughout Afghanistan.<sup>27</sup> Staffed by personnel with a mix of civilian and military expertise, PRTs continue to play a crucial role in extending the reach of the legitimate central government.

ISAF strength since 2006 has arguably been insufficient for the size of and mission in Afghanistan, whether conducting COIN or “providing security” or both. Since U.S. leadership has almost always been necessary for NATO operations and considering that the U.S. main effort since 2003 was Iraq,

Afghanistan had to accept what was left over. These conditions might have given the Taliban some breathing room to accelerate their insurgency. Nevertheless, by August 2009, ISAF consisted of approximately 64,500 troops from 42 countries with all 28 NATO members providing the bulk of these forces.<sup>28</sup> Overall, ISAF's performance in Afghanistan under NATO since 2003 has been mixed but impressive in several respects.

First, the fact that NATO has achieved consistent contributions (some quite significant) from all of its members during its first "out of area" operation is strong testament to the intrinsic value of the Alliance. Additionally and despite domestic resistance from many contributing nations' electorates, NATO and ISAF have stayed the course in Afghanistan for over 6 years. Second, there have been a number of specific improvements to the security, governmental, economic, and daily life spheres in Afghanistan that are rightly attributed to ISAF's presence and efforts. Starting at zero in 2002, the Afghan National Army (ANA) now numbers over 82,000 thanks to ISAF's training and mentoring and is increasingly taking the lead in the planning and execution of security operations and COIN, even in the more contentious regions of the country.<sup>29</sup> The ANA has also earned substantial levels of trust from the people.

ISAF and the ANA have secured several national and provincial elections, and approximately 67 percent of Afghans polled believe that the central government presence in their local area is significant.<sup>30</sup> This speaks well of ISAF's commitment to facilitate a strong and legitimate central Afghan government. On the economic, educational, and health fronts, Afghanistan has experienced consistent growth in gross domestic product since 2001, and legitimate agricultural production has doubled in the same timeframe.<sup>31</sup> ISAF has built or facilitated the construction of 3,500 schools, allowing over 7 million children, including 2 million girls, to receive a basic education. Additionally, ISAF has aided in the construction of clinics and programs that today provide 85 percent of the population access to basic health care.<sup>32</sup> Finally, ISAF enjoys popular support; 70 percent of Afghans support its presence in their country.<sup>33</sup> This fact cannot be overemphasized and by extension gives NATO excellent credibility as an alliance with a solid reputation and altruistic intentions.

## Under Pressure

If ISAF seems to be doing so well, why do so many politicians, scholars, and pundits state otherwise? Many of these same voices further warn of deeper problems within ISAF that threaten the future of NATO itself. The well-worn NATO issue of burdensharing has surfaced again, but this time with military personnel dying. The lack of true unity of command and effort inside ISAF is a thorny problem that creates friction, especially when U.S.-driven COIN efforts clash with the softer NATO-driven mission to "provide security and stability." And finally, national caveats—a NATO member's ability to pick

there was a 30 percent increase of Taliban attacks against ISAF and ANSF, and this trend continued into 2009.<sup>38</sup> Pleas from President Karzai for more NATO troops have largely fallen on deaf ears. For example, his request for 3,500 more troops at the 2004 NATO Istanbul Summit got him half as many and for less time.<sup>39</sup> This situation repeated itself several times until President Obama's pledge in December 2009 to send significantly more forces to Afghanistan. This prompted additional, albeit smaller, troop increases from European NATO nations. The President's decision represents a change in emphasis, if not strategy, and was the result of a stark,

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and choose from a menu of missions—seem to split ISAF into many hard-to-manage pieces. These issues put tremendous pressure on ISAF and paint a questionable future for it and the Alliance.

To most observers, the situation in Afghanistan is a classic insurgency led largely by the Taliban. Although many think that victory via a stable Afghan government and barely capable Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) is possible, almost everyone admits these conditions will take a long time to achieve. President Hamid Karzai stated as much and added that widespread corruption, narco-dollars, and criminality inhibit the development of stable and legitimate institutions in his country.<sup>34</sup> These sentiments and a raw acknowledgment of the renewed potency of the Taliban's effectiveness were recently echoed by President Barack Obama's Special Envoy to Afghanistan, Richard Holbrooke, and by the former ISAF commander, General Stanley McChrystal.<sup>35</sup> For example, between 2005 and 2006, the number of suicide attacks by insurgents and terrorists went from 27 to 139, an increase of more than 400 percent; the use of improvised explosive devices more than doubled, from 783 to 1,677; and the number of armed attacks almost tripled, from 1,558 to 4,542.<sup>36</sup> Combined with an initially nonexistent and later weak U.S. and ISAF presence in the narco-fueled south, it is easy to see why one observer asks, "How could America's 'good war' have gotten so badly off track?"<sup>37</sup>

More recently, the Taliban have continued to press their insurgency. In 2008,

candid, and comprehensive assessment by General McChrystal. His assessment underscored a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, a resilient and growing insurgency, and an urgent need to change to a strategy that focuses on the people, their security, and their political inclinations.<sup>40</sup>

Significantly, General McChrystal "up-gunned" the ISAF mission statement. Apparently attempting to merge the more kinetic and COIN-focused former *Enduring Freedom* mission with the necessarily vague and softer ISAF mission statement focused on "providing security and stability," the new mission statement asserts that "ISAF . . . conducts operations in Afghanistan to reduce the capability and will of the insurgency."<sup>41</sup> For NATO, this is a radical change; words matter. In no other NATO document related to ISAF will we find the word *insurgency* or *insurgent* or mention of the intent to conduct operations against insurgents. NATO widely uses the more imprecise terms *militant* and *security incident* rather than *insurgent attack*. This should not be a surprise; as already stated, NATO technically operates under a UN Chapter VII peace enforcement mandate. The fact that the North Atlantic Council allowed this new mission statement to stand might just be cosmetic; after all, contributing nations still have the ultimate "opt-out" card: the national caveat. As one expert noted, member nations no longer agree on the NATO mission in Afghanistan.<sup>42</sup>

Others point to the chronic tension between Europe and the United States over

what is viewed in much of Europe as largely an American problem rather than a NATO problem. These European NATO members want their troops to serve NATO, not the United States. To be fair, U.S. sentiment, by occasionally dismissing European contributions as useless, has not helped foster unity of effort either.<sup>43</sup> The most constructive and cerebral criticism came from General McChrystal himself, who noted that much of ISAF is not trained or equipped for COIN, that several contributing nations should increase their tour lengths in order to develop meaningful relationships with

on the cheap, knowing the United States, as the largest contributor by far, would eventually ensure collective security.<sup>46</sup>

For example, only five NATO nations currently meet or exceed the Alliance's 2 percent of gross domestic product defense spending requirement: the United States, United Kingdom, France, Greece, and Bulgaria. The other 23 nations are below 2 percent, some significantly.<sup>47</sup> This imbalance is not a new phenomenon, but has existed in one form or another for decades. Additionally, only about 6 percent of non-U.S. NATO troops (approximately 80,000) are trained and

U.S. pleas for help in Afghanistan have received a muted response. Many question why Europeans should value an alliance that the Americans ignore when they choose. In particular, France's and Germany's political hostility over Iraq has seriously eroded transatlantic solidarity.<sup>50</sup>

And finally, the most visible expression of an ISAF member nation's will or intent is the use of national caveats. While some NATO nations, such as Germany and Italy, contribute significant numbers of troops to ISAF, giving a strong appearance of burdensharing and solidarity, their troops are restricted to certain roles or geographic areas or both. For example, the Germans refuse to execute offensive combat operations or deploy outside Regional Command North, and the Turks will not deploy outside Kabul. According to some experts, these specific caveats, among others, have poisoned ISAF.<sup>51</sup> General McChrystal felt their deleterious effect on the ISAF mission and addressed them by stating that some nations in ISAF are overly protective of their own forces and need to get out of their bases and armored vehicles, engage the people, and physically collocate with the ANSF in order to be effective.<sup>52</sup>

Although some NATO nations are caveat-free, the situation is dire enough for the U.S. Secretary of Defense to declare that national caveats have created a two-tiered alliance of those who are willing to sacrifice and fight and those who are not, creating a state of affairs that will "effectively destroy the Alliance."<sup>53</sup> In addition to all of these problems within the Alliance, the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia has caused many European leaders and electorates to reconsider threats closer to home. They question the direct threat of the Taliban to Europe compared to the threat of an enigmatic and resurgent Russia.<sup>54</sup> While this sentiment may buoy the need for NATO in Europe, it does not help matters in Afghanistan.

### **NATO Impact If ISAF Fails**

ISAF and NATO are clearly struggling with many issues, but does this mean that NATO, resilient and steadfast as it has proven to be through several crises up to this point, will effectively collapse if ISAF fails in Afghanistan? Some prominent leaders and experts invoke this possibility. According to Richard Holbrooke, "NATO's future is on the line"<sup>55</sup> in Afghanistan. Others assert that



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the locals, and that unity of command and effort is needed for mission success.<sup>44</sup> The Taliban are paying attention and are aware of the fissures in the Alliance. According to some NATO and German officials, the Taliban have begun to specifically target German troops in the relatively safe north in an attempt to force Germany to quit and go home.<sup>45</sup>

Burdensharing is a fundamental requirement of a healthy alliance. All should sacrifice blood and treasure roughly equally in proportion to capability. This is not happening in ISAF. But cries of unequal burdensharing within NATO are certainly not new; even the Cold War saw this issue frequently. But in Afghanistan, it is not just a matter of taxpayer burden but of real lives lost. Due largely to entrenched social and labor programs, many European governments have consistently evaded the defense-welfare tradeoff by promising fair military contributions to NATO, but often failing to deliver. In effect, they could hide in the NATO security blanket and receive security

equipped for a deployment at any given time. When pressed, these governments often use the soft power alibi to try to compensate.<sup>48</sup> They either do not have the troops to send or do not want to send them.

The current imbalance has a political aspect as well: protest over the U.S. invasion of Iraq, which further threatens NATO's cohesion. According to the Spanish foreign minister, "The threat of mutual destruction during

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the Cold War had kept the boiling cauldron covered and the rifts hidden; Iraq blew the lid off to reveal all the fault lines in the Alliance.<sup>49</sup> According to other experts, this time it is not politics as usual. Many European nations have had enough of what they view as excessively aggressive and militant American unilateralism, especially in Iraq. As a result,



Spanish forces leave Forward Operating Base Bernardo de Galvez for patrol through Sang Atesh, Afghanistan

NATO must remain expeditionary, implying required success in Afghanistan, or seriously risk alliance-destroying U.S. disengagement.<sup>56</sup>

Indeed, what is the incentive for America, considering its global security requirements, to remain in an alliance that lacks the will to tackle complex transnational security crises that also have an indirect impact on the security of Europe? If ISAF fails in Afghanistan, it would join the ranks of the British and Soviets in the shameful list

security outside of NATO when its members agreed to form a 60,000-strong EU Multinational Corps.<sup>60</sup> But this corps exists only on paper; it never materialized. In fact, and with required U.S. support, it would end up borrowing the troops from NATO if needed.<sup>61</sup>

Simply put, the EU is not threatening to replace NATO. European taxpayers will not pay for it. And the United States is content with this position, for it will ensure U.S. influence, via NATO, in the affairs of Europe.

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of previous attempts to succeed by force in that country. More significantly, this outcome would bolster the Taliban and al Qaeda, and encourage wider unrest in the Middle East. Furthermore, it would probably ensure that the United States would not rely on NATO in the future, in effect rendering it useless. Afghanistan may well be NATO's "do or die moment."<sup>57</sup> Even President Obama remarked recently that "NATO's credibility is at stake in Afghanistan."<sup>58</sup>

In the backdrop of the crisis in Afghanistan, the EU is another possible threat to NATO's future. Several influential voices in Europe are calling for it to militarily replace NATO, freeing Europeans from what they see as American dominance in Europe and beyond. They are bitter about global "Americanization" and its attendant foreign policy, both of which are toxic to many Europeans.<sup>59</sup> During its 1999 Helsinki Summit, the EU took the first steps toward independent collective

A more cynical view is that NATO, with U.S. leadership, is useful to the EU. The United States will do all the dirty work in the world while the EU retains the moral high ground of noninvolvement plus the added bonus of security on the cheap.<sup>62</sup>

The question remains: If ISAF fails, would NATO go with it? Despite all the credible warnings by many respectable leaders, scholars, and observers, the answer is probably *no*. Not one NATO head of state or foreign minister, despite other grumblings, has suggested dissolving the Alliance. NATO was, is, and will remain critical for transatlantic security and for other reasons. NATO is the only institution in the world with the experience, structure, and capacity not only to handle large-scale security crises, but also to act as the hub of a global web of cooperative security initiatives.<sup>63</sup> Despite occasional rhetoric to the contrary, Europeans will continue to support NATO not only because Russia is in their

peripheral vision, but also because continuing to play the "burden-shifting" game gets them the best security at the cheapest price, far less than they would be forced to pay on their own.<sup>64</sup> They would rather tolerate an alliance with a hard-to-heel America than go it alone.

From the U.S. perspective, NATO is still relevant and useful despite the apparent unfair burdens on American troops and taxpayers. NATO is still the best means for America to remain involved in the affairs of Europe, and it also "augments the global prestige, political influence, and military power of the United States."<sup>65</sup> America cannot indefinitely solve the world's problems alone. NATO brings international legitimacy, the kind that matters when the United States has to defend its global adventures to a skeptical world. Although at times relations are strained, the United States and Europe are too tightly linked for the Alliance to dissolve. The political, economic, and cultural ties, cemented by shared values, will help hold NATO together. Finally, if the threat of ISAF failure portends the same for NATO, why is NATO still growing? In 2009 alone, Croatia and Albania joined, and France agreed to rejoin militarily.

NATO has faced many challenges to its legitimacy and relevance since its inception and especially since the end of the Cold War. It has searched for and found new doctrines and strategic visions. It has at times been slow to react to crises and clumsy in mission execution. Several have declared the Alliance hollow, others that the problems within ISAF and possible failure in Afghanistan will be the death knell for NATO. The issues of burden-sharing, unity of effort, and national caveats (among others) are indeed serious and need to be addressed. They threaten the cohesiveness and credibility of the Alliance. But these problems are not unique to the ISAF mission; to a lesser degree, they existed in Bosnia and Kosovo. Burden-sharing has been an issue practically since NATO's birth. Furthermore, one would be hard pressed to find any alliance in history that did not have unity of effort issues or restrictions, however slight, placed on troops by their own nations. Sovereign nations have their own foreign policy goals, and these matter.

If ISAF fails in Afghanistan, NATO will suffer a tremendous blow to its credibility, but one from which it will eventually recover. The United States would carry on the mission with a coalition of the willing and may not choose NATO as a partner for a while, but it would

not disengage from the Alliance. Neither would Europe. There are other simmering global security concerns on the horizon that for several practical, psychological, and economic reasons require a networked and experienced security structure with shared values. NATO is the only response. In the long run, the core members have much more to lose without NATO than they would gain by its demise. **JFQ**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Carlo D' Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life* (New York: Holt and Co., 2002), 693.

<sup>2</sup> John R. Deni, *Alliance Management and Maintenance: Restructuring NATO for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, "An Agenda for NATO: Toward a Global Security Web," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 5 (September–October 2009).

<sup>4</sup> ISAF Web site, available at <www.isaf.nato.int/en/our-mission/>.

<sup>5</sup> James M. Goldgeier, "NATO's Future: Facing Old Divisions and New Threats," *Harvard International Review* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2009), 48.

<sup>6</sup> Frank R. Douglas, *The United States, NATO, and a New Multilateral Relationship* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008), 66–67.

<sup>7</sup> Charles A. Kupchan, "The Atlantic Order in Transition: The Nature of Change in U.S.-European Relations," in *The End of the West? Crisis and Change in the Atlantic Order*, ed. Jeffrey Anderson, G. John Ikenberry, and Thomas Risse (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 118–119.

<sup>8</sup> Goldgeier.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Duignan, *NATO: Its Past, Present, and Future* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2000), 72.

<sup>10</sup> William I. Hitchcock, "The Ghost of Crises Past: The Troubled Alliance in Historical Perspective," in *The End of the West? Crisis and Change in the Atlantic Order*, 69–71.

<sup>11</sup> Jennifer Medcalf, *Going Global or Going Nowhere? NATO's Role in Contemporary Security* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang Publishers, 2008), 62–63.

<sup>12</sup> Sarwar A. Kashmeri, *America and Europe After 9/11 and Iraq: The Great Divide* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 2008), 55.

<sup>13</sup> Deni, 65–66.

<sup>14</sup> Douglas, 66.

<sup>15</sup> Kurt Volker, "The Bucharest Summit: NATO and the Future of the Trans-Atlantic Alliance," *Heritage Lectures*, no. 1082 (May 6, 2008), 1–2.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>17</sup> Goldgeier.

<sup>18</sup> United Nations (UN), UN Security Council Resolution 1386, December 20, 2001, available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/708/55/PDF/N0170855.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>19</sup> ISAF Web site.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Barfield, "The Roots of Failure in Afghanistan," *Current History*, no. 107 (December 2008); ISAF Web site.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> UN, UN Security Council Resolution 1510, October 13, 2003, available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/555/55/PDF/N0355555.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>24</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), "NATO's Role in Afghanistan," available at <www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\_8189.htm>.

<sup>25</sup> ISAF Web site.

<sup>26</sup> Barfield.

<sup>27</sup> NATO.

<sup>28</sup> Vincent Morelli and Paul Belkin, *NATO in Afghanistan: A Test of the Transatlantic Alliance* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, August 25, 2009), 1, available at <http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RL33627\_20090825.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> As of 2008, the Afghan National Army took the lead in approximately 62 percent of all security operations nationwide. See NATO, "Afghanistan Report 2009," 12–13, available at <www.nato.int/ebookshop/afghanistan\_report\_2009/afghanistan\_report\_2009\_en.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 19. Data come from a BBC/ABC/ARD opinion poll.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 31, 37.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>33</sup> NATO, "Progress in Afghanistan," 3, available at <www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/progress\_afghanistan\_2008.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> Hamid Karzai, "Afghanistan's Challenges," *Hampton Roads International Security Quarterly* (Spring/Summer 2009).

<sup>35</sup> See Richard Holbrooke, "Coordinated Support for Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Hampton Roads International Security Quarterly* (Spring/Summer 2009); and Stanley McChrystal, *Commander's Initial Assessment* (Kabul, Afghanistan: HQ ISAF, August 30, 2009), 1–1.

<sup>36</sup> Barfield.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* Additionally, when the author was on his first tour in Afghanistan in the southern Kandahar Province in 2003–2004, there was almost no U.S. presence in the poppy-rich provinces of Helmand, Uruzgan, and Nimroz.

<sup>38</sup> Morelli and Belkin, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Simon Serfaty, *The Vital Partnership: Power and Order. America and Europe Beyond Iraq* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 6.

<sup>40</sup> McChrystal, 1–1, 1–3.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 2–2.

<sup>42</sup> Azeem Ibrahim, "Testing the NATO Alliance: Afghanistan and the Future of Cooperation," *Harvard International Review*, no. 31 (Summer 2009).

<sup>43</sup> Anne Applebaum, "The Slowly Vanishing NATO," *The Washington Post*, October 20, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> McChrystal, 1–2, 2–1, 2–12.

<sup>45</sup> Nicholas Kulish, "German Limits on War Facing Afghan Reality," *The New York Times*, October 27, 2009.

<sup>46</sup> Wallace J. Thies, *Friendly Rivals: Bargaining and Burden-Shifting in NATO* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 222–223.

<sup>47</sup> NATO Home Page, available at <www.nato.int/docu/pr/2009/P09-009.pdf>.

<sup>48</sup> Serfaty, 13.

<sup>49</sup> From a personal interview by Kashmeri, 19.

<sup>50</sup> Kupchan, 122–124; Dieter Mahncke, "Maintaining European Security: Issues, Interests, and Attitudes," in *Redefining Transatlantic Security Relations: The Challenge of Change*, ed. Dieter Mahncke, Wyn Rees, and Wayne C. Thompson (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2004), 19–20.

<sup>51</sup> See Medcalf, 182–184; Morelli and Belkin, 22; and Leo G. Michel and Robert Hunter, "Keeping Our Allies on Our Side," *The Los Angeles Times*, October 27, 2009.

<sup>52</sup> McChrystal, 1–2, 2–12, 2–15.

<sup>53</sup> Robert M. Gates, remarks delivered at Munich Conference on Security Policy, Munich, Germany, February 10, 2008, available at <www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1214>; Medcalf, 184.

<sup>54</sup> Morelli and Belkin, 34.

<sup>55</sup> Holbrooke.

<sup>56</sup> Medcalf, 237.

<sup>57</sup> Kashmeri, 54.

<sup>58</sup> "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan," West Point, NY, December 1, 2009, available at <www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>.

<sup>59</sup> Allen G. Sens, "The Widening Atlantic, Part II: Transatlanticism, the New NATO, and Canada," in *NATO and European Security: Alliance Politics from the End of the Cold War to the Age of Terrorism*, ed. Alexander Moens, Lenard J. Cohen, and Allen G. Sens (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 22–23.

<sup>60</sup> Alexander Moens, "Thinking Outside the Box: NATO-ESDP Cooperation at Twenty-Three," in *NATO and European Security*, 71.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Thomas S. Mowle, *Allies at Odds? The United States and the European Union* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 160–161.

<sup>63</sup> Brzezinski, 9.

<sup>64</sup> Thies, 282.

<sup>65</sup> Douglas, 169.