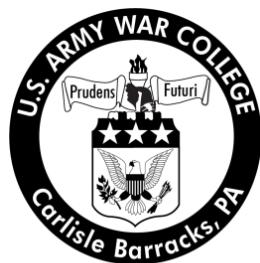


Civilian Research Project Senior Service College Fellow

Envisioning NATO Partnership Presence in Afghanistan from 2014 to 2020

by

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United States Army



United States Army War College
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ENVISIONING NATO PARTNERSHIP PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN FROM 2014 TO 2020

Introduction

Following the agreement to withdraw combat forces from Afghanistan in 2014, efforts continue to build competent Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and transition provincial security to the ANSF. Now is the time, with transition operations underway, for NATO leadership to determine what it will commit to Afghanistan as a part of its Strategic Partnership Declaration after 2014. Knowing that any NATO commitment must be agreed upon by all 28 member nations, each country's contribution must be able to withstand critical scrutiny over the expected costs, political support, consequential risks, and the over-arching idea of maintaining "good membership status," with the U.S. and the rest of the alliance. This study will present three options for NATO to pursue to meet their commitments to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA), and continue to meet the international goal of creating a secure Afghanistan that denies terrorist safe havens.

Why NATO Must Continue to Support Afghanistan

The NATO Alliance faces a difficult decision regarding its future in Afghanistan. Following the agreement to end combat operations in Afghanistan in 2014¹, efforts to build competent ANSF and transition provincial security to the ANSF accelerated. With the NATO Chicago Summit near and transition operations underway, now is the time for NATO leadership to determine what it will commit to Afghanistan post-2014.

Several drivers will influence NATO to continue its support to Afghanistan with military forces in the country. The first driver will be the international emphasis placed on stability in Afghanistan, evidenced by the number of United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR)

that apply to Afghanistan. UNSCR 2011, adopted on 12 October 2011, reaffirms four previous resolutions specifically regarding Afghanistan, and seventeen more resolutions that set out to stop terrorism, armed civilian conflicts, and the protection of women's rights.² Clearly, the General Assembly is concerned about the people of Afghanistan, as well as the problems that can spread from Afghanistan. The United Nations commitment to Afghanistan remains high. Contributing directly to the effort, the United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan maintains an international civil-military force of 430 people in addition to over 1,700 local civilians and UN volunteers working to improve political and government development and resolve humanitarian issues in Afghanistan.³ Even more important and directly tied to security matters in Afghanistan, the UN- established Law and Order Trust Fund is nearly the entire finance mechanism behind the Afghanistan National Police.⁴

At present, nearly fifty nations contribute forces to ISAF, demonstrating continued commitment for Afghanistan stability by the International Community.⁵ Closely aligned with the United Nations position are the NATO alliance pledges of continued commitment to the people of Afghanistan during the 2010 Lisbon Summit, to ensure Afghanistan will never again be a safe haven for terrorists and terrorism.⁶ At that summit, the NATO Secretary General formalized NATO's commitment to Afghanistan and President Karzai through the Enduring Partnership Declaration.⁷ The declaration moved to acknowledge and support Afghanistan's sovereignty, and to pledge NATO's support to Afghanistan as part of a larger international comprehensive approach.⁸

Perhaps driving that commitment within NATO is the U.S. led movement to keep a military presence in Afghanistan. Assuming Afghanistan asks for continued military and security support,

the US will reciprocate with military forces in order to protect the investment in the GIROA and the country, and to continue the fight against terrorist threats stemming from the region.⁹

Threats to Afghanistan are still many, and the security apparatus in Afghanistan will need NATO's continued comprehensive and multi-national support. The Director of National Intelligence reported to the U.S. Congress that Al Qaeda continues to recruit and attempts to employ spectacular attacks. The Taliban will continue to use high profile attacks and assassination of key government figures to undermine security and influence the local populace.¹⁰

The current U.S. assessment is that Afghanistan will still need direct security assistance after 2014 to avoid failure.¹¹ Attempts to reduce the threat to the GIROA through reconciliation with insurgents have not gone well.¹² Meanwhile, the U.S. has long-term interests in Afghanistan for security and economic reasons and does not want to see Afghanistan security gains lost due to weak Afghan governance and insurgent safe haven in Pakistan; nor will the U.S. want to operate unilaterally in Afghanistan, even at the request of the GIROA.¹³ Therefore the U.S. will look to protect its interests in Afghanistan, and it will look for NATO partners for continued coalition support.

For sure, NATO is a willing partner in this affair for reasons greater than their alliance membership. The 2010 Lisbon Summit emphasized NATO's interests as, "Afghanistan's security is directly linked to our own security."¹⁴ The alliance has invested heavily in aid and development of Afghanistan in addition to the military contributions to ISAF. Approximately \$24 billion dollars for aid to Afghanistan has come from NATO and other partners excluding the

U.S.¹⁵ Donors will not want to see these investments lost or looked at as only short-term security gains.

Finishing the job of creating a professional security apparatus capable of taking care of Afghanistan's security requirements is the only sure way of maintaining security gains. ANSF are unlikely to be able to control the entire country by the end of 2014. NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) is overcoming years of under resourcing.¹⁶ The mission to recruit, train and equip Afghan security forces has seen a 42% growth in ANSF in approximately fifteen months.¹⁷ Still, massive limitations in the Karzai Administration and the GIRoA put control and support to the ANSF at risk for fracture and corruption; already undermining Afghan police forces.¹⁸ Therefore, the continued development through NATO training and advising could be critical to security in Afghanistan and the greater security concerns of the rest of the world.

With all the compelling reasons and commitments to continue military and financial support to Afghanistan, NATO must recognize the limiting factors to address and evaluate in order to arrive at a proposal that will succeed in a North Atlantic Council (NAC) vote.

Costs associated with continuing operations in Afghanistan, as previously stated will be heatedly discussed and a limiting factor among contributing nations. The U.S. has spent over \$557B alone and cannot continue to spend at the same rate in Afghanistan.¹⁹ USAID contributions since 2002 equal \$15B for development and government improvement.²⁰ The Law and Order Trust Fund that supports the Afghan National Police received over \$2.4B from 23 countries last year.²¹ Still after all that investment, given Afghanistan's near non-existent economy and their weak government and civil institutions, continued support and expenditures is

required to keep the country headed towards stability. For just the police force alone, the GIROA is able to cover only 3% of the ANP annual costs.²² President Karzai has publically stated that his country will need the international community to continue to provide \$10B per year through 2025 to keep the country going.²³ Going forward, each member will certainly look at how much they have already contributed to Afghanistan, how much they are being asked to contribute, and how much they are willing to contribute.

Public support for those costs and the continued support for Afghanistan will be a key factor in terms of political acceptability. In the U.S., the largest supporter of the operations and rebuilding of Afghanistan, popularity for the war in Afghanistan has gone from 90% favor and 5% opposed in 1990 to 36% in favor and 62% opposed in 2011.²⁴ Political acceptability of prolonging costly military operations in Afghanistan will be hard to come by. In France, public sentiment for the war was so low, President Sarkozy decided to push to end France's participation in 2013, one year ahead of the Alliance's plans.²⁵ All alliance members will have to contend with the popular support, or lack thereof, when recommending to their national leaders proposals to continue operations in Afghanistan. The lack of popular support creates political risk for government officials or their representatives.

Political acceptance by neighboring countries is another factor, and one that remains low among Afghan neighbors. Pakistan will threaten security and stability in Afghanistan.²⁶ Aside from recent border incursions with International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) forces Pakistan military forces, Pakistan is possibly the most "Anti-American" country in the world due to the effects of the Pressler Amendment and the U.S. treatment of Pakistan during their pursuit of nuclear weapons.²⁷ In an effort to support their own position, Pakistan will continue to

support destabilizing terrorist and insurgent forces in Afghanistan through cross-border safe havens and additional aid. Pakistan seeks to have an Afghanistan that is strong enough to handle its own internal problems, but weak enough that Afghanistan can't pursue independent policies that may compete with Pakistan's own interests.²⁸ This tension between the U.S. and Pakistan makes the need for NATO presence all the more important to water down any ideas that foreign troops in Afghanistan are due to a U.S. driven policy position that threatens Islam.

Other neighbors will watch closely and pick and choose their involvement in Afghanistan. Iran and Russia remain concerned with Afghanistan's opium production and trafficking.²⁹ China and Russia both look to capitalize on economic opportunities with the New Silk Road and the two to three trillion dollars of mineral resources estimated to be untapped in Afghanistan.³⁰ Iran, Russia, and China's political acceptance of NATO forces remaining in Afghanistan become a function of how much they view NATO as a stabilizing force in Afghanistan vice a forward based military threat in the region.

Then next significant factor impacting NATO involvement is risk. There are risks and consequences involved if NATO continues to operate in Afghanistan, and there are risks if NATO does not. Continuing to operate in Afghanistan and financing the heavy costs to support the country risk the political support previously mentioned to the point where real civil-discord can arise.³¹ Additionally, continuing to operate in Afghanistan will likely fuel insurgents claims of Western occupation and colonization interests, which will undermine the legitimacy of the GIRoA, give support to terrorist recruiting, and could lead to their attempts at attacks on western targets.³²

Risks associated with not continuing NATO operations range from the fracturing of the country and its security forces along tribal and regional lines, to the fall of the GIROA, as in the historical examples of Afghanistan post U.S.S.R. ending its support in the 80s, and the fall of Vietnam after the U.S. decision to stop funding. In both cases, the government fell to opposition forces.³³ In Afghanistan, if NATO is unable to truly professionalize the ANSF and create loyal professional and funded security forces, the ANSF allegiance to the GIROA will be tested, and their services may go to the higher bidder, be it the GIROA or a local leader with money.³⁴ The secondary risk to the fracturing or failure of the GIROA is a re-emergence of the Taliban and Al Qaeda.³⁵

The last factor each alliance member will deliberate over is the notion of maintaining good member status within NATO. Slightly mentioned earlier, it is an important aspect of being a member of the alliance, to be a contributing member in good status with the rest of the alliance. Achieving or maintaining good member status revolves around the aspect of burden sharing and generally is concerned with member nation's contributions to three common funded NATO financial accounts.³⁶ Former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates in his last speech delivered to NATO and European allies brought new light to the burden sharing aspect in terms of troop contributions to NATO operations, emphasizing an increase of non-U.S. troops from approximately 20,000 in 2006 to 40,000 in 2010.³⁷ But Gates went on to question members' contributions to NATO by pointing out shortcomings in contributed capacity and will towards the widely politically supported Operation Unified Protector.³⁸

As a measure of good standing in financial terms, NATO members agree to commit 2% of their national Gross Domestic Product to their defense budgets, yet only five of the 28 members

in the alliance meet that target.³⁹ But given the difficulties brought on by global economic downturns and the continued conflict in Afghanistan, many smaller alliance members brought praise from Secretary Gates where he stated, “Several of these allies have managed to punch well above their weight because of the way they use the resources they have.”⁴⁰ Now looking forward, it will remain important for the alliance and its individual nation members to find and keep good member status, through their investments in defense, their efficiency in resource expenditures, and their sharing of burden on the battlefields. When NATO decides what its future in Afghanistan or elsewhere will be, the issue of good member status will be a point of concern.

How NATO Can Contribute

After understanding the driving factors that compel NATO to continue support and aid to Afghanistan, or limit that support, the issue becomes what is feasible and acceptable to the alliance given the cost, political acceptability, risk and good member status criteria that will test every recommended future commitment.

One option for NATO to consider after 2014 is providing advisors to the Senior Civilian Representatives of the GIROA. Another option is for NATO to continue the NTM-A mission, which would provide advisors and trainers inside the ANSF, well below the executive leadership of the GIROA ministries. The final option that will be discussed here is a commitment to continue the NTM-A mission as well as contributing NATO forces to security and peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan. Each of these options will be discussed in detail and with respect to the four criteria of cost, political acceptability, risk, and good member status. After a thorough description and analysis of the options, a final recommendation for NATO will be presented.

Senior Civilian Representative Advisors (SCRA).

One option for NATO to consider in providing support to Afghanistan after 2014 is the continuation of a ministerial level advisory element to continue to coach and support the senior GIRoA leadership. A Senior Civilian Representative Advisor (SCRA) mission in Afghanistan proposed here would be limited to the Ministries of Interior and Defense, while working in conjunction with other initiatives such as the United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA), the U.S. State Department mission, which has advisors in the Ministries of Finance, Agriculture, Commerce, Telecommunications, and the Afghanistan Bank, and other organizations working with the GIRoA.⁴¹

When the NTM-A was formed in 2009, it was charged with building Afghan capacity in four primary areas; training and equipping the ANA and ANP, developing the MoI and MoD, improving the country's human capital, and investing in Afghanistan's physical capital.⁴² Today, the ANA and ANP have their own training and recruiting commands and 2012 marks the year NTM-A intends to complete training Afghanistan's trainers. "Afghan first" contracting initiatives and larger efforts towards aid and development have concentrated efforts towards investing in Afghanistan's physical capital. Combating illiteracy and other leader development programs have contributed to investing in Afghanistan's human capital. Developing the MoI and MoD remains the last of the four areas of emphasis by the NTM-A. Therefore a NATO SCRA mission would essentially be a downsized and limited remainder of the current NTM-A after 2014.

The expected size of this SCRA mission would likely be less than 400 personnel, but the seniority and expertise of these key advisors is of critical importance. The U.S. Ministry of

Defense Advisor (MODA) program created by the U.S. Department of Defense currently employs approximately 60 civil servants as advisors within the Afghanistan MoD and MoI under the NTM-A.⁴³ Each of these 60+ advisors are senior in civilian grade status and individually have over 20 years of experience within the Department of Defense and deploy for two years to Afghanistan. While General David Patreus was commanding ISAF, he witnessed the program in progress and requested 100 of these high level advisors.⁴⁴ While the request for 100 has yet to be achieved, it shows the value of experience within the ministries in a quality over quantity aspect, and how relatively few this proposed mission requires.

The location for this mission would be centered around Kabul, with limited numbers working outside of Kabul on a limited or full time basis. Security for this exceptionally small and civilian force would be an imperative that must be addressed through NATO, the U.S. State Department and Private Security Companies or qualified Afghan Public Protection Force units; which at this time are not ready for operation.⁴⁵

This SCRA mission expected outcomes would be the continued improvement and strengthening of Afghanistan's security institutions starting from the Ministries of Defense and Interior. With improvement from the ministries will be expected positive impacts on the security forces in terms of governance, sustaining, and employing. Positive influence from the GIRoA leads to continued efficacy within ANSF members, which should contribute to their performance and add to public confidence. Ministerial improvements should reduce corruption and further increase public confidence. The greatest area of need or required distance to progress is within the Afghan MoI where reports from multiple sources show an overall lack of ministerial capacity beginning with the absence of a permanent director and empowerment to effect change.⁴⁶

Costs of this proposed mission are negligible with the extremely low number of personnel associated and the centralized employment. A March 2012 report from the Afghanistan Study Group reported a cost estimate from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction of \$570,000 to employ and sustain one civilian employee in Afghanistan.⁴⁷ Using 400 as a force cap, the cost of supporting the SCRA mission would be \$228M. After the billions required from the international community to continue to support and sustain ANSF, the cost of this advisory element will not be worth debate.

Political Acceptability is the highest of all three proposals. The low cost and low advisor number of the SCRA mission makes political acceptability very high. Additionally, maintaining good member status within the alliance for NATO members becomes a non-factor.

While SCRA mission, costs, political acceptability, and NATO internal member acceptability remain favorable, the risk to the enduring success of the campaign and the risk to Afghanistan remain high. Success of this limited mission assumes Afghan counterparts will remain open to the advice of foreign advisors and remain free from corruption or insurgent targeting and infiltration. The extremely limited executive level mission will not provide training or partnering with ANSF, and will have no ability to directly impact challenges that arise at the provincial or lower levels of security.

Clearly, the risk of not addressing this ministerial mission within the MoI and MoD runs much greater. The remaining pressures in Afghanistan from tribal and ethnic lines, powerbrokers, and insurgent threats make the risk of fracturing the ANSF and the security of Afghanistan extremely high without the continued improvements within the GIRoA security

ministries and in turn, their support to their forces. Some experts believe it to be almost certain.⁴⁸

Therefore, the NATO SCRA mission is a highly focused and valuable means of supporting Afghanistan after 2014. The mission targets the very heart of Afghanistan government and the leadership of the country and is absolutely needed. The complexity of Afghanistan with its ethnic and tribal differences, decades of war, relatively young security force apparatus and other major pressures on the country make the overall success of this mission questionable – if it constitutes the whole of NATO’s direct involvement in Afghanistan after 2014.

Continuing NTM-A.

The second option for NATO to consider in supporting Afghanistan after 2014 is to extend the existing NTM-A mission into the future. At the local or tactical level, realities of weak and immature security forces still undermine the readiness of ANSF. Immature forces will often react by staying safe, only partially upholding their duty, and making deals with the Taliban and insurgents. Attrition through desertions will rise. Afghan aid will be put at risk with less protection, and there will be more and more incentive for the ANSF to divide in ways that recreate the regionally controlled security of the past i.e. Northern Alliance, Taliban controlled areas, etc.⁴⁹ The multi-national NTM-A has been a huge factor in the improved quality, quantity, and capability of ANSF, but the forces still need help.⁵⁰

The Afghan National Army (ANA) leads ANSF capabilities at the present. The Afghan National Police, the Afghan Uniformed Civilian Police (AUCP), the Afghan Border Police (ABP), the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) and other police organizations are far

behind the ANA due to deep seeded issues such as corruption, human rights violations, desertion, drug addition, and other factors that erode the police forces abilities to be the police force Afghanistan requires.⁵¹ These problems create great amounts of distrust by the Afghan people. “Only public trust in the police provides the preconditions for the latter to establish human security effectively.”⁵² Therefore, continuing NTM-A with emphasis on maintaining the ANA while improving the ANP becomes key to long term Afghan security.

ISAF reports acknowledge the lag of ANP behind the ANA, but believe ANP will hit targeted growth and readiness by November of 2012.⁵³ These police forces continue to grow and receive training for tactical police skills as well as literacy and leader development. However, combating the over-arching problems within the civilian police structures of Afghanistan will require direct contact of Police Mentor and Liaison Teams (POMLTs) as well as the right advisors working in the Ministry of Interior. This expanded role with ANSF alludes to maintaining the full NTM-A mission.

One extremely positive aspect of this proposed option for NATO is the fact there is already an organizational structure and plan to work from. NTM-A has a mission, organization, plan, budget, and programs in progress to continue after 2014. The fact that NTM-A is already organized and operating successfully eliminates the need for NATO to create a new international organization to employ in Afghanistan.

Another reinforcing factor to this proposal is the support provided via the European Union Police Mission – Afghanistan (EUPOL). EUPOL, operating in nineteen provinces, contributes over 300 advisors from 23 European Union member states to the Afghan Ministry of Interior and police organizations at nearly every level of the Rule of Law and Police apparatus.⁵⁴ Keeping

this international police assistance mission active in Afghanistan after 2014 would reduce the appearance of foreign military forces, while lowering the burden placed on NATO to continue the development of Afghan security and police functions.

The NTM-A has a current mission, which likely needs little adaptation for supporting Afghanistan post 2014.

“NTM-A in coordination with NATO nations and partners, international organizations, donors and non-governmental organizations; support the GIRoA as it generates and sustains the ANSF, develops leaders, and establishes enduring institutional capacity to enable accountable Afghan-led security.”⁵⁵

At the beginning of 2012, the requirement for NTM-A trainers was 2,774. A little over 700 of those positions were not filled, though a Canadian commitment of 450 trainers may reduce the shortfall to only 300.⁵⁶ When the ISAF mission ends in 2014 and the majority of combat forces depart Afghanistan, the need to fill the full trainer requirement would be much more important; and quite possibly require an increase in end strength numbers in order to maintain advisory and training roles in places where partner military forces previously covered down. If an NTM-A represents security support to Afghanistan after 2014, then a mission size of 3,500 – 5,000 would be acceptable.

In addition to an adjustment in the size of the NTM-A mission, a change in function as well as location would be necessary. A re-distribution of trainers conducting initial entry type training of forces would allow for more operational liaison teams to work with police and army forces throughout Afghanistan. This would give greater strength and confidence to the fledgling Afghan forces and improve the visibility and reporting of readiness on those forces.

The outcome of this continuation of NTM-A must be the improved readiness and legitimacy of ANSF to execute the security and law enforcement functions for Afghanistan. Several subordinate outcomes must occur to achieve that, and may take as long as ten years to produce: transparency to eliminate corruption, sufficient sustainment and reinforcement from the GIRoA to reduce or prevent failure and defeat of the ANSF.

Costs of sustaining this mission would be difficult to assess for various reasons, but would likely remain under \$5B per year. This cost does not include the funds NTM-A plans for building and sustaining ANSF, which is estimated to be \$6B in 2013.⁵⁷ After looking at various cost figures to sustain a Soldier in Afghanistan for one year, and taking the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction highest figure of \$850,000, a NTM-A troop count of 5,000 would result in a cost of \$4.25B, in addition to the \$6B of international funds required to employ, and sustain ANSF.⁵⁸

Political Acceptability of a continued NTM-A mission is less than the acceptability of the SCRA mission. The planned 5,000 person NTM-A organization remaining after 2014 would still represent a foreign flag in Afghanistan; at least 28 of them to be exact. And the proposed mission with its price tag of \$4.25B still would not be able to guarantee an outcome or an end date. But compared to the number of Soldiers that could come out of Afghanistan, and the billions spent annually in Afghanistan, \$90B by the U.S. alone, a sole remaining NTM-A mission, at a shared 4 to 5 billion dollars cost annually may be supportable if properly presented.⁵⁹

Risks of the NTM-A mission are similar to the SCRA mission. The dispersion of advisors and liaison teams presents a security risk to the mission and contributing nations. ISAF currently

has 198 liaison teams with the ANA and ANP. These teams are comprised of ten to thirty persons and employed across the country, making internal force protection a concern. While the expectation is that NATO forces are partnering with ANSF, and are on the same side, sixteen NATO service members have been shot and killed by Afghan soldiers, policemen, or militants disguised in their uniforms. Since 2007, approximately eighty NATO service members were killed by ANSF and more than 75% of those were in the last two years.⁶⁰ Without jumping to conclusions, these figures show the increased rate of NATO soldiers killed by ANSF due to increased exposure (in combat), stress, changing loyalties, or enraged emotions with violent outcomes. The reality is those conditions could persist through the indefinite future and those risks will remain.

Similar to the SCRA mission, risks associated with not continuing the NTM-A mission is very high. The vulnerability of the GIROA, the legal system, and the security of Afghanistan are all very high given the remaining conditions the ANSF will encounter in Afghanistan after ISAF forces depart. Meanwhile, the advisory nature of the small NATO mission makes international approval of the mission achievable. It will be acceptable to NATO members looking to reduce their role and inherent risk from combat operations, and still not appear as a threat to neighboring Iran, Russia, Pakistan, or others.

Good member status factor with the continued NTM-A mission is still easily achieved. The relatively small number of 5,000 troops makes participation by many countries easy to buy into with relatively small numbers. Typical contributors to NATO will do their usual part to provide the bulk of that organization, while additional nations and partners will be able to provide small

numbers of best qualified service members or civil servants to make worthwhile contributions to the mission.

The continued NTM-A mission is a very likely mission to see after 2014. Easily acceptable by the GIRoA and its neighbors, and supportable by the alliance, the mission provides greater reach and operational involvement in the continued success of ANSF and the security of Afghanistan.

NTM-A + ISAF(-) mission.

The third option proposed for NATO in this study is a NTM-A mission with an operational peacekeeping or security force; something less than a full ISAF operation. This option becomes the most difficult to consider and propose, because it asks the most of NATO and the members of the alliance. While this option will prove to suffer the greatest contention and scrutiny, some experts contend that if we're going to avoid losing this war, it's the only real option.⁶¹

In 2003, ISAF was initially charged with securing Kabul and surrounding areas from the Taliban, Al Qaeda and factional warlords, to allow for the establishment of the Afghan Transitional Administration headed by Hamid Karzai. ISAF subsequently expanded the mission over the entire country. Looking at 2015, a reduction of the current ISAF operation to a remaining NTM-A mission plus a reinforcing security force would be a natural progression following the departure of combat forces in 2014. This would further emphasize ANSF responsibility for security and law enforcement within the country, with the reserve support of coalition forces remaining in the country. This proposed mission emphasizes Afghan

sovereignty, the remaining support to Afghanistan, and the responsible withdrawal of NATO forces without leaving Afghanistan on its own with its future challenges.

For the NTM-A + ISAF(-) mission, an increased presence of special operations forces would assist in fulfilling the partnering and advising functions of the NTM-A as well as providing quick strike task forces able to bring highly lethal combat power to the aid of ANSF in contact. A Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) comprised of three Special Forces battalions and one Ranger battalion and one or two conventional infantry battalions would create a force structure of approximately 5,000 troops. This special operations force would be well trained and familiar with operations requiring partnering with indigenous forces, while keeping the intelligence network and direct action ability to engage terrorist targets or security forces pinned down by insurgents, Taliban, Al Haqqani, or other forces.

A mission structure comprised of Special Forces battalions would provide the equivalent of 54 Operational Detachments-Alpha (A-Teams) and would essentially reduce the overall number of liaison teams under NTM-A by that number. Roughly calculating, that reduces the NTM-A estimate from the previous course of action by 1,000. Overall, the NTM-A + security force would be approximately 9,000 Soldiers.

The expected costs for this mission double or triple depending on the cost and allocation of enablers. Calling for the security force or quick strike capability to reinforce ANSF or target high value targets calls for rotary and fixed wing aviation support. Using the previous cost calculations, an operation of this size would cost between \$8B and \$9B per year; more if aviation and supporting close air support are factored in and provided by NATO or coalition partners.

These costs make Political Acceptability much more difficult to achieve. There will definitely be a foreign military presence seen by Afghans as well as other nations watching. The presence will call into question the true intentions of NATO and the West with respect to concerns of the West looking for permanent basing of highly lethal military forces in Afghanistan.⁶² The continued expenditure of billions on Afghanistan and the continued deployment of troops beyond 2014 will cause scrutiny within alliance member nations where popularity for the war in Afghanistan has reached all-time lows. The force presence will risk GIRoA credibility and popularity within Afghanistan, its people, and its insurgent elements. All these factors make political acceptability of this mission the hardest to achieve.

Risks associated with this proposed mission follow along the same lines associated with political acceptability. Keeping this force in country provides significant support to ANSF and the GIRoA, and keeps pressure on Taliban and others. This significantly increases the time to mature and improve GIRoA and ANSF and increases their chances of long-term success. It also runs the risk of inciting further violence by those who want to use foreign military presence as a recruiting and reason for jihad. Still, handled and employed appropriately, the GIRoA and NATO member national leadership can reduce the level of risk. The risk factors go down if NATO forces can maintain low profiles, respect for cultural and religious norms, and enable real improvements towards security that enables economic and civil institutional progress. However, the enemy is no fool and will look to target these forces and drive information operations as well as spectacular attacks to bring these NATO forces to light and then try to present them as the real enemy of Afghanistan and Islam.

Good member status factor is most difficult to maintain in this proposal. Countries that have supported ISAF for ten years now, looking for their chance to end their taxing contributions towards Afghanistan will be called on again to share the burden of this mission. The \$9B price tag combined with the annual \$10B President Karzai requests from the International Community will further stretch these countries. Therefore the NAC will have to look for an acceptable distribution of the burden in terms of combat power, enablers, and financial support to the mission.

While more expensive, politically challenging, somewhat risky, and possibly unsavory to alliance members, this course of action for supporting Afghanistan after 2014 is definitely supportable if political leadership determines the value of assured security and success is a must.

Recommendation and Conclusion

After spending nearly a half-trillion dollars in Afghanistan and making the international commitment to stabilize Afghanistan, to ensure it never becomes a safe haven for terrorists again, and to defeat Al Qaeda, NATO needs to continue to support Afghanistan with the NTM-A plus ISAF(-) proposed course of action. While ANSF have made considerable progress, and the world has seen Afghans receive new health care and education that was nonexistent for years, the fact remains Afghanistan is still a dangerous and fragile state. It is underdeveloped in every way.

The GIRoA needs every ounce of professional expertise available through NTM-A advisor and partner operations, while keeping the lethality of NATO and special operations forces in country to keep threats at bay. Given the history and competitive diversity of Afghanistan, the rampant corruption and illegal drug trade, to not stay closely embedded with the GIRoA and

partnering with ANSF would ask for everything that has been invested, and lives contributed, to be wasted.

Meanwhile, remaining committed by 9,000 troops and \$20B per year would be both sustainable and a means of ensuring Afghanistan progresses to become a stable country and government, capable of becoming a security producer rather than a security consumer. While the \$20B needs to come from International Community support, its expected and understandable to see to a larger portion of international aid dollars spent on the lowest underdeveloped countries in the world, where Afghanistan still remains near the bottom.

While the SCRA and NTM-A missions on their own are needed and much easier to present to NATO members in terms of cost, political acceptability, risks, and helping members maintain their alliance standing, they will not go far enough to combat the risks of GIRoA and ANSF failure, and the second and third order effects and costs of that failure. Providing the additional monies and forces to keep Afghanistan stable and secure is the direction NATO and others need to take.

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