

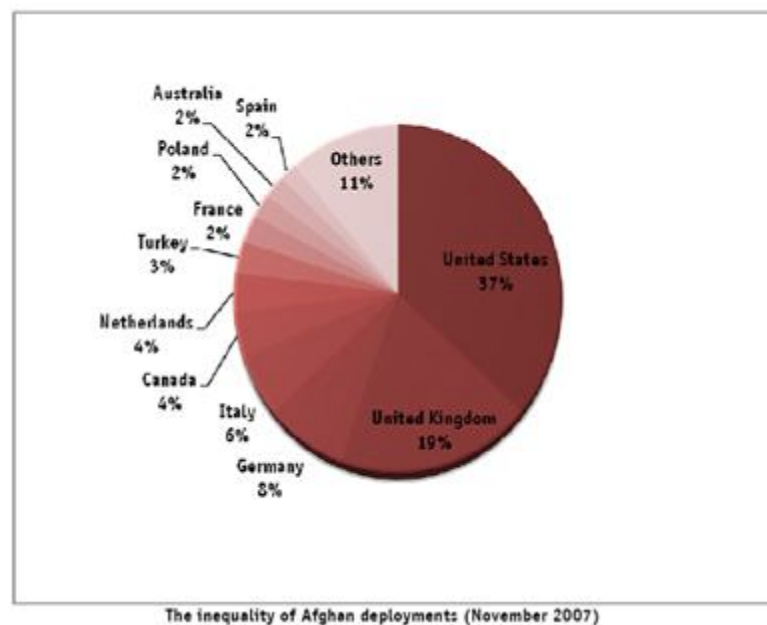
Publications / Stumbling into chaos: Afghanistan on the brink / Recommendations

[Overview](#)
[Executive Summary](#)
[Security Recommendations: "NATO Plus"](#)
[Development Recommendations](#)
[Full Report](#)

In order to start regaining the 'hearts and minds' of ordinary Afghans, an expanded, caveat-free 'NATO Plus' presence must be established. It is clearly no longer sustainable for the troops of just four core NATO member states – Canada, UK, US and the Netherlands – plus support from such non-NATO countries as Australia and New-Zealand, to engage in active combat against an emboldened and increasingly successful enemy.

A mandated minimum contribution from member-states

A proportional level of commitment from every NATO member state is an important benchmark, and would send out a clear message that NATO is a unified entity with the capacity to project itself globally. A force of 80,000 troops – over double the present total – should be achievable within a relatively short time-frame.



Two per cent a minimum: In order to lay the groundwork for an expanded deployment, each NATO state should spend at least 2 per cent of its GDP upon defence. At present only five of NATO's pre-1999 expansion states (France, Greece, Portugal, Turkey and the UK), and two of its newer members (Bulgaria and Romania) meet this criteria, prompting Jaap de Hoop Scheffer to declare that he felt 'ashamed' by this discrepancy. Although an imperfect measure, it does at least provide an equitable benchmark that will facilitate the deployment of required numbers of troops to 'NATO Plus'.

Establish a troops deployed/GDP ratio: With approximately 40,000 soldiers, NATOISAF still lacks substantial numbers of troops to be able to successfully fulfil its mandate.

This figure is equivalent to less than a quarter of the deployment of international troops to Iraq, whereas the rugged country of Afghanistan is more populated, and has a total area almost 50 per cent larger than Iraq. The 50,000 soldiers of the Afghan National Army (ANA) are neither numerous enough, nor suitably equipped or trained to be able to fully complement the current international force.

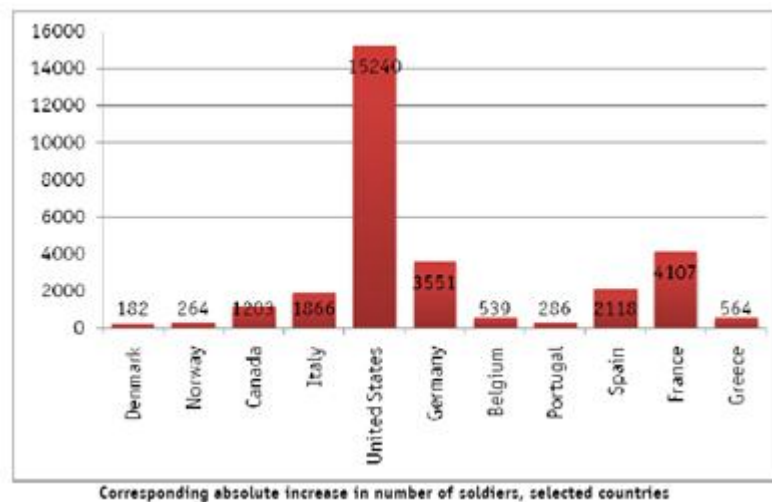
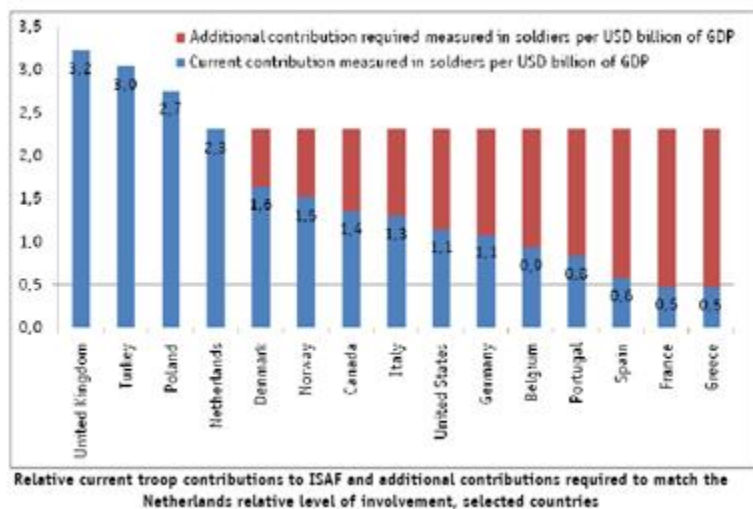
ISAF forces often manage to defeat Taliban units but are not able to permanently defend gained terrain and thus fail to prevent insurgents from re-conquering it. ISAF does not have enough troops in Afghanistan to make sure its victories are followed by the establishment of sustainable control over the rural territory. Too few troops on the ground also means that ISAF is heavily relying on air power to keep a tactical edge on the insurgents; the intense use of air power allows ISAF to win battles, but is resulting in a growing number of civilian casualties that make ISAF fail to win hearts and minds, and perhaps lose the war.

The total number of international troops integrated to ISAF urgently needs to be doubled to an minimum of 80,000 troops. Currently, NATO is in command of the International Force and most ISAF troops are provided by NATO member States. Nevertheless, contributions from individual countries are, even within NATO, largely uneven when considered in proportion to their population or GDP. For instance France and Spain are contributing less than 1 soldier per billion of GDP (measured in USD) while the United Kingdom and Turkey each supply above 3 soldiers per USD billion.

This disparity is hampering ISAF's efficacy and should be reviewed to allow for an increase in the total number of ISAF troops. Of course there is no easy answer to the question about how precisely the burden should be shared and how much every single country should contribute. But some first approximations of a fairer deal could involve having contributions proportional to national GDP.

Currently, The Netherlands is contributing to ISAF 2.3 soldiers per billion of GDP (in USD). This ratio represents less than half the UK's ratio of 3.2 soldiers per billion of GDP, but is the double of the US figure of 1.1.

If all NATO member countries increased their contribution to ISAF to this 2.3 soldiers per billion of GDP (or kept it the way it is when it is already higher), the total number would increase to around 71,000 troops.



In particular if each of Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy Norway, Portugal, Spain and the United States increased their contribution to a relative level equivalent to the Netherlands, ISAF would increase by a total of 30,000 troops.

In addition to increased NATO involvement, ISAF should benefit from contributions from non-NATO countries that also have an interest in establishing a sustainable peace in the region. While Australia, New Zealand, and nations from the Euro- Atlantic Partnership Council are already contributing to ISAF, new contributions could enhance ISAF's capacity and legitimacy.

In particular, participation to ISAF by more countries with significant Muslim population would ensure that the international force could not be described as mono-culture.

A debate should be opened on to what extent ISAF should grow in size and how that build up in capacity is to be achieved in a fair and legitimate manner.

National Caveats lifted

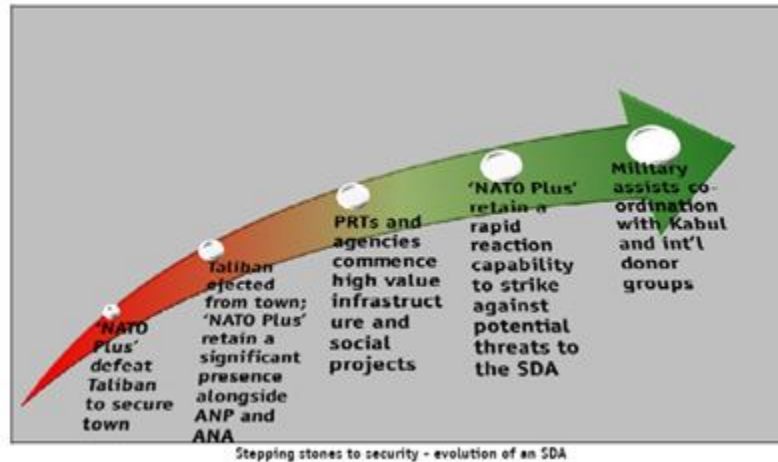
NATO's mission was hamstrung from the very outset, as a number of states were unwilling to share the fighting burden. If the coalition has any chance of success in Afghanistan, national caveats must be lifted immediately and states must engage the enemy under one set of rules.

Secure Development Areas (SDAs) to be established

Elements of 'NATO Plus' should look to establish concentrated Secure Development Areas (SDAs). Similar to the Afghan Development Zone (ADZ), these SDAs will focus upon bringing security to a densely populated or strategically important town, enabling non-military agencies to undertake developmental projects in a secure micro-climate.

Establishing security for SDAs requires one set of troops to be engaged in static security tasks, with a strong forward mobile presence aimed at preventing the insurgency from disrupting the development work. An expanded force of 80,000 would enable a higher concentration of forces to remain in situ within strategic towns that are desperate for reconstruction.

Once firmly rooted, an SDA can become a beacon of developmental progress for other troubled parts of the country, thereby exporting stability by example.



Increased representation from Muslim states

From an internal perspective, the overriding impression of the West's presence in Afghanistan is that of external aggressor. Such a perception has historically congealed

Afghan resistance of all hues against that presence, prompting an expedient coalition intent upon expelling them from the country. Indeed, much of the Taliban can be viewed through such a lens.

In order to at least partially counteract that perception, deployments from Muslim states should serve within a 'NATO Plus' force, primarily within the SDA serving as community liaison officers. This addition to NATO's presence in Afghanistan will have tremendous symbolic value, bolstering efforts to win over local hearts and minds, and helping NATO to project itself in means other military operations. A contingent of Muslim forces should also be detached to fight alongside NATO forces entering Pakistan.

Senior Muslim military figures should also be seconded to work alongside NATO commanders in ISAF headquarters in Afghanistan.

Support provided to Pakistan in missions against radical Islamists

An expanded 'NATO Plus' force would offer support to the Pakistani military's already extensive mission to defeat militant Islamists in its troubled western provinces. This support would range from the sharing of tactical intelligence assets (for instance, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle target imagery) to air support and tightly-targeted ground assaults upon high value insurgent targets.

'NATO Plus' support would serve under the operational control of Pakistan, and maintain the lightest possible footprint during lulls in combat to mitigate against insurgent strikes upon forward operating bases.

'Afghan COIN' adopted

In order to win hearts and minds, it is incumbent upon the forces operating in Afghanistan to adopt a different approach to the realities on the ground. An increasing recourse to airstrikes in densely populated areas is proving disastrous for the military's standing amongst local communities, and should be stopped. It is pivotal that the political and physical sanctuaries within which insurgents operate is shrunk, and SDAs established in their place.

Successful Practices	Unsuccessful Practices
Focus on the population, their needs and security	Place priority on killing and capturing the enemy, not on engaging the population
Isolate insurgents from the population	Concentrate military forces in large bases for protection
Conduct effective, pervasive psychological operations	Focus special operation forces primarily on raiding
Provide amnesty and rehabilitation for insurgents	View insurgents as inherently bad, and treat them accordingly
Embed special operations forces and advisors with indigenous forces	Ring fence incoming forces from indigenous elements

In order to achieve this outcome, the military must transition from a counterterrorism-led approach to a counterinsurgency (COIN)-driven one, such as advocated by former Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) chief General David Barno. The adoption of such tactics by an expanded 'NATO Plus', adapted to the Afghan theatre, will provide for more effective prosecution of core stabilisation strategy. The role of Muslim military liaison officers will be key in this regard, as these forces will offer strategic advice to western forces regarding suitable methods of engagement with locals.

Intelligence-driven approach

A greater emphasis upon intelligence, in particular, human intelligence (HUMINT) is required. This intelligence-driven approach should see the 'NATO Plus' strategy concentrate upon the needs and security of the population, although clearly the short-term operational requirement to defeat the insurgency militarily must continue in tandem.

The traditional methods for gathering intelligence developed during the Cold War have been proven consistently ineffective against the new terrorist networks of today, therefore, in order to conduct a successful COIN plan, it is imperative to operate at the grass-roots level, establishing a relationship of trust with the locals, who are historically suspicious of any outsiders (particularly in the Afghan context).

As difficult and long as this process may be, it will be the only way to get trustworthy information from an insurgency that relies on human relations to operate.

Marginal insurgents reintegrated

The reintegration of 'marginal insurgents'. Vast swathes of the Taliban are fighting for economic as opposed to ideological reasons. Establishing viable, sustainable alternative income sources in secure environments will deprive the movement of a core membership strand.