

NATO: from Kosovo to Kabul

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Ten years after it launched its large-scale intervention against Serbia, NATO remains mired in a seemingly unwinnable conflict in Afghanistan. These two missions are, in many ways, very different; but the marshalling of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), just like Operation Allied Force (OAF) before it, has given rise to the view that a failure for NATO would mean the end of the alliance. In fact, since the end of the Cold War (an event itself proclaimed as its death knell) NATO has navigated several existential crises, over Bosnia, 9/11, Iraq and now Afghanistan. For much of the last ten years it has also had to ride out the long, slow-burn consequences of the Bush administration's indifference to alliance solidarity.

Crisis as normality

This view of a NATO apparently perched permanently at the edge of collapse is problematic on at least three counts. First, the narrative of crisis is clouded by imprecision—at what point a crisis becomes terminal and precisely what NATO's dissolution would look like are rarely, if ever, specified. Second, it falls foul of what might be termed the 'Peter cried "Wolf!"' syndrome. NATO has faced imminent collapse so often that it is difficult to take seriously the latest judgement that its days are numbered. Third, and as the list above suggests, NATO seems to possess an inexhaustible capacity for recovery, a characteristic NATO pessimists largely ignore. Of course, mere survival is not enough; what matters equally is how far and how well survival reflects a more thoroughgoing adaptation to new circumstances. NATO's efforts to do just that, however imperfect or ill-judged, is the real story of the last two decades. The epithets of decline, dissolution and even death are, in this connection, misleading; while they allude to the very real problems NATO has encountered, they usually refer to a single operational experience or historical moment. Longer-term processes of change are, consequently, ignored. In fact, from 1989 to 2009 the alliance has engaged in a ceaseless process of transformation—of structure and organization, of operations, partnerships and membership. Located squarely in the middle of all this activity is OAF. That

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operation marked a decisive climax to a debate which had simmered throughout the 1990s over NATO's relevance and purpose. The debate was not resolved in 1999, but OAF and the simultaneous adoption of the NATO Strategic Concept at the 50th anniversary summit in Washington DC marked the most significant shift in NATO's history towards non-Article 5 missions. It also made manifest deep-seated problems of cohesion, leadership and capabilities. Thus OAF was both the occasion for presentiments of catastrophe yet also a driver of change. Its operational and political implications run all the way to the mission in Afghanistan.

Before OAF, NATO had already experienced a decade of turmoil. During the Cold War the alliance had come to function as more than simply a collective defence organization but the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact along with the Soviet Union undoubtedly robbed it of its major rationale. An alliance bound to traditional defence tasks, it was claimed, faced the real 'danger of dissolution' if it could not reorient itself to the emerging and fluid circumstances of the post-Cold War world.¹ And this was not only the view of leader writers and analysts. NATO's demise (or at least marginalization) was the leading premise of plans hatched in the West German Foreign Ministry to revamp the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and of French advocacy of the Western European Union (WEU) and, more ambitiously, a European confederation.² Yet neither these projects nor, indeed, the nascent European Union offered any greater prospect of promoting European stability than did NATO. As the high hopes of 1989 gave way by the early 1990s to the problems of disintegrating communist federations, Balkan instability and uncertainties in Mitteleuropa, NATO came to occupy centre stage in the so-called 'architectural' debate on European security institutions. Franco-German preferences notwithstanding, the alliance still offered the most reliable route for American engagement in Europe (a state of affairs desired both by the George H. W. Bush administration and the majority of allies), was the most effective body for joint military operations and had proved an effective forum for political consultations, both among allies and with former adversaries (NATO was the main interlocutor of the Warsaw Pact in the 1990 Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty and had established the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1991 to promote dialogue with former communist states).³

Guided by the US, NATO underwent a process of adaptation. The London Declaration of July 1990 and, to a greater extent, the Strategic Concept of November 1991 recognized a 'new strategic environment' of 'diverse and multi-directional risks'. The consequent need for a NATO role in crisis management and conflict prevention, in turn, suggested a shift away from the traditional preoccupation with self-defence and with its changes to force structures (away from forward defence), command structures (the abolition of Allied Command Channel) and a presumption in favour of cooperating with other international organizations. Yet

¹ Leading article, *The Times*, 5 July 1990.

² Stuart Croft, John Redmond, G. Wyn Rees and Mark Webber, *The enlargement of Europe* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 92, 127.

³ See Kori Schake, 'NATO after the Cold War, 1991–1995: institutional competition and the collapse of the French alternative', *Contemporary European History* 7: 3, 1998, pp. 379–407.

adaptation went only so far. Absent from the Strategic Concept was an explicit statement of what new tasks such as conflict management entailed for NATO. On this and the related question of how, if at all, NATO was to act out of area,⁴ a consensus was absent.

In this respect NATO was living up to type. Throughout the Cold War some of its deepest crises had been occasioned by transatlantic splits over the Middle East—for instance, over Suez and the 1973 Arab–Israeli war.⁵ Conscious also of the political unfeasibility of allied action outside the core prerogative of defending the European status quo, NATO played no role in Vietnam and figured in neither the Carter doctrine of American force projection into the Gulf region nor the Reagan doctrine of anti-communist destabilization in Afghanistan, Central America and southern Africa. After 1991, thinking on the issue would be framed by the unfolding crisis in Bosnia. NATO issued separate statements in 1992 offering support for both the CSCE and the UN, thereby signalling its formal entry into peace-support operations. Its subsequent involvement was, however, held back by several factors. Throughout, NATO lacked a doctrine for operations of this type and its force structure reforms could not keep pace with the requirements of the new tasks of conflict management.⁶ Further, political divisions over Bosnia ran deep; for most of the period of conflict, NATO simply lacked an agreed view both on what interests were at stake in the former Yugoslavia and how to go about achieving them.

Given these conceptual, operational and political impediments, it was inevitable that NATO's involvement in Bosnia was reactive, ad hoc and, in the absence of clear leadership, determined by an agenda laid down not in Brussels but in New York (that is, supporting UNPROFOR and enforcing UN Security Council resolutions). NATO was thus tied politically (and practically through the so-called 'dual-key' mechanism) to the fortunes of the UN (itself an increasing embarrassment), and simultaneously criticized for being hesitant and ineffectual. And as the situation in Bosnia continued to deteriorate, so the question of NATO's usefulness once more re-emerged. The claim levelled by one British leader writer that the alliance was a 'twitching corpse' was more colourful than most,⁷ but the underlying sentiment was shared by key players within NATO states.⁸

As in 1989–91, however, NATO proved resilient. There clearly was much to criticize about its role in Yugoslavia's collapse; had it acted sooner and more decisively, NATO might well have forced an early settlement and thus prevented

⁴ Article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty notes that the application of NATO's collective defence provisions are held to apply to the territories of the 'the Parties in Europe or North America ... [to] the islands under the jurisdiction of any Party in the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer' and to forces, vessels or aircraft stationed on these territories as well as in the Mediterranean Sea. What lies beyond the confines of this definition is 'out of area'.

⁵ S. Rynning, 'NATO and the broader Middle East, 1949–2007: the history and lessons of controversial encounters', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 30: 6, 2007, pp. 912–16.

⁶ J. R. Deni, *Alliance management and maintenance: restructuring NATO for the 21st century* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 65.

⁷ *Financial Times*, 12 Jan. 1994.

⁸ US Defense Secretary William Perry noted in early 1995 that NATO 'seemed to be irrelevant' and 'in the process of unravelling': William Perry, 'Six postulates for a future NATO', *Defense Issues* 11: 56, 1996, <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=995>, accessed 5 April 2009.

much of the carnage and colossal human suffering that was visited upon Bosnia.⁹ But, having started tentatively, the alliance eventually became a key actor, moving up a scale of commitment from sanctions enforcement to limited and then sustained air strikes, and eventually the deployment of a large-scale peacekeeping operation. While they were never activated, NATO also had plans in place for the deployment of an extraction force (up to 82,000 strong under one planning scenario) to assist in the safe withdrawal of UNPROFOR. By these measures NATO exercised a decisive impact, both in creating the conditions for peace (Operation Deliberate Force was critical in persuading the President of Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic, to enter the talks that led to the Dayton peace agreement¹⁰) and, in the shape of the Implementation Force (IFOR) and the Stabilization Force (SFOR), in policing it.

The Bosnian campaign, in fact, was a key driver of NATO's development. Not only did it define the contours of the transatlantic relationship but equally it proved a test of relations with Russia, and a clearing house for enlargement (NATO could not take on new members while the crisis remained unresolved). It also catalysed NATO's internal transformation. Bosnia saw NATO's first out-of-area operation (Operation Maritime Monitor), the first authorized use of force to back a UN Security Council resolution (Operation Maritime Guard), NATO's first combat operation (Operation Deny Flight) and the first time French forces had been involved in NATO military command structures since 1966. IFOR/SFOR, meanwhile, was not only NATO's first experience of peacekeeping but also the first major deployment of NATO-led land forces beyond member-state territory and the first major instance of NATO's coordinated involvement with partner countries (Russia included).¹¹ On the basis of the Bosnian experience, at Berlin in mid-1996 the NATO foreign ministers adopted MC400/1, which outlined a formal commitment to peace-support operations (including enforcement measures) beyond the treaty area. One year later, the Madrid summit noted that 'the new challenges of regional crisis and conflict management' now stood alongside the 'core function of collective defence'.¹²

Bosnia seemed to have presented an answer to Senator Richard Lugar's challenge that NATO go 'out of area or out of business'.¹³ But the move beyond the familiar provisions of territorial defence brought it face to face with what would prove to be an enduring dilemma. As Lawrence Kaplan observed at the time, 'NATO's "out of area" involvement may offer the greatest potential for justifying its survival [but equally] it may also expose vulnerabilities that could terminate the life of the alliance'.¹⁴ Kaplan's claim, while subject to the exaggerated assumptions

⁹ This was the view of, among others, Richard Holbrooke, the chief US negotiator at Dayton. See his foreword to D. Chollet, *The road to the Dayton Accords: a study of American statecraft* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. x.

¹⁰ The other factor was a series of setbacks suffered by the Bosnian Serbs at the hands of Croat forces.

¹¹ Deni, *Alliance management*, p. 41; G. L. Schulte, 'Former Yugoslavia and the new NATO', *Survival* 39: 1, 1997, pp. 19–42.

¹² Madrid Declaration on Euro-Atlantic Security and Cooperation, issued by heads of state and government at the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, July 1997, para. 3.

¹³ Cited in *Washington Post*, 2 July 1993.

¹⁴ L. S. Kaplan, 'NATO in the 1990s: an American perspective', *Paradigms: The Kent Journal of International Relations* 7: 2, 1993, p. 7.

of 'NATO is dead' thinking, nonetheless hit upon a central feature of NATO's history, namely the bitterness of intra-alliance disputes once its members became engaged in operations beyond their territorial borders. To make matters worse, the move out of area confronted NATO with the ever-present danger of operational failure; Bosnia, rather than resolving the debate on NATO's future, only prolonged it.

Operation Allied Force and NATO: the campaign

As the crisis in Bosnia subsided, it was widely expected that Kosovo would be the 'next test' for the alliance;¹⁵ and when it came, the Kosovan war resulted in another round of soul-searching on NATO's future. Claims that its very existence depended on the outcome were wide of the mark. What is clear, however, is that NATO was compelled to act (and then to see the action through), at least in part, out of an appreciation that its credibility was at stake. 'Demonstrat[ing] the seriousness of NATO's purpose', President Clinton declared, was the first purpose of the mission.¹⁶

Kosovo had emerged as a defining issue for NATO for several reasons. Not only did it signify a test of NATO's transformation, it required the alliance to face much more squarely than in Bosnia some fundamental questions about its role as regional crisis manager: whether to take sides; how to place force in the service of diplomacy; how to justify intervention; and how to produce an internal consensus.¹⁷ Whereas NATO had eventually acted with decisiveness in Bosnia, it was nonetheless tarred with the same brush of ineptitude that had characterized the wider international effort to staunch the conflict. The legacy of earlier failures thus continued to linger. The then US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, has suggested that by September 1998 Yugoslav repression in Kosovo had led her to the conclusion that intervention was necessary to avoid a repeat of the 'carnage' in Bosnia.¹⁸ 'We would', she suggested, have been 'judged very harshly if we allowed something like this to happen again'.¹⁹ This was a view she then repeatedly pushed within the Clinton administration, facing down the doubts of other senior officials (including National Security Advisor Sandy Berger, Defense Secretary Bill Cohen and the joint chiefs) and eventually winning the President over to military action. A similar fear haunted European capitals. Tony Blair had come to power having

¹⁵ J. Hoekema, 'The new NATO: security for an undivided Europe', Defence and Security Committee of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, report AR266DSC-E, Nov. 1998, para. 5.

¹⁶ 'Statement by President Clinton on Kosovo', 24 March 1999, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/303693.stm>, accessed 5 April 2009. Following the conclusion of OAF, the US Department of Defense cited 'ensuring NATO's credibility' as one of three 'primary interests' of the US and its allies (the others being 'ensuring the stability of Eastern Europe' and thwarting ethnic cleansing). See 'Kosovo/Operation Allied Force—action report', report to Congress, 31 Jan. 2000, p. 4. For other rationalizations along these lines, see the comments of Tony Blair and Robin Cook, cited in House of Commons, Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Fourth report* (Session 1999–2000), para. 73.

¹⁷ D. Allin, *NATO's Balkan interventions*, Adelphi Paper 347, 2002, p. 49.

¹⁸ M. Albright, *Madam secretary* (New York: Miramax, 2003), p. 494.

¹⁹ Albright, interviewed in Public Broadcasting Service, *War in Europe*, part 1 (first broadcast 22 Feb. 2000), www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/etc/script.html, accessed 5 April 2009.

criticized the weakness of the Major government in Bosnia and, along with Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, saw Kosovo as an opportunity to expunge the stain of not having stood up to ethnic cleansing.²⁰ Applying the lessons of Bosnia did not mean OAF was premised on 'exclusively humanitarian goals', to use Gerhard Schröder's words;²¹ rather, as Blair famously claimed at the time, it was based on a 'subtle blend of mutual self interest and moral purpose'.²² It was in the allies' own interest to avoid yet another wracking exposure of division and impotence; and this was even more so the case in Kosovo, where NATO (not the UN) had been regarded from the outset as the principal instrument of intervention.

NATO faced a test of its credibility over Kosovo for two particular reasons. First, in its dealings with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic the alliance had been systematically outmanoeuvred. During 1998 NATO emerged as the de facto military wing of international diplomacy on Kosovo. In support of diplomatic efforts by the Contact Group, the UN Security Council, the EU and the US, it had sent a series of signals that force could be used to compel the termination of Yugoslav paramilitary activities. These signals, however, failed to have the desired effect. Operations Determined Falcon (aerial exercises over Albania and Macedonia in June) and Cooperative Assembly (PfP exercises in Albania in July) did not deter a major Yugoslav offensive in August. Similarly, NATO verification flights in support of OSCE monitors, the build up of a NATO extraction force in Macedonia and authorization of a phased air campaign (measures taken after the US-brokered October agreement with Belgrade) could not prevent the Racak massacre of January 1999. While it would be analytically dangerous to impute rationality in Milosevic's calculations, it is safe to infer that he had dismissed the possibility of a serious deployment of force by the alliance. Milosevic and his entourage were well aware of divisions within NATO over the issue and had reliable intelligence of just how little it had prepared for the eventuality of a bombing campaign. These calculations persisted right up to the point of OAF itself, when Milosevic was of the view that having, in effect, rejected the demands presented at Rambouillet, Yugoslavia could sit out what was expected to be a campaign of short duration.²³ By that point, Milosevic had, in any case, achieved a victory of sorts over NATO by being able to implement, seemingly without restriction, a systematic ethnic cleansing of Kosovo.²⁴

Second, once OAF was launched, NATO's reputation was damaged still further by what was in its early stages a poorly conducted campaign. Operational difficulties, the US Department of Defense subsequently concluded, were to be expected given the complexity of a combined air operation involving 14 NATO allies

²⁰ A. Seldon, *Blair* (London: Free Press, 2004), p. 392.

²¹ Gerhard Schröder, *Entscheidungen: mein Leben in der Politik* (Berlin: Ullstein, 2007), p. 135.

²² Tony Blair, 'Doctrine of the international community', speech delivered to the Economic Club of Chicago, 24 April 1999, <http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page1297>, accessed 5 April 2009.

²³ D. Henriksen, *NATO's gamble: combining diplomacy and airpower in the Kosovo crisis, 1998–1999* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007), p. 195. Milosevic would have noted the relevant precedents here. Operation Deliberate Force in Bosnia lasted just over two weeks, with air strikes occurring on eleven days. Operation Desert Fox, the Anglo-US air attack on Baghdad in December 1998, took just four days.

²⁴ House of Commons, Select Committee on Defence, *Fourteenth report* (Session 1999–2000), para. 60.

against 'a ruthless adversary in less-than-ideal environmental conditions'.²⁵ Yet the operation's conception was also fundamentally flawed. NATO leaders (President Clinton most egregiously) publicly ruled out a ground option, thus signalling a lack of resolve to Belgrade; failed to appreciate the likelihood of an escalation of Yugoslav operations in Kosovo; and restricted NATO attack flights to a height of 15,000 feet, thereby increasing the risk of target misidentification.²⁶ Further, and notwithstanding the fact that British and American sources would later claim they were prepared for a long campaign, the working assumption of both military and civilian leaders was that the campaign would be quick. OAF commenced with the modest objective of returning Milosevic to the negotiating table and little thought was given to the allied response should he prove obdurate.²⁷ Instead of a 'Plan B', German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer would later reflect, there existed only a 'strategic-political vacuum'.²⁸

The crisis of confidence this state of affairs engendered was palpable. In Senate hearings in April, Albright faced the charge that Milosevic retained the advantage in Kosovo, that the bombing campaign had proven 'antiseptic' and that the US and NATO were on 'the losing end' of the conflict.²⁹ Of course, the military defeat of NATO was never on the cards, given the imbalance of forces. The more likely possibility was a political defeat, with OAF becoming but one further episode in the sequence of failed attempts of diplomacy backed by force in the Balkans. In the event, it was precisely that fear of failure which galvanized the alliance. Coupled with a recognition that there was no institutional alternative (the Contact Group, the OSCE, the EU and the UN all having proved inadequate) and that NATO nations (including the US) could not act alone, the alliance became the instrument of choice. On this basis, whatever the doubts on the part of some allies (the Czech Republic, Italy, Germany and Greece) as to the wisdom of the campaign, and whatever the political tussles over operational matters (most notably target selection), a consensus within NATO in favour of the air campaign held. It remains a matter of conjecture as to whether this determination would have eventuated a forced ground entry into Kosovo (given the opposition of key allies such as Germany and Italy as well as the US), but in its absence the aerial campaign was progressively ramped up during April and May. The premise here was that strategic targets would be hit for as long as was necessary to bring about a resolution acceptable to the alliance. Milosevic's capitulation in June can be partly laid at the door of the joint Russian-EU-US diplomatic effort, but the Yugoslav leader's loss of resolve in the face of the NATO onslaught was precisely what made the deal possible.³⁰

²⁵ 'Kosovo/Operation Allied Force—action report', p. xiii.

²⁶ J. Hoekema (rapporteur), 'NATO policy and NATO strategy in light of the Kosovo conflict', Defence and Security Committee of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, report AS252DSC-E, 6 Oct. 1999, para. 15.

²⁷ Henriksen, *NATO's gamble*, p. 8.

²⁸ Joschka Fischer, *Die rot-grünen Jahre. Deutsche Außenpolitik vom Kosovo bis zum 11 September* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2007), p. 175.

²⁹ Comments of Senator Chuck Hagel, 'The war in Kosovo and a post-war analysis', hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 20 April, 28 Sept. and 6 Oct. 1999 (Washington DC: USGPO, 2000), pp. 17–18.

³⁰ A. M. Brudenell, 'What caused Milosevic to capitulate? The role of air power in the defeat of Yugoslavia—Operation Allied Force 1999', *British Army Review*, no. 139, Spring 2006, pp. 77–8.

Operation Allied Force and NATO: the legacy

NATO was profoundly affected by the war in Kosovo. A report of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly claimed that ‘virtually everything that has been said about the Alliance’s roles and mission will sooner or later have to be reconsidered in light of this event’.³¹

One central issue was that of burden sharing—an area in which NATO, so it has been claimed, proved ‘spectacularly unsuccessful’.³² The broader context of OAF, however, leads to a more nuanced set of considerations. In the round, the spread of contributions was not so disproportionate. While the US contributed some 60 per cent of air sorties, 13 other allies (according to the US Department of Defense) provided ‘about the same share of their available aircraft for prosecuting the campaign’ as well as ‘virtually all the basing facilities, air traffic coordination, and supporting elements to keep [the] air armada of over 1,000 aircraft functioning throughout the conflict’.³³ The NATO extraction force in Macedonia was largely European in personnel, and remained so once deployed as KFOR in Kosovo. Troop contributions to Operation Allied Harbour in Albania and Macedonia were also predominantly from European allies. Significantly, the US military and political leadership, rather than criticizing the European contribution, went to great lengths to commend it.³⁴ Much greater concern was voiced over European capability shortfalls. OAF demonstrated for many in the US that NATO was a ‘two-tiered’ alliance and provided proof (if ever the matter was still in doubt) of how utterly reliant the European allies were on American military resources.³⁵ Yet this too was a problem easily exaggerated. No one in NATO was surprised by imbalances on this score and the related concerns, of interoperability and defence autonomy, were expressed as much in Europe as they were in the US. The problems simply affirmed the need for initiatives already under way either within NATO (the Defence Capabilities Initiative) or in parallel to it (the EU’s European Security and Defence Policy).

Other military lessons were also drawn. OAF gave rise to a range of official views on NATO’s operational and doctrinal deficiencies, and the ‘imperfection and inadequacy [of the means for] co-ordinating multinational operations’.³⁶ NATO’s new Strategic Concept was subsequently seen as the lodestar by which some of these recommendations would be guided. Conceived before OAF, but revised and drafted while the campaign was in motion, this document was suffused with NATO’s experience in both Bosnia and Kosovo. Understandably, therefore, it gave much greater prominence than the 1991 document to the tasks of conflict

³¹ Hoekema, ‘NATO policy and NATO strategy’, para. 5.

³² K. P. Coleman, *International organizations and peace enforcement: the politics of international legitimacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 205.

³³ ‘Kosovo/Operation Allied Force—action report’, pp. 24, 32.

³⁴ See e.g. combined prepared statement of General Wesley Clark, Admiral James Ellis and Lieutenant-General Michael Short of the United States Command before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 21 Oct. 1999.

³⁵ P. E. Gallis, ‘Kosovo: lessons learned from Operation Allied Force’ (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 19 Nov. 1999), p. 15.

³⁶ House of Commons, Select Committee on Defence, *Fourteenth report* (Session 1999–2000), para. 67.

prevention and crisis management.³⁷ OAF thus added to the momentum of NATO reforms concerning force posture, command structures and deployability.³⁸ These moves suggested that NATO, nearly ten years after the end of the Cold War, had finally reached agreement on the need for an expeditionary capability, albeit one limited geographically to the Balkans.

Problems of a political nature paralleled military and operational issues. It is a matter of public record that senior politicians openly interfered in targeting decisions.³⁹ The travails of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Wesley Clark, are also well documented, torn as he was between his responsibilities to the North Atlantic Council on the one hand and the Department of Defense on the other.⁴⁰ The latter, in fact, was often resentful of the NATO framework—hence its refusal to share certain intelligence with allies and its pursuit, in the shape of Joint Task Force Noble Anvil, of a US-only air campaign outside OAF.⁴¹ Yet on the broader conduct of the campaign, NATO proved more robust. True, the consensus of opinion in the alliance was fragile and the imperative of maintaining it had a determining effect on the campaign. This constraint prevented contingency planning in the early stages (for fear that contemplation of escalation would scare allies off) and, later on, delayed proper political and military discussion of the ground option.⁴² Yet in an alliance of 19 democratic states, differences of opinion on the use of force were to be expected. NATO, moreover, was in Dana Allin's words 'stronger than it looked'—Greece, Italy and Germany, countries which had strong reservations about the campaign, stayed on board. And French vetoing of sensitive targets, while resented in the Pentagon, actually helped preserve alliance unity by reducing the risks of civilian casualties.⁴³ Furthermore, NATO took some creative responses to decision management. A 'Quint', comprising the foreign ministers of the US, the UK, France, Germany and Italy, emerged to guide political strategy (parallel groupings of chiefs of defence staff and political directors also existed). The role of the Secretary General, meanwhile, was enhanced to a level without historical parallel (up to the ability to authorize air strikes).⁴⁴

That consensus persisted is all the more remarkable given the normative and legal issues surrounding OAF, many of which divided the alliance. That these were papered over owes much to the modesty of NATO's war aims. OAF gave rise to lofty rhetoric but, given a decade of disillusionment in the Balkans, some pretty low expectations. At the outset NATO's stated goals were in many cases

³⁷ 'The Alliance's Strategic Concept', 24 April 1999, para. 10, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065e.htm>, accessed 5 April 2009.

³⁸ K. Wittmann, 'Der Weg zum neuen strategischen Konzept der NATO', *Europäische Sicherheit* 8, 1999, p. 19.

³⁹ See President Jacques Chirac, interviewed in *The Fall of Milosevic*, part 2, first broadcast on BBC2, 12 Jan. 2003.

⁴⁰ Clark's own account is frank on this score. See *Waging modern war: Bosnia, Kosovo and the future of conflict* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), pp. 227, 229, 240–41, 261–2, 266, 302–306.

⁴¹ Henriksen, *NATO's gamble*, pp. 13–15.

⁴² House of Commons, Select Committee on Defence, *Fourteenth report* (Session 1999–2000), para. 94; Hoekema, 'NATO policy and NATO strategy', para. 21.

⁴³ Allin, *NATO's Balkan interventions*, pp. 63, 65.

⁴⁴ R. C. Hendrickson, *Diplomacy and war at NATO: the Secretary General and military action after the Cold War* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press), 2006, pp. 104–107.

ambiguous and muddled. There were also obvious failures—NATO did not, as was initially intended,⁴⁵ deter further Yugoslav attacks in Kosovo. As OAF progressed, the alliance's official aims boiled down to a reiteration of the provisions hammered out at Rambouillet, namely, that Yugoslav forces retreat, a NATO-led security force be inserted and diplomatic efforts resume to establish a political framework for Kosovo.⁴⁶ Whatever the controversies surrounding the merits of the goals themselves, what mattered for NATO's long-term credibility was the fact that it could make a reasonable case for having achieved them once Yugoslavia settled for peace, UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1244 was adopted and KFOR entered Kosovo.

In all, NATO's success was mixed. Despite a problematic campaign, the alliance avoided the worst possible outcome (a termination of OAF with its political demands unaccomplished), showed a collective decisiveness absent through much of the Bosnia crisis, and made good upon its claims to relevance and purpose after the Cold War. All sides, even the US, were able to take away something positive about alliance performance. This, on reflection, was not a potential terminus for NATO. Even if things had gone terribly wrong, it is likely that the alliance would have endured, albeit with the US accelerating a move away from multinational operations and the Europeans being forced to seek even more determinedly a form of defence autonomy. In the event, the outcome was fairly typical of NATO's history—a crisis recognized, acted upon in a less than optimum manner, and giving point to continuing processes of change.

OAF would fuel the debate over the relative merits of coalition versus alliance warfare (see the article by David H. Dunn in this issue),⁴⁷ and would feed speculation over the limits of NATO's ambition. On the latter, OAF had resulted in an open-ended commitment to keeping the peace in the Balkans, while affirming the irreversibility of NATO's move out of area. Yet how far this role would extend was not clear. Albright had spoken before OAF of a NATO acting 'from the Middle East to Central Africa'.⁴⁸ But this was not supported in Europe and the notion fell out of favour in the US once OAF was concluded. The imprecise formula used in the Strategic Concept—namely, that NATO would 'enhance the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area'²—simply added to the uncertainty.

Déjà vu? NATO and Afghanistan

The invocation of Article 5 in the wake of the terrorist attacks on New York and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001 extended this debate. The experience of OAF led the US to the conclusion that Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan would be an American-led coalition of the willing. The US rejected

⁴⁵ 'Statement by President Clinton on Kosovo'.

⁴⁶ Statement on Kosovo issued at NATO's Washington summit, 23–24 April 1999, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-062e.htm>, accessed 5 April 2009.

⁴⁷ David Hastings Dunn, 'Innovation and precedent in the Kosovo war: the impact of Operation Allied Force on US foreign policy', *International Affairs* 85: 3, May 2009, pp. 000–00.

⁴⁸ Cited in *Washington Post*, 22 Feb. 1998.

the option of planning the campaign through NATO and calculated that in doing so it would be unencumbered by the preoccupations of its allies. It welcomed individual contributions only so long as these were tightly aligned with American military objectives. As it turned out, certain NATO allies, particularly Canada, France, Germany, Italy and the UK, made significant contributions to ground combat operations and devoted an impressive share of national naval and air assets to the defeat of the Taleban.⁴⁹ NATO itself, however, became a formal party to the stabilization and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan only in August 2003, when it assumed command of the UN-mandated ISAF.

The purported cost of failure in Afghanistan is for NATO no less dire than the consequences that had been predicted earlier in Kosovo. Defeat here, some claim, could 'ultimately threaten the [very] *raison d'être* of the alliance'.⁵⁰ The Obama administration, meanwhile, has staked its foreign policy reputation on addressing the Afghan imbroglio. Here, NATO is seen as central. Should it fail, retired General James Jones noted prior to taking up the job of Obama's National Security Advisor, 'NATO's cohesion, effectiveness and credibility will be shaken and the rationale for NATO's expeditionary, out of area, role would be undermined.'⁵¹

Internally, the alliance has been beset by fundamental disagreements over Afghanistan: over the security interests at stake there and over key aspects of the operation itself. In many ways, NATO's involvement has crystallized persistent and deeply held disagreements about key aspects of NATO operations in general, past, present or future. Yet in this sense the Afghan experience, while clearly of a particular character, can be read as yet another instance of crisis as normality. This is neither to belittle the problems NATO faces in Afghanistan nor to spin the chances of success; it is rather to suggest that these problems should be seen contextually, as part of the seemingly endless, but often exaggerated, narrative of NATO failure and decline. The actual experience of NATO in Afghanistan, once more, provides a mixed record, and the assumption that this is NATO's swansong does not necessarily follow.

ISAF and OEF mandates

UNSCR 1386 (2001) bestowed on ISAF the limited mandate of maintaining security 'in Kabul and its surrounding areas'. Over time, ISAF-mandated missions and operational responsibilities have broadened. UNSCR 1510 (2003) expanded ISAF's role beyond Kabul, consistent with the 2001 Bonn Accord. It was now authorized to provide security and reconstruction assistance throughout Afghanistan and to aid in the 'fight against terrorism, drugs, and organized crime'.⁵² Vastly

⁴⁹ An inventory of allied contributions can be found in David J. Gerleman and Jennifer E. Stevens, 'Operation Enduring Freedom: foreign pledges of military and intelligence support', CRS Report for Congress, RL 31152, 17 Oct. 2001.

⁵⁰ Pierre Lellouche (rapporteur), 'Operations in Afghanistan and the expanding NATO role', NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 158 DSC 04 E, para. 5.

⁵¹ Cited in Frank Cook (general rapporteur), 'NATO operations: current priorities and lessons learned', NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 158 DSC 08 E, para. 148.

⁵² 'The Petersberg (Bonn) Accord', signed 5 Dec. 2001, <http://www.ag-afghanistan.de/files/petersberg.htm>, accessed 24 Jan. 2009.

different interpretations of that mandate have bedevilled intra-alliance relations and hindered operational effectiveness, within ISAF and between ISAF and OEF.

The 2004 Berlin Agreement committed NATO to remain in Afghanistan until the Afghan security and armed forces were 'sufficiently constituted and operational'. NATO member states also agreed to expand the number of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) throughout Afghanistan to effect the UN stabilization and reconstruction mandate, and established two multilateral funding agencies, the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) and the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA).⁵³ In December 2005 NATO foreign ministers endorsed an operational plan that allowed ISAF to extend its operations throughout Afghanistan. Consistent with UNSCR 1623 (2005), the military tasks of the alliance included aiding the Afghan government's efforts to extend its authority, 'conducting stability and security operations', aiding in justice and security sector reform, supporting the Afghan National Army (ANA) and police forces, and disarming illegally armed groups. Despite this broadened mandate, a clear distinction was made between ISAF responsibilities and the OEF counter-terrorism mission.⁵⁴ Between July and October 2006 ISAF assumed command of the southern and eastern provinces from OEF, thereby fulfilling the provisions of UNSCR 1510.

The 2006 Afghanistan Compact established security benchmarks of a 70,000-member ANA as well as an Afghan National Police and a Border Police together amounting to 62,000 members by the end of 2010. The compact weakened the distinction between the OEF and ISAF missions, as did UNSCR 1701 (2006). Both prescribed 'increased coordination' between OEF and ISAF, a development necessitated by the overlapping geographical responsibilities of forces dedicated to each mission, the progressive transfer of American forces from OEF to ISAF, and the growing ambiguity of the latter's operational mandate. Finally, the compact created a third multilateral financing mechanism, the Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund (CNTF), aimed at mitigating the threat posed by the narcotics trade to the authority of the central Afghan government.⁵⁵

The unravelling of the security environment in Afghanistan after 2006 produced a marked shift in the ISAF mandate: UNSCR 1776 (2007) and 1833 (2008) not only instructed ISAF (and OEF) 'to address the threat posed by the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremist groups', but directed ISAF to consult closely with OEF 'in the implementation of the force mandate'. The December 2008 NATO foreign ministers' meeting approved ISAF's 'Strategic vision'. This document and the communiqué issued after the meeting revealed strains within the alliance beyond persistent American efforts to draft ISAF into counter-terrorism operations. The 'Strategic vision' made direct reference to an asymmetrical sharing of burdens

⁵³ 'Berlin Declaration', International Afghanistan Conference, 1 April 2004, <http://www.ag-afghanistan.de/berlindeclaration.pdf>, accessed 24 Jan. 2009.

⁵⁴ NATO, 'Revised operational plan for NATO's expanded mission in Afghanistan', http://www.nato.int/issues/afghanistan_stage3/index.html, accessed 24 Jan. 2009.

⁵⁵ 'The Afghanistan compact', London Conference on Afghanistan, 31 Jan.–1 Feb. 2006, annex 1, http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/afghanistan_compact.pdf, accessed 24 Jan. 2009.

between allies, a shortfall of armed forces and equipment, national caveats and different rules of engagement that limited operational flexibility and diminished allied solidarity.⁵⁶

Burden sharing

During the Cold War, the traditional burden-sharing debate in NATO focused on the inventory of member-state armed forces and compared the shares of GDP devoted to defence as well as relative personnel, equipment and R&D expenditures. The increasing saliency of out-of-area operations and the requisite need for force projection capabilities has redefined this debate. After 1990 the US effectively demanded a restructuring of allied forces towards acquiring force projection capabilities, achieving interoperability with the American military (rather than American interoperability with European forces), enhancing the deployability and sustainability of forces outside national territory, and conducting operations along the entire conflict spectrum. The apparent failure of certain European NATO allies to meet successive force-generation goals for conducting operations in Afghanistan has intensified this debate. The Americans, as well as the Canadians, the British and the Dutch, have freely and openly complained of asymmetrical burden sharing in Afghanistan.⁵⁷ Does that complaint withstand empirical scrutiny?

The burden-sharing debate today has two facets, the transatlantic and the intra-European. The empirical foundation for determining the presence or absence of intra-alliance (in)equities in Afghanistan cannot simply be restricted to the ISAF operation; NATO operations elsewhere must be included since these, by necessity, require a dispersal of national and alliance efforts. The changed nature of NATO operations, or rather the interdependency of military operations with the civilian tasks of policing and economic reconstruction, also requires consideration of financial contributions alongside any inventory of committed military assets.

There is little doubt that burden sharing in the American-led OEF operation was highly asymmetrical: the US provided almost 68 per cent of the dedicated forces, with the balance shared between a relatively small number of NATO allies (Canada, France, Germany, Italy and the UK) plus Australia. ISAF operations in 2003, however, tell a different story: the European NATO allies accounted for almost 60 per cent of the armed forces dedicated to the operation and Canada an additional 33 per cent. The US contribution was less than 2 per cent. Taking OEF and ISAF together at this point, the combined European contribution accounted for just over 28 per cent of allied forces, while Canada accounted for 8 per cent and the US for 60 per cent (see table 1).

The fuller picture of transatlantic burden sharing that materializes when commitments in Kosovo (NATO's second major operation alongside ISAF) are added also suggests a balance more favourable to European efforts. As of 2008,

⁵⁶ 'ISAF's strategic vision' (2008), para. 4; North Atlantic Council foreign ministers' meeting, 'Final communiqué', press release (2008) 153, 3 Dec. 2008, para. 5.

⁵⁷ Julianne Smith and Michael Williams, 'What lies beneath: the future of NATO through the ISAF prism', Center for Strategic and International Studies/Royal United Services Institute, 31 March 2008, p. 3.

Table 1: ISAF/OEF troop contributions, 2002/2003 (%)

	ISAF	OEF	Combined share
NATO Europe			
Belgium	4.06		0.48
Czech Republic	0.12		0.01
Denmark	0.86		0.10
France	9.59	4.67	5.25
Germany	26.26	9.11	11.13
Greece	2.19		0.26
Hungary	0.19		0.02
Iceland	0.02		0.00
Italy	2.36	6.31	5.84
Luxembourg	0.16		0.02
Netherlands	0.75		0.09
Norway	1.12		0.13
Poland	0.21		0.02
Spain	1.98		0.23
Turkey	4.60		0.54
UK	4.67	3.97	4.05
Total share	59.15	24.06	28.20
NATO North America			
Canada	33.26	4.67	8.04
US	1.93	67.76	60.00
Total share	35.18	72.34	68.04
Other contributing nations			
Australia	1.05	3.50	3.22
Albania	0.40		0.05
Azerbaijan	0.40		0.05
Bulgaria	0.74		0.09
Croatia	0.63		0.07
Estonia	0.11		0.01
Finland	0.54		0.06
Ireland	0.12		0.01
Latvia	0.16		0.02
Lithuania	0.04		0.00
Macedonia	0.18		0.02
New Zealand	0.35		0.04
Romania	0.56		0.07
Sweden	0.37		0.04
Switzerland	0.04		0.00
Total share	5.67	3.50	3.76

Source: NATO; authors' own calculations.

Table 2: NATO troop commitments to KFOR, ISAF and OEF, 2008 (%)

	KFOR 2008	ISAF 2008	KFOR/ ISAF 2008	OEF 2008	ISAF/ OEF	Aggregate share for KFOR/ISAF/OEF	GNI share
Belgium	1.58	0.78	0.93		0.57	0.72	1.36
Bulgaria	0.41	0.88	0.79		0.64	0.61	0.11
Czech Republic	3.78	0.79	1.36		0.57	1.05	0.47
Denmark	2.42	1.33	1.54		0.97	1.18	0.94
Estonia	0.22	0.25	0.24		0.18	0.19	0.06
France	15.62	5.47	7.41	2.05	4.55	6.18	7.71
Germany	17.99	6.45	8.66	0.51	4.85	6.78	10.07
Greece	5.04	0.27	1.18		0.19	0.91	1.04
Hungary	2.54	0.45	0.85		0.33	0.66	0.37
Italy	17.29	4.45	6.91		3.25	5.32	6.27
Latvia	0.15	0.13	0.14		0.10	0.10	0.07
Lithuania	0.27	0.38	0.36		0.28	0.28	0.11
Luxembourg	0.18	0.02	0.05		0.01	0.04	0.11
Netherlands	0.05	3.35	2.72		2.45	2.09	5.51
Norway	0.18	0.93	0.79		0.68	0.60	1.13
Poland	2.28	3.01	2.87		2.20	2.21	1.18
Portugal	2.02	0.08	0.45		0.06	0.35	0.63
Romania	1.20	1.46	1.41		1.06	1.08	0.42
Slovakia	1.20	0.23	0.41		0.17	0.32	0.20
Slovenia	2.82	0.13	0.65		0.10	0.50	0.13
Spain	5.09	1.48	2.17		1.08	1.67	4.16
Turkey	4.35	1.51	2.06		1.11	1.58	1.87
UK	1.31	16.87	13.89		12.32	10.70	8.22
NATO Europe	88.02	50.87	57.83	3.56	37.70	45.12	52.16
US	11.94	43.97	37.84	97.44	58.38	51.54	43.74
Canada	0.04	5.36	4.34		3.91	3.34	4.10
NATO North America	11.98	49.32	42.17	97.44	62.29	54.88	47.84
Total troops	12,498	52,814	65,312	19,500	72,314	84,812	

Source: NATO and Congressional Research Service; authors' own calculations.

NATO Europe contributed 88 per cent of KFOR forces, while the United States contributed less than 12 per cent. The ISAF operation, meanwhile, revealed a largely proportionate burden sharing between NATO Europe (just under 51 per cent) and the US (44 per cent).⁵⁸ The combined contributions to KFOR and ISAF suggest that NATO Europe is more than pulling its weight *vis-à-vis* the US (see table 2). When the NATO Europe allies reassigned their OEF-committed

⁵⁸ We have relied upon NATO gross national income (GNI) shares to determine proportionality. The European share of total NATO Gross National Income (GNI) is approximately 52%, while that of the US is just under 44%. GNI data are found in World Bank, 'Gross national income, Atlas method', <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GNI.pdf>, accessed 15 March 2009.

Table 3: NATO multilateral aid to Afghanistan, 2002–2008 (%)

	ARTF	LOTFA	CNTF	ODA	Total aid share	GNI share
Transatlantic shares						
NATO Europe	73.98	43.01	81.98	42.39	49.59	52.16
NATO North America	26.02	56.99	18.02	50.79	50.42	47.84
US	12.35	45.93	16.84	45.10	43.52	43.74
Intra-European shares						
EC/EU	20.72	69.32	24.16	27.74	27.77	
Denmark	2.43			2.75	2.58	1.81
Germany	7.81	11.94		14.07	12.73	19.31
France				1.88	1.46	14.78
Italy	2.98		1.80	4.64	4.19	12.03
Netherlands	18.36	13.28		10.51	11.86	10.57
Norway	8.38			8.67	8.24	2.17
UK	38.88	4.56	72.57	24.44	26.93	15.75

Sources: World Bank, Afghanistan Reconstruction and Trust Fund, *Annual Report to Donors*, SY 1386; UNDP Afghanistan, Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA-Phase IV Quarterly Project Report, 2nd quarter, 2007); UNDP Afghanistan, Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund (CNTF), *Quarterly Project Report*, 3rd quarter, 2008; OECD, Overseas Development Assistance 2008, <http://stats.oecd.org/whos/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=ODA=SECTOR>. Authors' own calculations.

forces to ISAF, the European contribution to OEF (and counterterrorism operations) became marginal. If ISAF and OEF are considered jointly, NATO Europe's contribution to the allied effort in Afghanistan amounts to almost 38 per cent, significantly less than its 'fair share'. But when considered in conjunction with KFOR, the combined European contribution rises to 45 per cent of committed forces, while the US share is just under 52 per cent (and the Canadian just over 3 per cent). NATO European and NATO US contributions to allied operations are thus roughly proportionate and do not suggest evidence of free-riding. The same cannot be said of intra-European burden-sharing. When considering KFOR/ISAF contributions, of the twelve states that contribute a disproportionately greater share of military assets to the operations, all but four (Denmark, the UK, Greece and Turkey) are recent accession states. While France and Italy contribute a proportional share of military assets to these operations, none of the other long-term NATO states are doing so.⁵⁹

Allied contributions to multilateral facilities financing Afghanistan's reconstruction as well as ODA provide another metric for measuring intra-alliance

⁵⁹ When all three operations are considered, the intra-European disparities are starker. Of the long-established member states, only the UK and Denmark contribute a disproportionately greater share to the operations, while Greece and Turkey make near proportional contributions.

burden sharing (see table 3).⁶⁰ NATO Europe contributes a larger aid share than the US when the three multilateral facilities—ARTF, LOTFA, CNTF—and ODA are considered jointly; only with the addition of Canada does NATO North America exceed the financial contributions of NATO Europe. The Europeans also provide almost 74 per cent of the direct budgetary support to the Afghan government (ARTF) and almost 82 per cent of the financial support funded through the CNTF. The US and NATO Europe contribute virtually equal shares to LOTFA and to ODA (see table 3). Yet a cursory examination of financial contributions across NATO Europe reveals asymmetrical burden sharing: Norway and the UK supply a disproportionately high share of total aid, while France and Italy are free-riding.

Risk sharing

Differences in exposure to risk have marked the alliance throughout its history. During the Cold War, Europeans faced the greater and more immediate risk of a conventional or limited nuclear war. Yet the global quality of the Cold War, along with the assumption that the risks it entailed were commonly held (the US and Canada bore their own, equally dangerous, risks in the stand-off with the Soviet Union), meant that NATO was in many ways bound together by this shared experience. With the shift to a more variegated risk environment after the Cold War and, more specifically, the generation by NATO of allied expeditionary operations in response, risk has become a deeply and publicly divisive issue.⁶¹ Canada and some European governments, notably in Denmark, the Netherlands and the UK, have been publicly critical of those European allies avoiding counterterrorism operations and imposing national caveats restricting participation in allied operations. American Defense Secretary Robert Gates, meanwhile, has claimed that the risk avoidance inherent in national caveats foreshadows a two-tier alliance where some allies do the fighting while others stand aside.⁶²

Risk has three separable dimensions: the stationing of troops in 'safe' as opposed to 'dangerous' regional commands within Afghanistan; the number of combat deaths; and the numerous national caveats which keep national forces out of harm's way.

By common consent, the most unstable, contested regions of Afghanistan are in ISAF Regional Commands South and East, particularly those provinces along the Afghan–Pakistani border. ISAF forces operating in the southern provinces are drawn from Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Romania, the Netherlands and the

⁶⁰ Donor conference pledges have been excluded from the analysis owing to the double pledging of financial commitments over time. See Jon Boone, 'Afghan donations fall billions short: one third of Paris aid pledged twice', *Financial Times*, 19 Feb. 2009.

⁶¹ On NATO and 'risk', see M. J. Williams, *NATO, security and risk management: from Kosovo to Kandahar* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).

⁶² Gates cited in Andrew J. Bacevich, 'NATO at twilight', *Los Angeles Times*, 11 Feb. 2008. American soldiers have apparently concluded that for European forces, ISAF stands for 'I saw Americans fight', 'I suck at fighting' and 'I sunbathe at FOBs' (forward operating bases). See Anna Mulrine, 'In Afghanistan, the NATO-led force is "under-resourced" for the fight against the Taliban', *US News and World Report*, 5 June 2008.

Table 4: NATO combat fatalities in Afghanistan, 2001–2009

	2001–2009 Total	%	2008 Total	%	Combat deaths as share of deployed forces (%)
All NATO	1,078		296		0.57
NATO Europe	318	28.39	109	35.14	0.41
Czech Republic	3	0.28	2	0.68	0.48
Denmark	21	1.95	12	4.05	2.89
Estonia	3	0.28	1	0.34	0.77
France	24	2.23	11	3.72	0.38
Germany	28	2.60	3	1.01	0.09
Hungary	2	0.19	2	0.68	0.83
Italy	13	1.21	2	0.68	0.09
Latvia	1	0.09	1	0.34	1.43
Lithuania	1	0.09	1	0.34	0.50
Netherlands	18	1.67	6	2.03	0.34
Norway	3	0.28			
Poland	9	0.83	7	2.36	0.44
Portugal	2	0.19			
Romania	8	0.74	3	1.01	0.39
Spain	25	2.32	2	0.68	0.26
UK	145	13.45	51	17.23	0.57
NATO North America	760	70.50	187	63.18	0.73
US	652	60.48	155	52.36	0.67
Canada	108	10.02	32	10.81	1.13

Source: icasualties.org; Operation Enduring Freedom; authors' own calculations.

UK (Regional Command South), while those operating in the eastern provinces are drawn primarily from the Czech Republic, Turkey and the US (Regional Command East). ISAF troops operating in the relatively stable western and northern provinces are drawn from Italy, Spain and Lithuania (Regional Command West) and Germany, Hungary and Norway (Regional Command North), while French troops are assigned to Kabul (Regional Command Capital).

British, Canadian and American armed forces accounted for approximately 84 per cent of the 1,078 combat-related deaths in Afghanistan between October 2001 and February 2009 (see table 4). The US and Canada account for just over 70 per cent of combat deaths, while NATO Europe accounts for just over 28 per cent. The figures for combat-related deaths within NATO Europe also reveal an asymmetry of sacrifice: aside from the high casualty rate of British troops, Dutch and Danish forces have suffered casualties exceeding those of Italy and close to the number of French and German dead. Equally telling is the number of combat deaths expressed as a share of national troops deployed. By this measure (and leaving aside the statistical oddity of Latvia), the Canadian and Danish armed forces have experienced

the highest level of casualties, while American, British, Estonian and Hungarian armed forces meet or exceed the NATO average. With the notable exception of the Netherlands (which comes out low on this measurement), those national forces operating in Regional Commands East and South are clearly exposing themselves to a greater risk of combat death than forces operating elsewhere.

National caveats on the use of national forces have been characterized as intra-alliance 'burden shifting' as well as 'cancers' on operational effectiveness.⁶³ A recent NATO Parliamentary Assembly report identified 62 national caveats, 45 of which have a negative impact on ISAF operations. The caveats with operational significance include those which ban night-time operations, restrict the geographical mobility of national forces, require consultations with national capitals when making tactical decisions, exclude specific categories of activity (notably, counterterrorism operations) and prohibit the helicopter transport of ANA forces or fighting after a snowfall.⁶⁴ These caveats generally reflect the difficult domestic political contexts that allied leaders must negotiate in order to make any meaningful contribution to the allied effort, an especially difficult balancing act in Berlin and Rome. Nonetheless, they minimize the risk of combat-related deaths and have shifted the burden of high-intensity warfare onto American, Australian, British and Canadian forces along with those from Denmark, the Netherlands and a few of the east European NATO states.

Divided command

The initial American insistence that its operations in Afghanistan remain outside NATO military structures meant that OEF and ISAF were formally kept separate even though their missions were complementary. After ISAF assumed responsibility for the whole of Afghanistan, however, over 10,000 US troops engaged in OEF were rebadged as ISAF forces. This development, in turn, initiated an operational overlap of OEF and ISAF commands, a process that has not been without consequences. First, ISAF responsibility for southern and eastern Afghanistan required new rules of engagement that would allow ISAF forces to engage in pre-emptive combat operations similar to those conducted by OEF.⁶⁵ Second, the NATO allies, including France, accepted that the ISAF and OEF commands should be brought under a NATO flag.⁶⁶ Third, the need for operational coherence eventually forced the creation of a unified national command for

⁶³ Leo Michel, 'Why NATO must remain engaged in Afghanistan for some time to come', National Defense University, Institute for Strategic Studies, 2006; and Cook, 'NATO operations: current priorities and lessons learned', para. 135.

⁶⁴ Daniel Korski, *Afghanistan: Europe's forgotten war* (London: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2008), p. 16; Timo Noetzel and Sibylle Scheipers, 'Coalition warfare in Afghanistan: burden-sharing or disunity?', Chatham House Briefing Paper, ASP/ISP BP 07/01, Oct. 2007, p. 6; Cook, 'NATO operations: current priorities and lessons learned', paras 31–2; Kenneth Katzman, 'Afghanistan: post-war governance, security, and US policy', CRS Report for Congress, RL30588, 29 Sept. 2008, p. 32.

⁶⁵ Sebastian Merz, 'Still on the way to Afghanistan? Germany and its forces in the Hindu Kush', SIPRI Project Paper, Nov. 2007, p. 7.

⁶⁶ Paul Gallis, 'France: factors shaping foreign policy, and issues in US–French relations', CRS Report for Congress, RL32464, 19 May 2006, p. 16.

'US Forces Afghanistan' that answered to ISAF and US Central Command. Today, General David McKiernan is concurrently commander of US Forces Afghanistan and NATO/ISAF; in that capacity he answers to SACEUR at NATO headquarters and the US Central Command. While this command restructuring has not merged OEF and ISAF, it does leave the US in a position to conduct counterterrorism operations throughout the entirety of Afghanistan, enables NATO to better coordinate ISAF-mandated security operations, and provides the institutional foundation for eventually arriving at common operational rules of engagement and purpose, thus honouring the 'principle of unity of command'.⁶⁷ In short, after initially rejecting the prospect of NATO oversight, the Bush administration came to recognize (and this has been continued under Obama) that in doing so the high costs of operational incoherence and inefficiency far exceeded any potential gain of operational freedom.

Conclusion

If the diplomatic disagreements and hedged contributions to the counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan demonstrate anything, it is that Senator Richard Lugar's 'out of area' aphorism should be revisited for operations outside Europe geographically defined. If America is to pursue a 'global NATO', as some advocate,⁶⁸ it is entirely conceivable that going out of area will drive NATO out of business—if, that is, NATO is simply understood as a body of collective defence in which burdens are equally or proportionately shared and interests naturally aligned. In some respects, the picture here may appear grim. NATO's division and consequent inability to act in Iraq have been followed by further division and a highly contentious mission in Afghanistan.

Yet the Afghan experience has produced some positive lessons for NATO. First, while there is clearly differentiation of contributions, claims of a transatlantic gap are subject to exaggeration (although they may have more substance should the pledge of the Obama administration to significantly increase American troops materialize). Further, just like Bosnia and Kosovo before it, Afghanistan is but the latest episode in which NATO is seen to be facing its darkest hour. We make no judgement here on NATO's chances of success in Afghanistan, but we would urge caution in accepting too easily the rhetorical claim that failure is in the offing and that NATO's final days will surely follow. The Balkan experience of the 1990s suggests that the alliance is operationally effective when truly challenged, even if the response is belated, divisive and controversial. And even if one were to assume that Afghanistan was a truly unique operational challenge for NATO, the assumption need not follow that it is also a unique historical juncture—the crisis which finally brings NATO down. Other crises—from Suez in 1956 to the Balkans in the

⁶⁷ Katzman, 'Afghanistan: post-war governance', p. 22; Noetzel and Scheipers, 'Coalition warfare in Afghanistan', p. 3.

⁶⁸ Ivo H. Daalder and James Goldgeier, 'Global NATO', *Foreign Affairs* 85: 5, 2006, pp. 105–13.

1990s and Iraq in 2003—were viewed similarly, but in each case NATO endured.⁶⁹ A sober and historically aware analysis suggests that NATO's fortunes rest on more than simply the outcome of a single (if vital) mission.

Afghanistan also shows us that when the US and its European allies operate outside Europe, they can settle for a 'coalition of the willing' without endangering the alliance. OEF was such a coalition, and this eventually led to NATO providing a coordinating framework through ISAF. It thus proceeded in a quite different manner from the international coalition constructed over Iraq. That the former has lasted longer than the latter suggests the value added which NATO can bring to bear, even if this is accompanied by the stresses and strains of variable allied commitment and interest. NATO's experience of expeditionary interventionism (as in Afghanistan), just like the experience of crisis management in the 1990s (of which OAF was the exemplar), sits uneasily with the principle of consensus premised on shared obligations to collective defence. Divergent threat assessments and an unbalanced desire to contribute to NATO operations arguably require an alternative decision-making principle in order to accommodate allied differences. Amendments to consensus in carrying out operations have been suggested by, among others, the former chair of the NATO Military Committee, General Klaus Naumann.⁷⁰ Yet NATO has proved singularly unwilling to modify the principle governing its core *modus operandi*. Consequently, the allies have had to live with the task of managing differences among themselves. Sustaining a truly allied effort in operations thus becomes an end in its own right. In Afghanistan, the Bush administration confounded that important goal. In essence, it embraced the wrong lesson of OAF. 'War by committee' may not be the most efficient or least frustrating method for conducting military operations, but it does make each contributing nation a stakeholder in the operation and more likely to carry a proportionate share of the burden. Afghanistan represented a lost opportunity when the US initially refused to take full advantage of NATO's invocation of Article 5. That position was eventually rectified, and since then NATO has obtained a collective stake in stabilizing Afghanistan and keeping the Taliban out of power.

⁶⁹ The fallacy of judging the latest crisis in NATO as somehow worse than any before and thus likely to lead to alliance collapse or retrenchment is explored in W. Thies, 'Was the US invasion of Iraq NATO's worst crisis ever? How would we know? Why should we care?', *European Security* 16:1, 2007, pp. 29–50.

⁷⁰ Naumann, along with four other retired chiefs of defence staff, made this proposal in *Towards a grand strategy for an uncertain world: renewing transatlantic partnership* (Lunteren: Noaber Foundation, 2007), p. 125.