

# SHAPING EUROPE'S AFGHAN SURGE

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## SUMMARY

Unnoticed by many, the last few years have seen something of a European military surge in Afghanistan. Since late 2006, 18 of the 25 EU countries participating in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), NATO's Afghan mission, have increased their troop contributions, and as a result EU member states now account for 43% of ISAF's total deployment. This military surge has been accompanied by a steady growth in European efforts to contribute to Afghanistan's reconstruction, from development aid to police training – although not every EU member state is pulling its weight.

These measures have made the EU a major stakeholder in Afghanistan. Yet the EU's real impact on the country has been limited. In the face of a likely request from the Obama administration to do more, European governments should now formulate a hard-headed political strategy as a complement to the coming US military surge.

The overall aim of this strategy should be to begin systematic outreach to Afghanistan's insurgency groups. To prepare the ground, the 2009 presidential elections will have to be safeguarded from insurgent attack and fraud. After the election, EU governments should push for the twin processes of reconciliation and constitutional change.

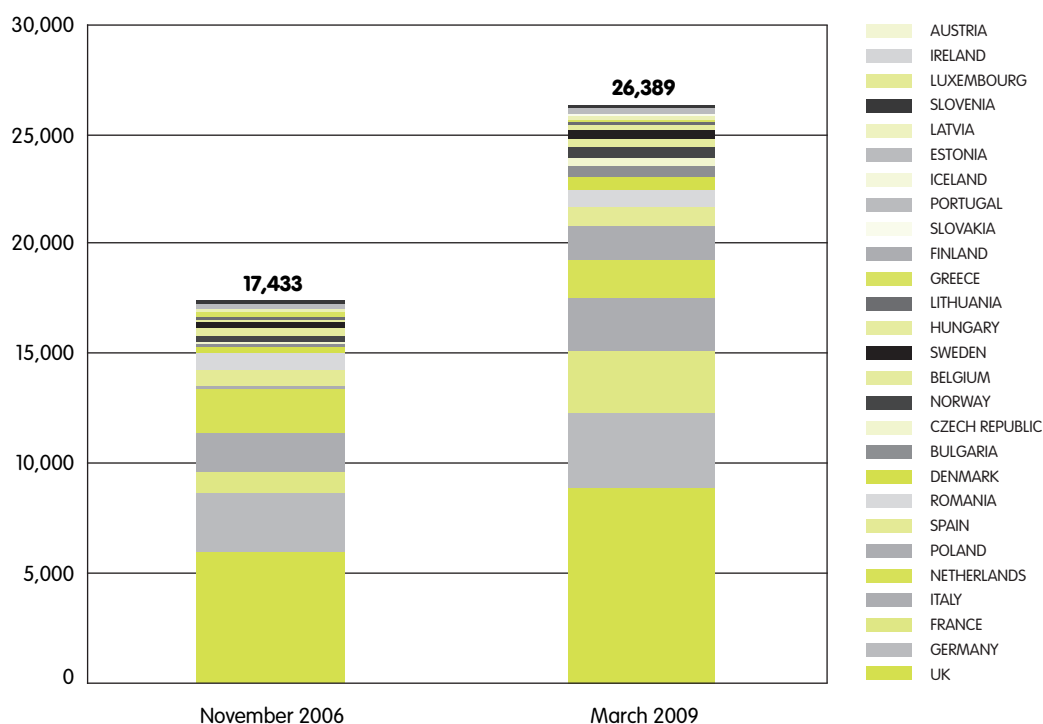
But European governments cannot revert to a purely civilian role. They should continue improving their training of the Afghan army and police, and assist US and local forces in emphasising "human security" in military operations. This should be backed up by well-funded and long-term aid commitments, the launch of a European provincial reconstruction team in Kabul, a development-based approach to counter-narcotics, and a revived Pakistan strategy.

## Introduction

President Barack Obama and his secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, have made it clear that they expect a significant enhancement of the European effort in Afghanistan. The issue is likely to be viewed in Washington as a litmus test of whether the Europeans can be taken seriously as strategic partners.

Obama's strategy in Afghanistan is likely to include an attempt to "regionalise" the issue, involving some kind of dialogue with Iran and efforts to bring India, the Gulf states and the central Asian countries into the conversation; an initial increase of 17,000 US troops, particularly in the south and east of the country, with a possibility of further deployments later this year or early next; and an offer of negotiations with "reconcilable" Taliban insurgents. It may also include an attempt to co-opt – and possibly even arm – Afghanistan's Pashtun tribes, much as General David Petraeus did in Anbar province in Iraq (the so-called Awakening).

Although much of this will sound like sweet music to European ears, some elements of the new US strategy will be decidedly uncomfortable for Europeans, not least a likely request for more troops. The idea of establishing Pashtun "tribal militias" also has its European detractors, who worry that transplanting to Afghanistan what seems to have worked in Iraq overlooks key differences between the two

Figure 1. The growth in European troop numbers in Afghanistan<sup>1</sup>

countries, and could present NATO with a whole host of new problems down the line.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, while the US is placing demands on them to do more, European governments are coming under increasing domestic pressure to do less. Poll after poll in France, Germany and even Britain finds respondents saying they want their troops to be pulled out and less of their money to be spent on Afghanistan. A year ago, the Afghan mission was Europe's "forgotten war".<sup>3</sup> Today it is Europe's unwanted war.

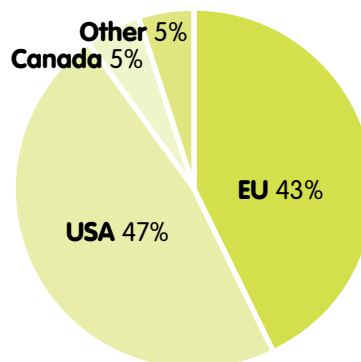
Europe will always be overshadowed by the US in Afghanistan and south Asia. But if European governments were to withdraw from the NATO mission, they would open themselves up to threats from the region and cease to have any influence on US policymaking. Europe therefore has every reason to remain committed to Afghanistan's reconstruction.

### *The silent European surge*

The US still has by far the greatest number of soldiers deployed in Afghanistan, with 29,820 troops in NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission and an estimated 10–12,000 in the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), which runs in parallel to the ISAF mission.<sup>4</sup> Yet unnoticed by many, the last few years have seen a quiet European military surge in Afghanistan. The ISAF mission

has grown from 32,800 troops in November 2006 to 61,960 in March 2009, with many of these new forces coming from European countries. During this period, the number of European troops in Afghanistan has risen by over half – from 17,433 to 26,389. (See figure 1, above).

Of the 25 EU countries participating in ISAF, 18 have increased their deployment since late 2006. Germany alone has sent over an additional 1,000 troops, taking its total to 3,640 – the largest number of German combat troops deployed outside the country's borders since the Second World War. Indeed, the EU is now responsible for 43% of the total ISAF force. (See figure 2, below).

Figure 2. ISAF troops by origin<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ISAF Placemat, November 2006, and ISAF Placemat, March 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Williams, "The Militia Mistake", *The Guardian*, 29 December 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Korski, *Europe's Forgotten War*, ECFR report, January 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> ISAF Placemat, March 2009.

In southern Afghanistan, where the fight against the Taliban is most intense, Canadian, Dutch and British soldiers have been joined by a mini “coalition of the willing”, including Denmark, Estonia and Romania.<sup>6</sup> Denmark has boosted its military presence to some 700 troops, despite suffering the highest per capita casualties among ISAF countries. Italy and France have dropped the operational restrictions on their troops known as “caveats”, allowing more flexibility to General David McKiernan, the top NATO commander in Afghanistan. A number of countries have already promised to supply more troops in the run-up to the presidential elections later this year.

Europe also continues to provide massive development and technical assistance. At a donors’ conference in Tokyo in 2002, the European Commission (EC) pledged €1 billion over five years. For the years 2007-10, the EC has made available a package of development aid worth €610 million. In addition, since 2007, the EU has had in place a European security and defence policy (ESDP) mission known as EUPOL Afghanistan, which advises and trains the Afghan National Police (ANP). EUPOL Afghanistan has set up emergency teams to deal with kidnapping, organised crime, intelligence and anti-corruption. In May 2008, EU foreign ministers decided to double EUPOL’s staff to 400.

### *What Europe can – and can’t – do*

Yet Europe is not doing enough. Although they frequently talk about the importance of non-military instruments, many European governments have failed to provide staff to civilian bodies like EUPOL, the office of the EU special representative to Afghanistan, or the NATO civilian representative’s office. (A full audit of each EU Member State’s contribution to military and civilian missions in Afghanistan appears at the back of this brief.) And while many European governments have pushed for the UN to take on a stronger role in policy development and coordination, few have given the UN mission in Afghanistan and Kai Eide, the Norwegian diplomat who serves as the special representative of the UN secretary general, the necessary support, staff or resources, either in New York or Kabul. Despite the decision last year to bulk up the EUPOL mission to 400 people, actual staffing levels remain at less than half this figure, with many European countries having no personnel in the mission at all. Some medium-sized EU Member States, like Austria, Belgium and Portugal, do not even have an accredited resident ambassador in Kabul, an extraordinary situation that undercuts their governments’ proclamations of support for non-military policies.

But more importantly, for a bloc that wants to be taken seriously as a partner to the US, the EU’s Afghanistan strategy and, more broadly, its approach to the entire region are floundering. They may have spent billions of euros in reconstruction and contributed almost as many troops as the US to the NATO mission, but European governments

## Afghanistan’s alphabet soup

### **Afghan National Army (ANA)**

The military of the state of Afghanistan.

### **Afghan National Police (ANP)**

The police forces of the state of Afghanistan.

### **Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A)**

US-led military command dedicated to the development of the Afghan security forces. A subordinate unit, the Combined Training Advisory Group (CTAG), works on the Afghan army’s higher education (non-basic training). CTSC-A reports to OEF.

### **EUPOL Afghanistan**

EU police mission in Afghanistan launched in mid-June 2007 to monitor, mentor, advise and train the Afghan police.

### **European Union special representative (EUSR)**

An emissary of the EU, the EUSR (currently Ettore Francesco Sequi) undertakes political reporting and diplomatic representation tasks.

### **International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)**

A NATO-led security and development mission in Afghanistan established by the UN Security Council on 20 December 2001. Five subordinate regional commands co-ordinate all regional civil-military activities.

### **Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)**

US-led military operation involving some coalition partners. Operates primarily in the eastern and southern parts of Afghanistan, along the Pakistan border.

### **Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLTs)**

NATO training teams embedded with the ANA to support, train and advise Afghan soldiers.

### **Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT)**

A unit consisting of military officers, diplomats and reconstruction experts, working to support reconstruction efforts in unstable states. First established in Afghanistan in early 2002.

have failed to agree on an EU strategy with clear ideas of what they want to see happen.

There are a number of ways Europe can make a difference in Afghanistan, aside from simply sending more troops. Although Member States have made different levels of commitment to the Afghan mission, European leaders seem to agree implicitly on what is needed: the opening of negotiations with “reconcilable” Taliban insurgents, more civilian reconstruction, a development-based approach to counter-narcotics, more training for the Afghan security forces to enable them to lead the counter-insurgency effort, and regional initiatives that include not only Pakistan but also India, Iran and China.

Such efforts could complement the coming US military surge and replicate the success of General Petraeus’s strategy in Iraq, where a military surge and an increase in civilian personnel were coordinated with the opening of negotiations with insurgency groups. Contrary to widespread perception, in Iraq, the military surge played “at best a kind of supporting role in case something went wrong”, as Michael von der Schulenburg, a UN diplomat who has worked both in Baghdad and Kabul, puts it.<sup>7</sup> Since most European governments acknowledge the success of the surge in Iraq, the challenge in forging a common EU strategy seems to be practical rather than philosophical.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Correspondence with author, 24 February 2009.

If EU leaders want to influence US policy – rather than simply choose whether to implement or obstruct it – they need to define what they want and what they are willing to offer. Although the US will retain its policy primacy, particularly after its increase in troop numbers, the Obama administration will want to hear European ideas. Yet other than the “reflection paper” drafted by France last year, which articulated policy ideas on a number of regional issues, the EU does not have a strategy for either Afghanistan or for Pakistan. Nor is anyone empowered to articulate European views either at the political or bureaucratic level. This needs to change.

The US and European governments should start by defining their “war aims” – or perhaps rather their “peace aims”. EU leaders need to accept that it may not be possible to achieve all of their goals – stability, democracy and economic development – before the European public’s patience runs out. They will also have to acknowledge that a “zero casualties” policy is not militarily feasible. The US, meanwhile, will have to be willing to discuss what have previously been taboo issues, such as the viability of its counter-narcotics policy. It must also take further steps to minimise civilian casualties.

The long-term vision of establishing a functioning democracy in Afghanistan should remain. But in the short term – the next five years or so – the international community’s aim should be consolidation and containment, not victory. As Paddy Ashdown has said: “Our success will be measured not in making things different, but making them better, not in final defeat of the jihadists, but in preventing them from using Afghanistan as a space for their activity”.<sup>8</sup>

This means seeking to contain rather than to eliminate the insurgency. Even this may be difficult. It will certainly be a difficult story to sell to European audiences that have long been told by their politicians that the mission in Afghanistan will eventually transform the war-torn society. But lowering expectations in this way is more realistic than continuing the broad-based, liberal statebuilding project, the edifice of which was built on the foundations of a discredited US foreign policy. Such a shift in strategy, together with a US military and a European civilian surge, could make all the difference in Afghanistan.

## 1. Putting politics first

What should Europe’s new Afghanistan strategy look like? Much of the discussion about Afghanistan in recent months has focused on the need to expand the military operation. But most analysts now recognise that the Taliban cannot be defeated militarily. The conflict has reached a stalemate, not unlike the situation between the British military and the IRA in Northern Ireland in the late 1990s. Both sides – NATO and the Afghan government on one, and the Taliban on the other – can score major victories, but only at a prohibitive cost. An all-out Taliban attack on Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand province, for example, would give the Taliban a media coup, but would produce casualties on a scale it can ill afford and, even if successful, territory it could not hold. NATO, on the other hand, will continue to struggle to seal Afghanistan’s porous 2,400-mile long border with Pakistan, which allows insurgents access to their safe havens. And while the killing of senior Taliban commanders may have disrupted the insurgency’s operations, in many cases it has also proved self-defeating, as power has simply been handed down to younger, more radical fighters.

Some argue that Europe should instead concentrate its attention on improving state services, attempting to weaken the appeal of the Taliban to ordinary Afghans by strengthening the bond between state and citizen. But such a strategy is unlikely to bear fruit in the short term: few experts believe that the international community can provide services at a sufficient level to persuade tacit supporters of the Taliban that the Afghan government is worth backing. Eight years after the Taliban’s fall, for example, there are only a few hours of electricity a day in Kabul. The problem is compounded by the fact that in most parts of the country, the provision of services is dictated by European politics, not by on-the-ground needs. For example, the Danish government is investing half of its assistance to Helmand province in schools, even though the local population cannot defend them from Taliban attack. Moreover, there is a fundamental problem with this entire approach. Many ordinary Afghans, especially in the south, have little interest in forging a bond with the central government in Kabul.

Instead of focusing on fighting the Taliban or providing services, therefore, Europe should prioritise some kind of political process, reaching out to the Taliban and drawing in those elements that are open to reconciliation. “Ultimately, the solution here in this country will be a political solution and not a military one”, ISAF commander General McKiernan told AFP last October on the sidelines of a change-of-command ceremony.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Paddy Ashdown, Hands lecture, Mansfield College, Oxford, 4 November 2008.

<sup>9</sup> “Top US general in Afghanistan backs ‘political solution’”, AFP, 9 October 2008.

## *Safeguarding the elections*

Before it can begin making approaches to the Taliban, however, the Afghan government and its international backers need to ensure the smooth running of the presidential and provincial elections slated for August. There are a number of outstanding concerns, particularly about insurgent attacks and electoral fraud.

The first challenge is to ensure that the elections take place in an atmosphere of relative security, particularly in the south and east of the country. Fear of Taliban attacks may lower turnout in many places, especially because the election coincides with the beginning of the so-called “fighting season”. So far voter registration has been better than expected in southern provinces like Uruzgan, Helmand, Kandahar and Nimroz. Yet this merely reflects the depths to which expectations have sunk: at the time of writing, only around 500,000 people had registered in these provinces. When you consider that Afghanistan has about 9.8 million eligible voters, more than half of whom are in the southern provinces, the scale of the challenge becomes clear.

Fears about election fraud have been heightened, first by President Karzai’s appointment of a close confidant to run the Afghan Election Commission, and second by reports that women are registering in much greater numbers than men – something that has raised suspicions in a country where women continue to occupy far inferior social positions to men. Fraud in one part of the country could exacerbate regional and ethnic tensions, with serious implications for a new presidential mandate.

The Afghan government’s backers in the west should be under no illusions: the election will not by itself produce the legitimacy needed to quell the insurgency, because the Taliban and other insurgency groups are not yet ready to participate in the electoral process. And if the elections are mishandled, the west could find itself faced with a whole new host of challenges. In the worst-case scenario, the presidential election is rigged and President Karzai declares himself winner in the face of protests by the opposition and criticism by observers. The international military and civilian presence would then be left propping up an illegitimate government, which would struggle to deliver services or to engage the insurgency. The elections therefore have the potential to undermine much of the progress that has been made since 2001, while also being insufficient on their own to provide a new beginning. Expressing this gloomy outlook, one senior Afghan minister has said: “We are doomed if we do hold elections and we are doomed if we don’t”.<sup>10</sup>

Faced with these challenges, some diplomats have suggested postponing the elections. But this would create a new set of problems. A delay of more than a few months would create a perception among Afghans that the international community was backing the indefinite rule of President Karzai, which would damage not just prospects for reconciliation with the

## Policy recommendations

- A twin process of reconciliation with the Taliban and constitutional reform to be launched
- EU to field a large election observer mission and NATO to deploy the NATO Response Force for an election-focused boost to ISAF
- NATO allies to improve training of the Afghan army by setting up a Military Advisory Force, a Military Advisory Centre and launching a NATO training mission for non-basic army training
- EU to grow its police mission by hiring 500 officers on the open market, including from third states, like Ukraine, Moldova, Morocco, Serbia and Turkey, while reconciling the roles of the US CSTC-A and EUPOL
- EU states to support the establishment of a special UN-backed serious crimes tribunal, located in Kabul or elsewhere in the region, to take on drug kingpins
- US and EU to call for a new UN “assistance envoy” for Pakistan and to organise a donors’ conference
- EU to launch a “capital reconstruction team” for Kabul to guarantee a concerted focus on security and reconstruction

Taliban but also the concord between the Afghan government and the Northern Front (the opposition bloc in the national assembly created around the old Northern Alliance). On the other hand, any pressure from the west to replace elections with a *loya jirga* – an assembly of tribal elders and other grandees at which political posts are handed out – would make an enemy out of President Karzai. In either case, Afghanistan’s constitution would be weakened.

So the US and European governments must focus on ensuring that the presidential elections take place safely, and on preventing electoral fraud throughout the country, particularly in the southern and eastern parts of the country. To help achieve this, the EU should send a group of as many election observers as possible, led by an experienced and respected European figure. Those countries that have underperformed on military or civilian deployment – Austria, Estonia, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia – should feel a particular responsibility to staff and fund this election mission. European governments should also

<sup>10</sup> Cited by a European diplomat, ECFR interview, 22 November 2008.



deploy as many troops as possible in the south and east in the run-up to the elections. Troops on stand-by for use by the NATO Response Force (NRF) could be used to temporarily boost ISAF's force strength. Countries that do not contribute troops should help meet the additional deployment costs their allies will incur through a temporary financial burden-sharing formula.

European governments should also encourage presidential candidates to work together. In particular, the European Union's special representative (EUSR) for Afghanistan should promote the idea of candidates running on ethnically and regionally balanced "tickets", and consider what incentives Europe could offer would-be candidates to engage in such "accommodative electioneering". Faizullah Zaki, an Afghan MP, has proposed amending the electoral law so that, in the event of a run-off (which under electoral law takes place if none of the presidential candidates receives more than half the votes in the first round), presidential candidates can change their nominations for vice-president. This would allow for slates to be combined, thereby ensuring that the winning candidate is backed by as wide a coalition as possible. Although there are four main ethnic groups in Afghanistan – Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks – the Afghan constitution prescribes only three slots on the presidential slate, which automatically disenfranchises one ethnic group on any given ticket. The EU should therefore also encourage all presidential candidates to state an intention to informally nominate a fourth member on their ticket, perhaps for a senior ministerial post.

Finally, and perhaps most contentiously, European governments should address the widespread belief among Afghans that President Karzai is trying to steal the election. The best solution would be for Karzai to stand down as president for the duration of the campaign, as Mikhail Saakashvili did in Georgia in 2007. Karzai could retain the title of president, if need be, but hand over actual power to someone else. This could give the presidential election at least the appearance of fairness by reducing the power of incumbency. (It could also improve the credibility of district and parliamentary elections.) Under these circumstances, the best candidate for Karzai's temporary replacement would probably be Abdullah Salaam Azeemi, the chief justice.

Once the election is over, it is crucial that the US and European governments present the newly elected president with a list of hopes and expectations for the government's first hundred days – perhaps in a joint letter from President Obama, the UN and NATO secretary-generals and the EU's special representative. Lord Robertson wrote many such letters to Balkan leaders when he was NATO chief.

In the longer term, the international community should begin to address a cause of the systematic instability that has racked Afghanistan for the last seven years: the absence of political parties. In most political systems, parties play a central role in selecting leaders, defining a political agenda and bridging social cleavages. Yet in Afghanistan, alliances tend to be based on ethnicity or religion rather than ideas. The situation is not

helped by the use of the single non-transferable vote system, which creates structural disincentives to the formation of genuine parties. The EU could encourage the growth of parties by, for example, making assistance for future elections contingent on the introduction of the single transferable vote, or on setting aside 60–100 parliamentary seats for party lists.

### *Relaunching reconciliation*

Once the elections have taken place, it will be crucial for the international community to relaunch some kind of political outreach process. This will not be easy: the insurgency in Afghanistan does not represent a monolithic group with a clear set of political demands that can be negotiated over a conference table. Rather, it includes a number of independent and decentralised organisations, including the Taliban, al-Qaeda, Hezb-i-Islami and the Haqqani network, as well as criminal organisations and a range of sub-tribal groups. These various groups may have ideological links and may co-operate on occasion, but they are fighting for different reasons and are not subject to any central authority.

The second problem in relaunching outreach lies with the Afghan government. Since the 2001 Bonn conference, convened to build the political structures of the new Afghanistan, from which the toppled Taliban leadership was excluded, the Karzai government has shown itself largely uninterested in reconciliation with the Taliban. Although the president has attempted to reach out to the most senior Taliban leadership, it has been hard for insiders and outsiders alike to ascertain his seriousness. So far the government has won over only 12 of the 142 UN-listed senior Taliban figures.

Some provincial governors have made efforts to bring onside tribes and communities who had previously tolerated or supported the Taliban. These efforts have been successful in some areas, like the Musa Qala district in Helmand province. Elsewhere, however, many insurgents and their supporters who might have been open to reconciliation have been harassed by the Afghan security forces, or even by NATO troops. The Afghan government's reconciliation programme, PTS, which helps non-ideological insurgents – farm boys and foot soldiers – to return to a peaceful life, has been underfunded and badly led.

Some analysts reject the idea of reaching out to insurgents. How, they ask, can negotiating with the Taliban be reconciled with the international community's commitment to human rights or democracy?<sup>11</sup> Other experts, like Jamie Shea and Paddy Ashdown, fear that negotiating with the Taliban could strengthen its belief that it is winning its war against NATO. As a result of these various views, some European governments, like the British and the Dutch, seem to favour some form of negotiations, while others, like the Danish, are sceptical, or worried about getting ahead of the US. To cover up these

<sup>11</sup> Ann Marlowe, "Don't Negotiate with the Taliban: Afghanistan is making progress despite its president", *Wall Street Journal*, 18 November 2008.

disagreements, European governments hide behind the mantra that negotiations should be “Afghan-led”.

European governments do face a tough challenge in explaining why they are reaching out to serial violators of human rights, and in some cases possibly granting them positions of power. It is true that negotiations will empower some Taliban commanders with worldviews that are unpalatable to Europeans, but in this they are hardly distinct from many former warlords who have become ministers in the Afghan government (and the same could be said of Iraq). It seems hypocritical to vilify the Taliban while pretending that the Afghan government is entirely free from taint.

Set against this, there is reason to think that reconciliation will eventually produce results. Some Taliban will no doubt refuse to negotiate, and others will hold out for as long as they think they are winning. Nevertheless, negotiations could go a long way towards strengthening “pragmatic” leaders and towards weaning away from the Taliban those tribal leaders who have joined the insurgency out of opportunism rather than religious fervour. But the strongest argument for reconciliation is simply that there is no realistic alternative. The European public is unlikely to support a military presence in Afghanistan for as long as it would be needed in order to build a liberal, democratic and modern state. European governments should not lose sight of this long-term goal altogether, but must accept that in the short term they will have to settle for less.

Europe is in a particularly strong position to relaunch a reconciliation effort in Afghanistan. Several Taliban commanders have pronounced themselves willing to see the EU play a role as an intermediary. EU governments have valuable experiences to draw on from Northern Ireland, the middle east and Sri Lanka. However, a new approach is needed. An effective reconciliation strategy, as the former EU diplomat Michael Semple says, should “be sought on the basis of accommodation between the conflicting parties rather than on an expectation that insurgents will be co-opted or subjugated to the Kabul-based order”.<sup>12</sup>

This means reconciliation has to be tied to constitutional reform. Formal decentralisation of power could open up an avenue for political inclusion. This would not only have a political use, but could address the institutional dysfunctionality of the Afghan state. The Obama administration is expected to emphasise capacity-building among tribal and provincial authorities in the provinces over institution-building at the centre. Last year, Richard Holbrooke, now the president’s envoy to Afghanistan, said the US should stop trying to bolster the “weak and corrupt” Karzai government in Kabul and focus more on improving local governance.<sup>13</sup> However, there are different views on what this means in practice. For example, while the European Commission thinks local governance means improving state-province relations in order to improve the delivery of

basic services, the US military thinks it means empowering provincial leaders to fight the Taliban.

This confusion has led to the creation of multiple layers of governance and conflicting legislation. The relationship between the key entities at the local level – traditional *shuras*, community development councils (CDCs), governors and provincial councils – is unclear. Meanwhile, real power is often wielded by insurgency commanders, drug lords or Taliban-appointed governors. A twin-track process of opening talks while looking at ways to formally decentralise the country’s political set-up through constitutional reforms could provide the lure of more power at the provincial level – and therefore more locally contested positions – and a more functional governance set-up, and thus draw in individuals and groups that have previously provided support, tacit or otherwise, to insurgents.

The establishment of a new political order in a place like Afghanistan must, of course, be led by the people who have been involved in the conflict. But while external actors are not themselves in a position to identify legitimate local leaders or directly foster self-government, they can nevertheless offer local actors incentives to reach agreements. If any non-Afghans have the authority to reach out to the Taliban insurgency, it is the UN. But with more than enough on his plate, the UN envoy, Kai Eide, could ask his EU and NATO counterparts, Ettore Sequi and Fernando Gentilini, to take the lead in developing a plan to help relaunch the reconciliation process. This must include appraisals, monitoring and follow-up mechanisms to ensure that resources enable insurgents to live peacefully. It would also have to include some kind of “counterbalancing” development assistance to the north, as one report puts it, to prevent “remobilisation of demobilised combatants and commanders of the Northern Alliance”.<sup>14</sup> To this end, the Northern Front will also need to be involved in the political process. The process of constitutional reform, in turn, should aim to formally decentralise the state. The EU could supply technical expertise to the constitutional process and support a relaunched reconciliation process, while making financial support for future elections contingent on progress towards reform.

## 2. Providing security

Although reconciliation will be crucial, nothing can be achieved unless the security situation improves. The failure to provide security has made it easier for the Taliban to convince tribesmen that only it can keep areas safe, dispense justice, and protect opium cultivation, smuggling and other illegal activities.<sup>15</sup>

While civilian activity will be key to Afghanistan’s security in the medium to long term, there is no way around the fact that basic security requires troops. There are now more European

<sup>12</sup> Correspondence with author, 12 January 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Greg Grant, “Obama’s Afghanistan Strategy Likely to Ditch Karzai, Focus on Local Governance”, *International Policy*, 29 January 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Sultan Barakat et al, “DFID Understanding Afghanistan, Strategic Conflict Assessment”, The Development and Recovery Consortium, November 2008.

<sup>15</sup> This is not simply a question of insurgent attacks. In fact, in a poll last year, Afghans said they saw interpersonal violence, including physical attacks, racketeering and kidnapping, as a greater threat than insurgent-related violence or actions by NATO forces.

soldiers in Afghanistan than ever, but many are operating in the quietest parts of the country. Few want to join the fight against the Taliban in the southern and eastern provinces. And while some EU governments have sought to do more, others have kept a low profile, hoping that they will not be asked to increase their contributions. Finland, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Romania have all seen their contributions to ISAF drop in recent years. For these governments, criticism of the “over-militarised” strategy of the US in Afghanistan is a convenient foil to hide their own limitations.

However, the reality is that even if some European countries were to increase troop numbers in Afghanistan, overall deployment numbers would still be far short of the ratio of 20 troops to 1,000 population military doctrine says is necessary for effective counter-insurgency operations. In the southern provinces alone, such a ratio would require over 280,000 security personnel – over ten times more than the amount of troops currently deployed in the area. This is why the international community’s primary aim must be to improve the Afghan army.

### *Improving the Afghan army*

The first objective of military operations must be to secure the population, to counter intimidation from insurgents, to allow reconstruction to take place and to secure legal economic production and exchange. This is easier said than done. Some insurgents, in the words of a previous ISAF commander, are “beyond behavioural adjustment”.<sup>16</sup> And the Taliban often provoke NATO forces, attacking urban centres like Lashkar Gah and hiding among the local population. Where NATO has allowed Taliban activity to continue undisrupted, like in Arghandab in Kandahar province, things have become worse. Nevertheless, focusing on “human security” may prevent the insurgency from obtaining control in the first place. This strategy will probably require foreign troops to embed themselves ever more closely with the Afghan military, getting out among the people, staffing security stations and patrolling neighbourhoods together with the Afghan National Army (ANA).

The most efficient and sustainable way for the international community to improve human security in Afghanistan is to increase the effectiveness of the ANA, and, therefore, of NATO’s operational mentor and liaison teams (OMLTs), which train and mentor Afghan troops. Much remains to be done. The Afghan army is fielding units faster than NATO can supply OMLTs to train them. Few NATO countries have the manpower to supply more than one or two OMLTs, which can vary in size from ten people to 50 or more. And given that it takes an average OMLT four to six months to become effective, a typical six-month tour leaves little time to leverage the skills learnt and the relationships created before rotating out of theatre.

To deal with these problems, European countries should offer to create a 2,000-person military advisory force under NATO auspices. The force could consist of multinational forces committed, on a rotating basis, to a six-month period of joint training prior to the start of an operational stand-by period. Joint training would continue throughout the stand-by period. This would ensure that NATO has a highly flexible, OMLT-style capability and that the experiences of the trainers deployed to ISAF are maximised. In the first instance, NATO should create an alliance-wide database of soldiers who have served in OMLTs. These soldiers could provide train-the-trainers courses and subsequently help tailor courses for other soldiers being deployed to Afghanistan. All European soldiers serving in OMLT-style assignments should be on 12-month rotations.

NATO should also declare its intention to create a purpose-built military advisory centre to gather together training currently carried out at the Joint Force Training Centre in NATO’s Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast, in Poland, and the US Army Europe’s Joint Multinational Readiness Centre, in Germany. The centre would teach prospective advisers the tricks of the trade, along with the necessary language skills.

European governments, meanwhile, should consider how to improve their own contributions to the Afghan army’s development. Notwithstanding the few OMLTs, the bulk of Afghan troop training is conducted by the US-led Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A). NATO should consider setting up a training mission to assume control of army higher education (non-basic training), which is currently done by a part of CSTC-A called the Combined Training Advisory Group (CTAG). Since General David McKiernan is in charge of both ISAF and CSTC-A, integration should not be a problem.

NATO and the Afghan security forces must also accept their share of responsibility for contributing to the atmosphere of insecurity. As the academic Marika Theros has argued, “the substitution of firepower for manpower and the emphasis on force protection over protection of Afghans has inevitably resulted in significant civilian casualties from air strikes”<sup>17</sup> – according to a Human Rights Watch report, 321 Afghan civilians died last year as a result of bombing raids.<sup>18</sup> The imminent increase in the number of US ground troops should minimise reliance on air strikes, but it could also lead to greater use of close air support, which may in turn increase civilian casualties. This is not just an American problem: European contingents often call in aerial support. NATO needs to do better in showing that it cares about the deaths of innocent civilians at its hands. Blaming the Taliban and questioning death tolls, as it has had a tendency to do, makes NATO look callous and undermines its counter-insurgency objectives.

<sup>17</sup> Marika Theros, “A Human Security Strategy for Afghanistan”, Centre for the Study of Global Governance, LSE (forthcoming).

<sup>18</sup> “Troops in Contact: Airstrikes and Civilian Deaths in Afghanistan”, Human Rights Watch, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Cited by ISAF staff officer, ECFR interview, 3 January 2008.



## *Training the Afghan police*

A permanently militarised society will always be at risk of future autocracy. So while the Afghan army will be key to delivering security and defeating the insurgency, the country's domestic security should ultimately be the responsibility of the police. There remain considerable problems with the Afghan National Police (ANP), which in many provinces is both corrupt and predatory. Nevertheless, 82% of Afghans say they have confidence in the ability of the police to do their jobs, and nearly half of crime victims say they reported the crimes to the police.<sup>19</sup> President Karzai's appointment of Hanif Atmar as interior minister last year is a further positive sign: through his work in other ministries, Atmar has shown himself to be serious and reform-minded.

Until now, police reform has been divided between the US and the EU. EUPOL, the EU's Afghan police training mission, was created in 2007 and has taken over from various bilateral programmes, while the European Commission manages a Rule of Law programme and funds the ANP through its Law and Order Trust Fund (LOTFA). Yet EUPOL has struggled to make any discernable difference to policing standards in Afghanistan over the past 18 months. Upon taking over as EUPOL's head last October, Kai Vittrup called the assignment "his toughest job yet".

A major part of the problem is a lack of resources. No less than 14 calls by the EU Council Secretariat for contributions by EU states to EUPOL have fallen on deaf ears, and it took months to fill the mission's second highest-ranking job. Only 15 EU states are contributing staff to the operation, and of these, only Germany, Italy and Britain have provided more than ten staff. France, for example, has only two people in the EUPOL mission, but has managed to find 18 for the equivalent mission in Bosnia, 43 for Georgia and 176 for Kosovo. Though Portugal has told the EU it has 481 police officers ready to be deployed on ESDP missions, it has sent none to EUPOL Afghanistan.<sup>20</sup> Unsurprisingly, EUPOL's contribution is dwarfed, both in terms of manpower and technical support, by the US police programme, CSTC-A, with which co-operation has been messy. And while EUPOL has struggled to get out into the provinces, in 2007 the US launched a basic training programme to train all Afghan police officers in more than 350 districts. Several European countries, such as Britain, the Netherlands and Germany, are participating in this programme, but not through the EUPOL mission.

Even more worryingly, EUPOL's aim – to become, in the words of its head, a "strategic advisory service" – is out of step with the wishes of the Afghan government. Speaking to European ambassadors in November 2008, the Afghan interior minister asked for EUPOL to "become operational rather than merely strategic", and made it clear he needed "people who would be willing to get their hands dirty". It is not even clear that EUPOL has a clear vision of its own mission. In

a recent report,<sup>21</sup> the International Crisis Group argued that a common "European vision that draws together Member States as well as EU institutions' efforts in the field has yet to emerge". The report also claimed that "EUPOL has tenuous links with the office of the European Union's Special Representative for Afghanistan, which is tasked with promoting 'overall EU political coordination'".

Part of the problem is that the EU's approach is not suited to conditions in Afghanistan. Since deploying its first police mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2003, the EU has aimed to train, mentor and advise indigenous personnel, usually at senior levels, while improving formal administrative, financial and legal frameworks. But this approach shows few results in places like Afghanistan, where legal and administrative traditions are limited, corruption pervasive, the skill base low and illiteracy high, even at senior levels.

The EU should make a strategic choice to lead the international community's police reforms, but at the same time it must change its approach to suit local circumstances. It should increase staff numbers, merge the EUPOL and EC programmes and allocate funding for technical improvement. In particular, the EUPOL mission should be expanded by a minimum of 500 officers, with police personnel hired on the open market and managed by seconded police officers, much as we have seen with the British-led police reforms in southern Iraq. The hiring could be done by the European Commission, which has authority to hire so-called "contract agents", by the EU Council Secretariat or by the EUPOL mission itself. (Granting hiring powers to EUPOL would allow countries that have not previously supported the mission, including Austria, Belgium, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia, to begin doing so.) Another option would be to contract a private company to supply the police officers. Increasing numbers would help EUPOL establish its reach across the country and unite national programmes, such as those run by the Spanish Guardias in Bagdis and the Italian Carabinieri in Herat.

Greater diplomatic efforts should also be made to recruit police officers from European countries outside the EU, such as Ukraine, Moldova, Serbia, Morocco and Turkey (whose gendarmerie-style police may be useful for lower-level mentoring), and also from countries like Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Japan that are already committed to Afghanistan. It may even be worth studying how elements of the 800-strong European Gendarmerie Force, currently deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina, could be used to help fill key posts in EUPOL. An overall goal for the EUPOL mission could be to manage all police training in the northern and western parts of the country. It could do so by emulating the OMLT model, fielding what could be called Police Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (P-OMLTs), which would work closely with their Afghan counterparts, including on patrols, and improve cooperation with CSTC-A.

<sup>19</sup> See "Afghanistan in 2008: A Survey of the Afghan People", Ruth Rennie, Sudhindra Sharma, Pawan Sen, Asia Foundation, 2008.

<sup>20</sup> The figures are from "Seconded Personnel", Internal Note, General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, December 2008.

<sup>21</sup> "Reforming Afghanistan's Police", International Crisis Group, *Asia Report* N°138, 30 August 2007.

In addition, the EU should establish a European Police Capital Investment Fund of around €50 million, which would give the EUPOL head access to funds for technical improvements. The fund would function like the US Commanders Emergency Response Programme (CERP), which allows American military commanders to implement short-term programmes. Resources could come from European governments and the European Commission, which could second staff into EUPOL to manage the fund.

European foreign ministers should signal their intention to establish a long-term training and mentoring relationship with the Afghan police. In particular, plans should also be put in place for a 20-year programme to support the Kabul Police Academy and its regional equivalent in Mazar-e Sharif. The academy could be twinned with European training centres like Britain's National Policing Improvement Agency or the Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units in Italy, creating a regular rotation of trainers. European governments should also support the UN-led Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC) – which assists law enforcement cooperation in the region – perhaps by offering to establish an affiliated, region-wide police and border academy.<sup>22</sup>

### 3. Changing counter-narcotics policy

The only real solution to Afghanistan's drug problem may be long-term development. After all, it took 15 years and an economic miracle to tackle the problem in Thailand. The militarised counter-narcotics policy in Columbia has simply shifted coca production to other countries in the region, like Mexico. The war on Afghan's poppy fields is not going to reduce the country's dependence on opiates; it is simply going to increase hostility to the state. Since Afghan farmers do not use chemicals, they will blame aerial eradication for disease, premature deaths or crop destruction. This would create a backlash against the Afghan government, which many already mistrust, and could turn an insurgency into an insurrection. The EU must therefore emphasise that it cannot support aerial eradication or the current militarisation of the counter-narcotics effort.

The international community should instead focus on prioritising security for local farmers, especially on the main roads to markets and between villages, and making alternatives to poppies economically viable. If farmers cannot get their goods to market, there is no chance they will switch their crops. Development policy should, in turn, improve access by poor and landless farmers to markets, land, water, credit and employment. Rich farmers and landowners may not change their behaviour immediately. But over time, with more transit security, and official provision of the same kind of services drug traffickers provide to opium farmers, they may switch to alternative sources of income. The EU should take a lead in commissioning studies on how to provide "farm-gate"

services – credit, transport, purchase at the farm-gate – for alternatives to opium.

At the same time, however, drug lords and their backers in government must be arrested and prosecuted. Extra-judicial killings, which NATO's supreme commander seems to favour,<sup>23</sup> are not only morally and legally dubious, but unlikely to make a real impact. The EU can make a specific contribution in this respect. The recognition that fragile democracies find some crimes too hard to handle alone led to the creation of specialised UN war crimes tribunals for Bosnia, Cambodia and Sierra Leone. Five years of capacity-building work in Afghanistan has failed to secure any serious convictions for drug trafficking. The EU should therefore back the establishment of a special UN-backed serious crimes tribunal – located in Kabul or elsewhere in the region, and staffed by international and Afghan experts – which could put the organisers of the drug trade on trial.

### 4. Making aid work

Both national governments and the EU need to take steps to increase and improve their aid efforts in Afghanistan. Although the EC's aid to Afghanistan is sizeable, it was roughly the same as its aid to Iraq during the tough years in that country, despite the fact that the US spends 3.8 times as much there as it does in Afghanistan.<sup>24</sup> (See figure 3, right).

Compared to previous post-conflict missions, such as in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and East Timor, the EC has underinvested in Afghanistan since 2001. Although Afghanistan is poorer and more populous than both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, the difference between what the three countries received on average in post-conflict EC assistance is not that great. (See figure 4, right).

Still, given that Bosnia and Kosovo are in the neighbourhood and may one day be EU Member States, it is perhaps not unreasonable that the EC has spent so much money on them. But the EC provides roughly the same amount of aid to many developing countries. Mozambique, for example, will receive €622 million from the EC between 2008 and 2013 – that is, approximately €125 million a year or €7.3 per capita per annum. The €610 million in EC assistance slated for Afghanistan between 2007 and 2010 comes to approximately €203 million a year – a higher total figure, but only about €6.3 per capita per annum. Of course, development assistance to the world's poorest countries remains crucial. But given the importance of Afghanistan in terms of both security and development, it seems odd that the country seems to be so low on the EC's list of priorities.

<sup>23</sup> Susanne Koelbl, "Should NATO kill Afghan opium traffickers?", *Der Spiegel*, 28 January 2009.

<sup>24</sup> US assistance to Iraq totalled \$653.1 billion over fiscal six years. See Amy Belasco, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11", pp. 16 and 19, Congressional Research Service, RL33110, updated 14 July 2008.

<sup>22</sup> The EU can draw on experience from the Southeast European Co-operative Initiative (SECI), which it helped establish in Romania.

Figure 3. EC aid to Iraq and Afghanistan 2002–2007 <sup>25</sup>

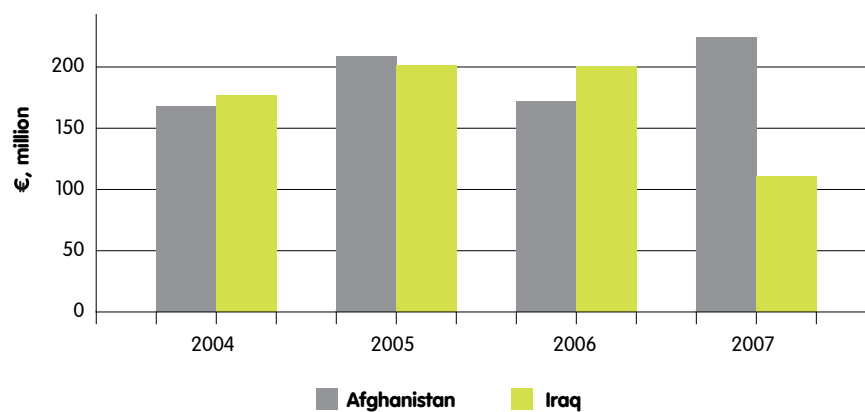
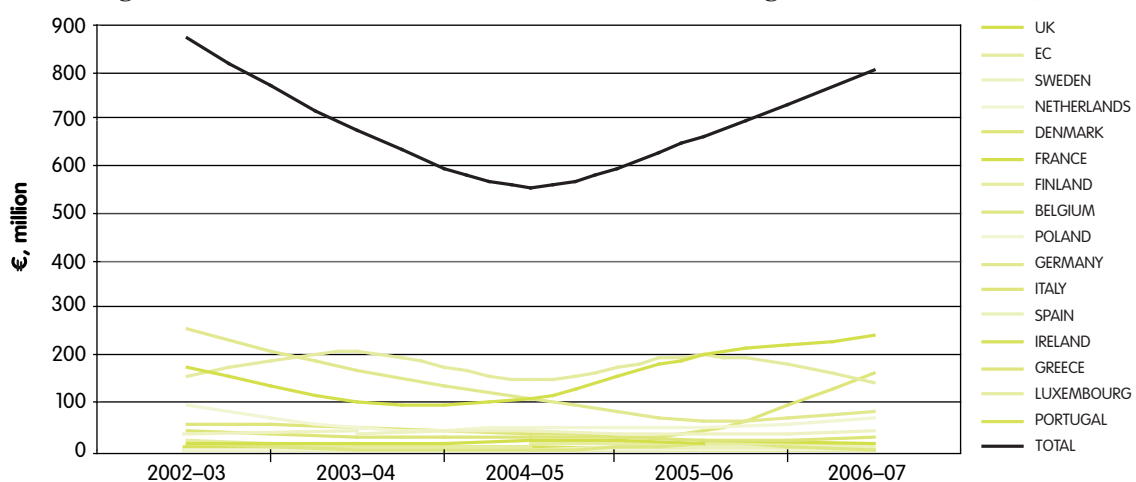


Figure 4. Annual average EC assistance

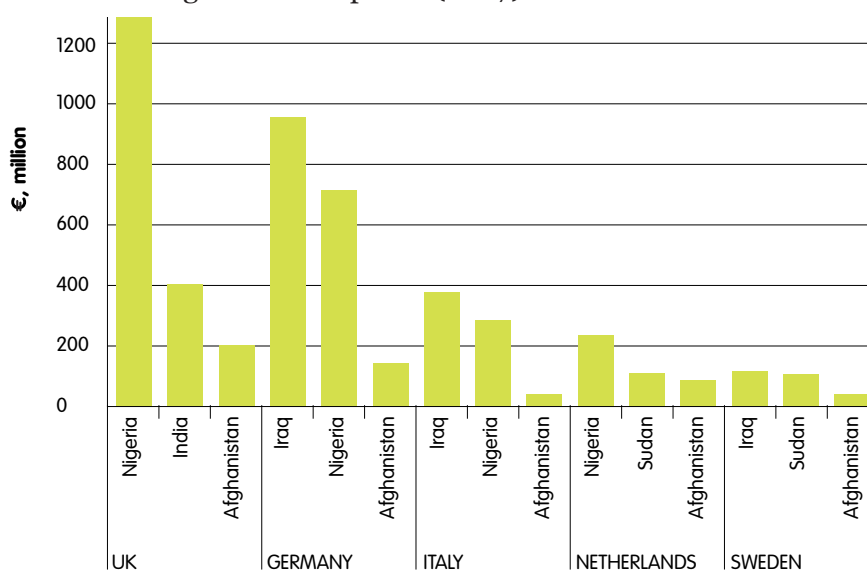


Figure 5. EU Member States' aid disbursements to Afghanistan 2002–2007 <sup>26</sup>



<sup>25</sup> The figures were taken from: European Commission State of Play 30 June 2008: Major Milestones towards reconstruction and Peace Building in Afghanistan: [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/documents/state\\_of\\_play\\_afghanistan\\_june\\_2008\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/documents/state_of_play_afghanistan_june_2008_en.pdf); European Commission State of Play 31 July 2008, republic of Iraq: [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/gulf-region/documents/state\\_of\\_play\\_2008\\_07\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/gulf-region/documents/state_of_play_2008_07_en.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Figures taken from the Afghanistan ministry of finance originally presented in USD millions at: [http://www.budgetmof.gov.af/units/Aid\\_Coord\\_Effectiveness/ACU\\_Resources/Pledge\\_Table\\_ACU\\_2008%20Final.xls](http://www.budgetmof.gov.af/units/Aid_Coord_Effectiveness/ACU_Resources/Pledge_Table_ACU_2008%20Final.xls); converted into euros on 17 December 2008, the average 2002/03, 2003/04, 2004/05, 2005/06, 2006/07 USD-EUR exchange rate was used.

Figure 6. Sample countries with Afghanistan among the top ten gross aid recipients (2007) <sup>27</sup>Figure 7. European assistance to Afghanistan in €, million  
January 2002 – March 2008 <sup>28</sup>

	PLEDGED	COMMITTED	DISBURSED
EC	1,554.40	1,225.10	1,090.28
UK	1,050.36	1,290.21	1,098.98
GERMANY	436.20	895.68	682.71
NETHERLANDS	360.96	360.96	344.05
ITALY	257.05	310.09	353.96
SWEDEN	189.50	218.42	218.42
DENMARK	175.03	175.03	178.74
SPAIN	116.31	47.12	20.51
FINLAND	69.30	69.30	69.13
FRANCE	31.15	91.22	87.23
BELGIUM	30.03	33.82	31.87
IRELAND	16.37	8.56	8.02
LUXEMBOURG	6.94	2.34	1.44
GREECE	5.89	0.23	0.22
PORTUGAL	0.96	1.73	1.17
POLAND	0.91	0.83	0.83

<sup>27</sup> The figures were taken from the OECD DAC data, originally in US dollars, at: [http://www.oecd.org/countrylist/0,3349,en\\_2649\\_34447\\_1783495\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/countrylist/0,3349,en_2649_34447_1783495_1_1_1_1,00.html); converted into euros on 17 December 2008. The average USD-EUR exchange rate for 2006-2007 was used. Note that aid was particularly high in 2006 due to large Paris Club debt relief operations (notably for Iraq and Nigeria). For more information see: [http://www.oecd.org/document/17/0,2340,en\\_2649\\_33721\\_38341265\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/17/0,2340,en_2649_33721_38341265_1_1_1_1,00.html).

<sup>28</sup> Figures taken from Afghan ministry of finance, originally in US dollars, at: [http://www.budgetmof.gov.af/units/Aid\\_Coord\\_Effectiveness/ACU\\_Resources/Pledge\\_Table\\_ACU\\_2008%20Final.xls](http://www.budgetmof.gov.af/units/Aid_Coord_Effectiveness/ACU_Resources/Pledge_Table_ACU_2008%20Final.xls).

As for national governments, virtually all have increased their contribution to the country's reconstruction since 2001, according to figures from the Afghan ministry of finance. However, some Member States place Afghanistan far higher up their list of priorities than others. Afghanistan is not among the top ten aid beneficiaries of Austria, Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg and Spain. Even among those Member States that do put Afghanistan in their top ten, countries like Germany, Italy and Sweden have devoted more aid to Iraq, even though – or perhaps because – they no longer have troops there, or never sent any in the first place. (See figure 6, left).

Moreover, these figures do not show how much of the money pledged by the EC and by individual EU governments actually reaches its intended recipients. According to Afghan government figures, Spain has disbursed only 18% of the aid it pledged for 2002–08, Ireland only 49% and the European Commission only 70%. (See figure 7, left).

In the southern parts of Afghanistan, aid delivery is particularly difficult, as few NGOs are willing to operate while security conditions are so uncertain. In other parts of the country, corruption, lack of capacity, large overheads and stipulations that donor resources must be used on expatriate consultants all chip away at the money pledged.<sup>29</sup> From 2009 onwards Denmark will allocate 12.5% of its aid directly to Helmand<sup>30</sup> while the UK spends 20% of its aid in the same province. Canada increased its aid to Kandahar from 17% to 50% in 2008,<sup>31</sup> while Germany spends 15% of its aid in two provinces in the north.<sup>32</sup>

This is not to say that assistance should be targeted exclusively at the southern and eastern parts of the country, or only on tackling the insurgency. Such a shift could create a perverse incentive, showing that insurgency attacks can be used to generate greater flows of international assistance. It would also cut funding from key central and country-wide initiatives while running the risk of reversing progress made in the west and north.

Instead, international aid providers – European development agencies in particular – should work with the UN mission in Kabul to develop different strategies for different parts of the country. Afghanistan can be divided into three zones: the north, the south and east, and a central belt. Each of these areas requires a separate development strategy. The fighting may be hardest in the south, but a number of other areas can now be also described as critical. The Taliban has opened a second front in the east of the country and is mobilising in traditionally anti-Taliban provinces like Nangarhar. Should the Taliban extend its campaign to these and other areas in

earnest, they will be able to exploit weak governments, fragile communal relations and economic dislocation.

In the secure areas, primarily in the north, the international emphasis should be on development. This means increasing support for national schemes like the National Solidarity Programme and developing provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) into more traditional, civilian-led mechanisms. In the south, the focus has to be on security. Here, European governments should focus on making their contribution to army and police development more effective, as discussed above. In the central belt, European governments need to step up their efforts in those so-called “critical” provinces that are in danger of sliding backwards. The UN mission hopes to target more than 50 “swing” areas where the situation is worsening through a body called the Integrated Approach Working Group, which brings together the UN, NATO and other key actors. European governments should do their best to meet aid requirements in these districts.

One of the most important “critical” districts is Kabul, where there has been a sharp deterioration in security in the last few years. The EU could use the experience it has in city reconstruction to create a cross-disciplinary team to adjust existing political, military and reconstruction plans for the capital. With a two-year mandate, a European Kabul capital reconstruction team could help ensure that civilian development goes hand in hand with the fact that the ANA has now taken over responsibility for security in the city from ISAF. If the method works in Kabul, it could serve as a model for other large cities like Kandahar or Jalalabad.

Europe could also do more to make the PRTs – the primary vehicle for working with local authorities in critical districts – more effective elsewhere. It is probably not sensible for the EU to set up its own PRTs beyond Kabul, as the Polish foreign minister Radek Sikorski has proposed. However, it should commit to providing more pre-trained staff for the PRT executive steering committee, the body that coordinates the work of the PRTs. This should include a pool of at least 100 civilian experts who could be deployed into all PRTs for short and long-term assignments. The EU should tailor and run pre-deployment training for all civilians to be deployed into PRTs – and, over time, for all Europeans, including those working for NGOs, who are about to be sent to Afghanistan.

Finally, the Afghan government needs a secure guarantee of future income. As the costs of the Afghan security forces rise, there is a danger that the government will be forced to make cuts in areas like health and education. European governments should therefore make a long-term commitment to Afghanistan's reconstruction, which would give the Afghan government a degree of certainty about its own revenue streams, as well as an answer to the Taliban's claim that the international community will eventually abandon Afghanistan. Every European government should also commit to spending, within two years, 80% of its assistance to Afghanistan through the Afghan budget and 90% on Afghan government priorities.

<sup>29</sup> Determining how much funding reaches recipients is always difficult, in part because donors do not share data with the Afghan government. As such, the EC has taken issue with past calculations. But most analysts at least agree that aid has been insufficient and badly targeted.

<sup>30</sup> Danish ministry of foreign affairs, 2008.

<sup>31</sup> Government of Canada 2008. The increase was a direct response to the “Manley report” and the high casualty rates of the Canadian armed forces in 2007, after going south.

<sup>32</sup> DIIS, Afghanistan report, forthcoming.



## 5. Supporting regional diplomacy

It is now widely recognised that success in Afghanistan requires engagement in the region's wider conflicts, in particular those between India and Pakistan and between Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>33</sup> Pakistan continues to provide an important sanctuary for the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and some of the insurgent groups are still believed to be backed by Pakistani intelligence.

Paddy Ashdown has argued for "a formal Dayton-like treaty which starts with recognising the territorial integrity of Afghanistan and [that is] underwritten by the great powers, including China".<sup>34</sup> Others have suggested a formal gathering of regional powers, like the 1973–75 Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (which led to the formation of the OSCE). Though proponents of this plan have not fleshed out the details, the strategy would probably include direct negotiations among all regional players as well as a formal treaty that would legally bind the parties to respect each other's sovereignty.

However, there are a number of difficulties with such a regional approach. First, the linkages between different conflicts in the regions are not necessarily straightforward: progress in one area does not necessarily mean progress in another. Second, the Pakistani government's ability to enforce legally binding treaty commitments cannot be taken for granted. Third, the region's governments do not welcome an "everything-is-connected-to-everything" attitude: India bristled at recent suggestions by the British foreign minister David Miliband that a resolution of the Kashmir dispute would help solve the problem of terrorism in South Asia. Fourth, the EU does not have the same leverage with all the region's countries: it is struggling to sway China on strategic issues, and its diplomacy with Iran has failed to deliver.

Until now, while the US has preferred to deal with each country in the region individually, European involvement in the region has been negligible. France's attempt to kickstart regional diplomacy in late 2008 – which marked the first time representatives from Iran and China had formally been brought into a conversation about the region's stability – shows that while Europe can bring regional parties into a discussion, it struggles to reach agreements.

European policy should therefore focus more specifically on Pakistan, which has a fragile economy, a fractured political system, a profound need for institutional reform and security forces that are ill-prepared (and possibly unwilling) to undertake counter-insurgency tasks. In Pakistan's troubled Federally Administered Tribal Areas, which border Afghanistan, the military is making progress in Bajaur, but has lost more territory in Swat and has almost withdrawn from Waziristan. It is widely known that the Afghan Taliban use these areas as safe

havens and as sources of logistical support, with the collusion, many analysts believe, of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency.

The EU is Pakistan's largest trading partner, accounting for around 20% of Pakistan's trade in 2007, and has quadrupled its development funding for the period 2007–10 (although it is overshadowed by the US contribution: over the last seven years, the Pentagon alone has spent more than \$10 billion in Pakistan). Yet the leverage offered up by this economic relationship is being squandered: Pakistan is nowhere to be found in the EU's security strategy. Although several European states and the European Commission have joined a "Friends of Pakistan" group organised by the US, they have brought no common European stance. No European country has made an effort to drive the EU's policy for Pakistan in the way Germany took the initiative on central Asia in 2006. One European diplomat describes the EU's policy for Pakistan as "stop and go".<sup>35</sup>

The US is training and equipping the Pakistani army and the locally recruited Frontier Corps forces. Europe can do more to help Pakistan deal with its problems. EU governments should consider launching a police reform programme, particularly in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). To start with, the EU, together with the Pakistani authorities, could carry out a comprehensive assessment of the various police forces, along the lines of the 2006 Internal Security Sector Review (ISSR) in Kosovo.

But Europe's Pakistan policy should not focus on security alone. The EU should lobby for – and, if necessary, staff and fund – a new UN "assistance envoy" to be appointed by the UN secretary-general. The envoy – preferably someone with a background in humanitarian work – could start preparing a donor's conference to be held in Islamabad later in 2009. The appointment of someone who can work full-time on Pakistan's development – as opposed to the political track, which will be led by the US envoy, Richard Holbrooke – will help the Pakistani leaders sell the idea of close co-operation with the west to their people. Pakistan has long sought inclusion in the EU's Generalised System of Preference Plus preferential trade scheme. This provides a leverage opportunity: Europe should lay out a clear map of obligations that Islamabad needs to meet in order to join the scheme. And with talk of the Czech EU presidency hosting an EU-Pakistani summit, the EU may have a further opportunity to bang the drum on the need for democratic progress.

The EU should help Pakistan's many internally displaced people (IDP). Refugee camps have been operating in the NWFP since the start of floods in August 2008, and were expanded when clashes between the Pakistani military and insurgents drove many people away from their homes. Many people returned, but some of them found their property damaged. The EC has already donated significant funds to assist Pakistani IDP, but more is needed, not only for humanitarian reasons but also

<sup>33</sup> Barnett R. Rubin and Ahmed Rashid have made a particularly persuasive case for such a region-wide approach. See "From Great Game to Grand Bargain: Ending Chaos in Afghanistan and Pakistan", *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Correspondence with author, 6 February 2009.

<sup>35</sup> Correspondence with author, 29 December 2008.

because Jamaat-ud-Dawa, the political and civilian wing of the outlawed terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba, is benefiting from the Pakistani government's inaction.

The Afghan-Pakistan border area remains one of the greatest challenges to creating a stable region. Through the G8, the Canadians are working on an ambitious border strategy, which includes security, development, economic and other measures. The US and other donors are also assisting Afghanistan and Pakistan in expanding and regularising border crossings, which may improve security, cut down on smuggling and increase tax revenues. European governments should take on the non-military aspects of the Canadian-sponsored plan for the border region. They should also take note of a proposal by Asia expert George Gravilis for the establishment of a border management co-ordination centre led by the EU, along the model of the successful Border Management Programme for central Asia.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, the EU should facilitate a broader set of regional confidence-building measures. The EC has made a start by pledging more than €60 million on regional initiatives. The commission is now planning a meeting of experts in Brussels to prepare project proposals for the next ministerial meeting of the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference for Afghanistan (RECCA), which Pakistan has proposed to host in April. Kickstarting trade and transit should be at the centre of this. To undertake the high-level diplomacy, the EU should replace the proliferation of Member State envoys with a single senior European figure, who could work closely with Richard Holbrooke in the way Cyrus Vance and David Owen collaborated in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s.

## Conclusion

The EU has increased its efforts in Afghanistan over the last couple of years, with a veritable surge of troops and a rise in development funding. However, it does not have a coherent strategy, and as a result is doing less than it could and a lot less than the situation merits. Few European governments have deployed civilians into the UN Afghan mission or EUPOL, despite their repeated insistences that the Afghan mission needs to be "civilianised". EU development assistance to Afghanistan may be increasing, but it still represents a small percentage of overall EU development aid. Few countries make Afghanistan a real priority, and aid flows do not take into account regional differences. Moreover, a considerable proportion of pledged aid never reaches the intended recipients. The EU's dealings with Pakistan have been technical and limited, despite the strategic importance of shoring up the Pakistani government, and despite the leverage that the EU has as Pakistan's largest trading partner.

The EU is, in fact, well placed to strengthen its role in many of the key areas that require a renewed effort in Afghanistan and Pakistan, such as policing assistance, political outreach and regional confidence-building. Developing the details of a new EU strategy will not be easy. Each Member State and each EU institution already has its own plans and is primed to argue that it is doing enough. Nevertheless, European leaders could agree to draft a reflection paper like the one authored last year by the French EU presidency. They could then ask the EU special representative in Kabul, Ettore Sequi, to bring together stakeholders, including the European Council Secretariat, the European Commission, EUPOL, NATO and European governments, to examine what Europe could do better, much as Wolfgang Ischinger did on behalf of the EU in Kosovo. Such a process would also allow European governments to engage with the US on Afghan/Pakistani policy. The EUSR's office needs to become a fully fledged, well-staffed organisation that can bring together the work undertaken by the EC delegation and the ESDP mission.

Once Europe has agreed a new policy with the US, it should pull together its transatlantic strategy and its own new initiatives in a new EU Afghanistan strategy, owned jointly by the Council Secretariat and the European Commission, which would be sent out for discussion in European parliaments and agreed by European leaders before a US-EU meeting. It is in Europe's interests to help rebuild an insurgency-free Afghanistan and a stable Pakistan. Europe now needs to match those interests with its resources, attention and long-term commitment.

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<sup>36</sup> See Fabrice Pothier, "Debunking five fallacies on Afghanistan", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace web commentary, 3 February 2009.

## An audit of EU Member States' contributions to Afghanistan's reconstruction

The information in these tables was provided by the respective ministries for foreign affairs. Regarding the figures on aid, the OECD data (2002-07)<sup>1</sup> represents the outlay to Afghanistan from the donor's side, while the Afghan finance ministry figures (January 2002–March 2008) indicate recipient measurements. Both sets of figures represent bilateral aid, although measurement techniques may not be consistent. (The aid figures for countries who are not OECD members and who have not reported aid to the Afghan government were provided by the respective foreign ministries.)

AUSTRIA	
Resident embassy	None
Soldiers deployed	1 soldier in ISAF
Civilians deployed	None
Aid	OECD: €42.5m Afghan finance ministry: €600,000

BELGIUM	
Resident embassy	Representation office
Soldiers deployed	405 troops in ISAF (300 at Kabul International Airport, and 20–25 with the German Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kunduz province)
Civilians deployed	None
Aid	OECD: €37.2m Afghan finance ministry: €30.8m

BULGARIA	
Resident embassy	✓
Soldiers deployed	470 troops in ISAF; plans to expand by 150–200 in 2009
Civilians deployed	None
Aid	€23m for armaments, ammunition and equipment for the Afghan National Army

CYPRUS	
Resident embassy	None
Soldiers deployed	Cyprus does not participate in international military missions
Civilians deployed	None
Aid	None

CZECH REPUBLIC	
Resident embassy	✓
Soldiers deployed	580 troops in ISAF (200 in Provincial Reconstruction Team in Logar province, 80 in Uruzgan province and 70 in Kabul); plans to expand to 645
Civilians deployed	8 civilian experts to ISAF; 5 police officers to EUPOL; 1 expert seconded to UNAMA
Aid	OECD: €27m Afghan finance ministry: None

DENMARK	
Resident embassy	✓
Soldiers deployed	700 troops in ISAF; plans to expand to 750 in 2009
Civilians deployed	2 civilian advisers in Helmand province; 1 senior civilian national representative and 2 education advisers with the Danish Provincial Reconstruction Team; 8 police officers to EUPOL, including the head of mission; 4 experts seconded to UNAMA
Aid	OECD: €112.9m Afghan finance ministry: €174.6m

ESTONIA	
Resident embassy	"Special mission" led by a chargé d'affaires
Soldiers deployed	130 troops in ISAF
Civilians deployed	1 civilian with the CSTC-A; 1 civil servant with UNAMA; 1 senior expert on healthcare with the UK-led Provincial Reconstruction Team in Helmand province; 1 police officer and 1 administration officer to EUPOL
Aid	Has contributed around €1.1m since 2001

<sup>1</sup> Figures from OECD ODA present disbursed aid between 2002 and 2007. Data for each country can be accessed at <http://webnet.oecd.org/wbos/Index.aspx>.

FINLAND	
Resident embassy	✓
Soldiers deployed	110 troops in ISAF as part of the Swedish Provincial Reconstruction Team in Mazar-e Sharif
Civilians deployed	4 civilians as advisers in development, and 2 police advisers in the Provincial Reconstruction Team; 1 human rights expert in the EUSR's office; 12 police officers to EUPOL, with the aim of increasing to 18 in 2009
Aid	OECD: €85.3m Afghan finance ministry: €67.2m

FRANCE	
Resident embassy	✓
Soldiers deployed	2,780 troops in ISAF
Civilians deployed	2 police officers to EUPOL
Aid	OECD: €84.3m Afghan finance ministry: €85.9m

GERMANY	
Resident embassy	✓
Soldiers deployed	3,640 troops in ISAF, including 45 military police engaged in training the Afghan police forces
Civilians deployed	36 police officers and 9 civilians to EUPOL; 5 civilians and 1 military expert seconded to UNAMA; 30 military police as part of the German Police Project Team; and an additional 14 police officers
Aid	OECD: €598.2m Afghan finance ministry: €658.5m

GREECE	
Resident embassy	None
Soldiers deployed	140 troops in ISAF
Civilians deployed	None
Aid	OECD: €66.6m Afghan finance ministry: €200,000

HUNGARY	
Resident embassy	✓
Soldiers deployed	370 troops in ISAF; plans to deploy an additional 100 military personnel, 2 OMLTs and a special forces unit in 2009
Civilians deployed	2 civilian experts in ISAF and 3-4 civilians on an "occasional basis"; 3 police officers to EUPOL
Aid	OECD: €6.2m Afghan finance ministry: none

IRELAND	
Resident embassy	None
Soldiers deployed	7 troops in ISAF
Civilians deployed	None
Aid	OECD: €30.8m Afghan finance ministry: €7.6m

ITALY	
Resident embassy	✓
Soldiers deployed	2,350 troops in ISAF
Civilians deployed	1 civilian to EUPOL; 14 Carabinieri and police officers to EUPOL; and 15 development cooperation experts, including 4 in the rule of law area
Aid	OECD: €205m Afghan finance ministry: €348m

LATVIA	
Resident embassy	None
Soldiers deployed	160 troops in ISAF
Civilians deployed	3 civilians – 2 representatives of state police and 1 political and development adviser from the ministry of foreign affairs
Aid	Has contributed around €180,000 in aid since 2001

LITHUANIA	
Resident embassy	None
Soldiers deployed	200 troops in ISAF
Civilians deployed	2 police officers to EUPOL; 2 civilian experts – one political adviser and one development adviser
Aid	Contributed around €3m in aid between 2006 and 2008

LUXEMBOURG	
Resident embassy	None
Soldiers deployed	9 troops in ISAF
Civilians deployed	None
Aid	OECD: €15.5m Afghan finance ministry: €1.4m

MALTA	
Resident embassy	None
Soldiers deployed	None
Civilians deployed	None
Aid	Pledged €30,000 in 2008

NETHERLANDS	
Resident embassy	✓
Soldiers deployed	1,770 troops in ISAF
Civilians deployed	13 civilians in Uruzgan province; one political adviser in Kandahar province; 4 police officers to EUPOL; 4 additional civilians committed for the regional HQ in Kandahar province
Aid	OECD: €483.5m Afghan finance ministry: €334.4m

POLAND	
Resident embassy	✓
Soldiers deployed	1,590 troops in ISAF
Civilians deployed	3 police officers to EUPOL
Aid	OECD: €2.7m Afghan finance ministry: €800,000

PORTUGAL	
Resident embassy	None
Soldiers deployed	30 troops with ISAF
Civilians deployed	1 military observer to UNAMA
Aid	OECD: €19.3m Afghan finance ministry: €1.2m

ROMANIA	
Resident embassy	None
Soldiers deployed	900 troops with ISAF and 12 protection service officers
Civilians deployed	5 police officers to EUPOL; 13 civilians to UNAMA; 1 military observer
Aid	None

SLOVAKIA	
Resident embassy	None
Soldiers deployed	120 troops in ISAF; 50 military police officers in Kandahar province
Civilians deployed	None
Aid	OECD: €6.4m Afghan finance ministry: none

SLOVENIA	
Resident embassy	None
Soldiers deployed	70 troops in ISAF
Civilians deployed	2 civilians with the Italian Provincial Reconstruction Team; plans to increase to 5 Rule of Law civilians
Aid	Has donated armaments and ammunition, but no financial aid



SPAIN	
Resident embassy	✓
Soldiers deployed	780 troops and 96 guardias civiles in ISAF
Civilians deployed	6 police officers and 5 guardias civiles to EUPOL; 13 experts from the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development
Aid	OECD: €108.6m Afghan finance ministry: €20.5m

SWEDEN	
Resident embassy	✓
Soldiers deployed	265 troops in ISAF
Civilians deployed	1 political adviser and 1 development adviser in Mazar-e Sharif province; 3 police officers, 4 mission support staff in Kabul; 1 liaison officer in Kabul as part of EUPOL
Aid	OECD: €238.4m Afghan finance ministry: €214.7m

UK	
Resident embassy	✓
Soldiers deployed	8,300 troops in ISAF
Civilians deployed	150 civilians in Kabul and 60 in Helmand province
Aid	OECD: €1.04bn Afghan finance ministry: €1.08bn

## European aid to Afghanistan

	OECD 2002–2007 €, million <sup>2</sup>	Afghan ministry of finance 2002–2008 €, million <sup>3</sup>
EC	1,205.4	1,072.7
UK	1,039.9	1,080.1
GERMANY	598.2	658.5
NETHERLANDS	483.5	334.4
SWEDEN	238.4	214.7
ITALY	205.0	348.0
DENMARK	112.9	174.6
SPAIN	108.6	20.5
FINLAND	85.3	67.2
FRANCE	84.3	85.9
GREECE	66.6	0.2
AUSTRIA	42.5	0.6
BELGIUM	37.2	30.8
IRELAND	30.8	7.6
CZECH REPUBLIC	25.7	0.0
PORTUGAL	19.3	1.2
LUXEMBOURG	15.5	1.4
SLOVAKIA	6.4	0.0
HUNGARY	6.2	0.0
POLAND	2.7	0.8
BULGARIA	0.0	0.0
CYPRUS	0.0	0.0
ESTONIA	0.0	0.0
LATVIA	0.0	0.0
LITHUANIA	0.0	0.0
ROMANIA	0.0	0.0
SLOVENIA	0.0	0.0
MALTA	0.0	0.0

<sup>2</sup> Figures in USD million taken from OECD (<http://webnet.oecd.org/wbos/Index.aspx>); converted into euros using the average USD-EUR annual exchange rate.

<sup>3</sup> Figures in USD million taken from Afghan ministry of finance ([http://www.budgetmof.gov.af/units/Aid\\_Coord\\_Effectiveness/ACU\\_Resources/Pledge\\_Table\\_ACU\\_2008%20Final.xls](http://www.budgetmof.gov.af/units/Aid_Coord_Effectiveness/ACU_Resources/Pledge_Table_ACU_2008%20Final.xls)); converted into euros using the average USD-EUR annual exchange rate.

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