

## CRITICAL QUESTIONS

**Afghanistan and Pakistan at the NATO Summit**

Frederick Barton, with Harald Thorud  
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**Q1: What steps has the Obama administration taken in advance of the April 3–4 NATO summit?**

**A1:** The United States' challenge is convincing allies skeptical about the mission and direction of the conflict that Afghanistan is not a sinking ship. Shortly after taking office, President Barack Obama decided to send 17,000 additional troops to Afghanistan to help stabilize the security environment in preparation for the national elections scheduled for August 20. He also ordered a 60-day review of U.S. policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan (led by Bruce Riedel, Richard Holbrooke, and Michèle Flournoy). The review has included consultations with NATO partners as well as Afghanistan and Pakistan. Richard Holbrooke, special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, has traveled extensively to the region for discussions with partners. The administration's involvement of the allies has been well received. It is expected that the review process will propose another 15,000 U.S. troops for Afghanistan and a significant increase in U.S. civilian personnel.

At the Munich Security Conference in February and in a meeting on Afghanistan with the North Atlantic Council in Brussels in March, Vice President Joseph Biden called for greater commitment to Afghanistan by the NATO allies. He underlined the importance of building up the Afghan security forces and the need for a comprehensive approach with a strong civilian and diplomatic effort next to the military. Notably, the vice president reached out to Russia to work with NATO in defeating the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan, and he also reiterated that no strategy for Afghanistan can succeed without Pakistan.

**Q2: How does the political state of the NATO allies affect the discussions over Afghanistan and Pakistan and the likely outcome?**

**A2:** The war in Afghanistan is unpopular among the publics of the major NATO troop-contributing countries, and the political leaders do not share a common narrative or sense of purpose about the mission. Public opinion polls suggest that Europeans are not opposed to the mission in Afghanistan but rather concerned and uncomfortable helping with the combat aspects of the effort.<sup>1</sup>

Alliance leaders can expect more requests from the United States as President Obama develops his Afghanistan strategy in the weeks to come. It is expected that 10 countries, including Germany and Italy, will contribute more troops. On the civilian side, 20 countries have pledged to increase their financial contributions to Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, significant increased force deployments or loosened operational restrictions from the NATO allies are highly unlikely.

In our recent report, *Afghanistan and Pakistan on the Brink*, we recommend that the administration work to secure a 3-year military commitment from the allies and a longer 10-year financial commitment for Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup>

**Q3: What can NATO do in Pakistan?**

**A3:** NATO members generally agree that Afghanistan cannot be improved without involving Pakistan and the neighboring countries. However, Pakistan is highly resistant to the presence of foreign ground forces within its borders, and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is based on a UN Security Council resolution on Afghanistan and gives no UN mandate to conduct operations on Pakistani territory. Further, such interventions would likely be counterproductive, destabilizing Pakistan.

<sup>1</sup> "Europe Opposes More Troops for Afghanistan: Poll," Reuters, January 20, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSTRE5J0NQ20090120>.

<sup>2</sup> David McKeeby, "Allies Agree to Boost Afghanistan Aid," February 23, 2009, U.S. Department of State, <http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2009/February/20090223165648idybeekcm0.1445429.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Barton and Karin von Hippel, *Afghanistan and Pakistan on the Brink: Framing Policy Options* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS, 2009), [http://www.csis.org/component/option,com\\_csis\\_pubs/task,view/id,5299/](http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_pubs/task,view/id,5299/).

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The solution in Pakistan is not a military one and must include substantial economic and development assistance from the international community. A central requirement is a more effective and integrated effort among the key international institutions and countries, with an emphasis on rule of law and education. There is a need for a 5- to 10-year economic development plan for Pakistan, with an estimated cost of \$10 billion per year.<sup>4</sup> This funding will need to come through the United Nations, United States, European Union, International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and other international institutions and major donors rather than NATO.

**Q4: How can NATO secure the logistical supply route to Afghanistan?**

**A4:** Some 75 percent of the supplies to the Western forces in Afghanistan pass through Pakistan, after being off-loaded from the port of Karachi. In recent months, dozens of convoys and logistical depots with Western supplies have been attacked and destroyed by insurgency forces within Pakistan. This has made NATO review its supply routes to Afghanistan. One alternative route would be to ship the supplies through the Caucasus and Central Asian states in Russia's "near abroad." Many NATO countries, and particularly its new members from the eastern parts of Europe, are uneasy about being too dependent on Russia. Other possible supply routes that have been mentioned are by train or trucks through China or Iran.

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<sup>4</sup> Estimate based on the Kerry-Lugar proposal: Chuck Hagel and John Kerry, *Needed: A Comprehensive Policy Towards Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: Atlantic Council, 2009), <http://www.acus.org/publication/pakistan-report>.