WOSCAP

State-building in the Shadow of War: EU Capabilities in the Fields of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in Afghanistan

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STATE-BUILDING IN THE SHADOW OF WAR: EU CAPABILITIES IN THE FIELDS OF CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING IN AFGHANISTAN

Whole of Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

This case study discusses the capabilities of the European Union in Afghanistan in the fields of conflict prevention and peacebuilding from 2001 until 2016. It has been produced as part of the project "*Whole-of-Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding*" (WOSCAP). This report complements the other in-depth research cases with a broader view of EU interventions regarding conflict prevention and peacebuilding in Georgia, Ukraine, Mali, and Yemen; and desk review studies in Sri Lanka, Kosovo, Guatemala and Honduras. More information at www.woscap.eu.

Table of contents

Abbreviations

ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
BSA	Bilateral Security Agreement
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CSTC-A	Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan
DoD	Department of Defense
DoS	Department of State
EU	European Union
EUPOL-A	EU Police Mission in Afghanistan
EUSR	EU Special Representative
FDD	Focused District Development
GPPO	German Police Project Office
HR/VP	High Representative/Vice-President
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
LOFTA	Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
MIP	Multi-Annual Indicative Programme
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MSF	Médicins Sans Frontières
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NTM-A	NATO Training Mission Afghanistan
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
PSC	Political and Security Committee
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
SoFA	Status of Forces Agreement
SOFs	Special Operations Forces
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNSMA	UN Special Mission to Afghanistan
US	United States
WOSCAP	Whole-of-Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

1. Introduction

This desk study report discusses the capabilities of the European Union (EU) in Afghanistan in the fields of conflict prevention and peacebuilding from 2001 until 2016. Despite fifteen years of international intervention – including EU efforts – the political, security, and economic future of Afghanistan is increasingly uncertain, with important consequences for the civilian population. While the early years after the 2001 US-led intervention were relatively stable, especially since 2005 Afghanistan has seen escalating violence, a growing insurgency, predatory militia behaviour, a deterioration of Kabul's reach in outlying districts (International Crisis Group 2014), and, recently, increased migration flows. Never since 2001 has the Taliban controlled as much territory as it does today, while at the same time the UN (2016) reported that the first half of 2016 showed a record high level of civilian casualties. Generally, state presence is weak in rural areas, and various hybrid arrangements of warlords, militias, and insurgents fill the security and governance vacuum at the local level. According to Martin et al (2016: 18), this 'political or conflict context' can create serious challenges for the EU's civilian capabilities in the fields of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Even though the context in Afghanistan has been extremely challenging for the EU, since 2001 the EU has put forward ambitious policy goals and became a prime donor in the post-2001 build-up of the new Afghan State. This is illustrated by the fact that Afghanistan receives more development aid from the EU and Member States than any other country, and between 2007 and 2016 the Union was engaged in police reform through the EUPOL Afghanistan Mission. The EU's engagement with Afghanistan has been shaped in a complex field of Afghan and international actors where some sought to build peace, while others focused on waging war. This fundamental tension illustrates how the international state-building project that followed the US-led military intervention has been driven and shaped by different logics, justifications, and approaches that often competed with – or even directly contradicted – each other (Suhrke 2011; Goodhand and Hakimi 2014).

This desk study therefore investigates how the EU has maneuvered in that complex field of actors. It shows how the EU has developed its capabilities in the fields of conflict prevention and peacebuilding in Afghanistan and what the main characteristics are of the social and political processes in which these capabilities have evolved since the 2001 US-led intervention. In doing so it touches upon clusters and cross-cutting themes of the WOSCAP project, namely local ownership, multi-stakeholder coherence, and security sector reform (SSR). EU capabilities within these realms are understood as the ability and capacity to achieve objectives in relation to the EU's overall mission (Martin et al. 2016: 16). While the research is informed by the existing literature on EU capabilities, as well as the WOSCAP Theoretical and Methodological Framework and WOSCAP scoping studies, the case study research is primarily exploratory and empirical in that it looks for relevant factors (bot contextual and internal to the EU), as well as processes and patterns of interaction, that provide information about the ways in which the EU deploys, develops, and adapts its capabilities in multiple policy domains and in interaction with other stakeholders. This report is largely based on secondary sources and interview data collected during a short visit to Kabul in March and April 2016. During this visit, interviews have been conducted with various stakeholders including diplomats, NGO workers, other researchers, officials of the EU Delegation, the Office of the EU Special Representative, and staff of the EUPOL Mission.

The remaining part of this desk study starts with an extensive overview of the conflict in Afghanistan and the international involvement therein in chapter two. Chapter three discusses the EU's engagement with Afghanistan, current EU policies, and the main outcomes of the 2016 Brussels Conference on Afghanistan. Based on this assessment, two EU interventions have been selected to investigate in more detail in chapter four. These are the role of the EU Special Representative, and the EUPOL Afghanistan Mission. Finally, in chapter five, the main findings are presented and conclusions are drawn.

2. Overview of the conflict and international involvement in Afghanistan

Introduction

In this chapter, an extensive overview of the conflict and the international involvement in Afghanistan is given. While this desk study report focuses on the EU in Afghanistan, it is important to point out that the international involvement in Afghanistan since 2001 has primarily been shaped by US policy. Even though Afghanistan receives more assistance from the EU and its Member States than any other country, these efforts to rebuild the Afghan State have always been pursued in the shadow of the US-led war effort. It is therefore crucial to detail how the international involvement in Afghanistan evolved, has been challenged, and has changed in order to be able to contextualise the efforts of the EU that are discussed in chapter four and five.

Firstly, this chapter provides a brief history of Afghanistan in the twentieth century, but the focus lies on the US-led military intervention from 2001 onwards. Subsequently, this chapter addresses the outcomes of the Bonn Conference and the peace- and state-building project in the years that followed. Various views and approaches to this state-building project are discussed and some of the most predominant tensions and contradictions within this project are explained. Finally, this chapter delves into the drawdown of international military troops from Afghanistan, the post-2014 Resolute Support Mission, and the recent efforts to talk to the Taliban.

2.1 Afghanistan in the twentieth century

Although most media coverage, academic studies, and policy reports on Afghanistan today are concerned with the post-2001 era, it is important to underline that Afghanistan's current security and governance crisis started neither after the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington D.C., nor with the Soviet intervention in 1979. These events should rather be seen as outcomes of social, economic, and political processes that have shaped Afghan society since the beginning of the twentieth century (Ruttig 2013: 13; Barfield 2010: 12-14). The different periods of Afghan rulers and their regimes in the hundred years that preceded the US-led intervention in 2001 may seem overly complex at first glance, but the underlying problems remained largely the same (Barfield 2010: 172). In an almost dialectical process, radical and reactionary forces and modernist and traditionalist forces invoked increasingly violent reactions to each other's attempts to rule (Wagemaker 2012: 105; Barfield 2010). Illustrative of this dynamic is that since the death of Abdur Rahman Khan, the 'Iron Amir' that ruled Afghanistan from 1880 until 1901, every Afghan ruler in the century that followed was either driven into exile or assassinated while in power (Barfield 2010: 12). Barfield (2010) distinguishes three main periods in this span of Afghan history, namely: 1901-1929, 1929-1978, and 1978-2001. These periods are briefly explained below.

2.1.1 – Period I: 1901-1929

The first period (1901-1929) is characterised by constitutional reform and independence from British control, which were both achieved after the third Anglo-Afghan war in 1919 under the reign of Ahmanullah (1919-1929). However, his attempts to modernise the country, and his diplomatic offensive to compel Britain to recognise the independence of Afghanistan,[1] eventually led to resistance and a civil war that made his abdication inevitable (Andisha 2015: 8; Barfield 2010: 12). After Ahmanullah was driven from power, a Tajik bandit briefly ruled from Kabul, thereby ending a series of two centuries of Pashtun rulers. His reign would only last a mere nine months and ended with his public hanging after the Pashtun Nader Khan drove him from power (Wagemaker 2012: 304).

2.1.2 – Period II: 1929-1978

The declaration of Nader Khan as king of Afghanistan in 1929 marks the start of the second period (1929-1978). The former military chief favoured closer relations with Britain, which had supported him in his quest for power. Through this stance, he rebalanced Afghanistan's relations with the British Empire and the Soviet Union, the two hegemonic powers in the region. He furthermore increasingly engaged with European nations such as Germany, Italy, and France (Andisha 2015: 8). Nader Khan's reign ended abruptly when he was assassinated in 1933, but his extended family, the Musahibans, remained in power for the following fifty-five years (Barfield 2010: 169; Ruttig 2013: 1; Andisha 2015: 8-9).

The young Zahir Shah became the new king, but Nader Khan's brothers were effectively ruling in his name. During this period, Afghanistan was relatively stable with no international conflicts or internal rebellions that could pose a serious threat to the Afghan State. This period has been praised therefore as a time of stability and peace, but Barfield (2010: 169) points out that 'it probably looks much better in hindsight than it did to the people of the time.' Especially during the 1950s and 1960s, Afghanistan witnessed significant social, economic, and political developments. Under Mohammed Daud Khan, a cousin of Zahir Shah, who was the prime minister between 1953 and 1963, Afghanistan witnessed a profound rise of educated citizens. This newly educated class of citizens were confronted, however, with limited economic opportunities, and they were largely excluded from political power. As a result of dissatisfaction with the slow pace of progress, political activism was on the rise (Ruttig 2013; Barfield 2010). The majority of these activists were modernists, but there was a minority of Islamists who also sought a downfall of the government (Barfield 2010: 170). With regard to Afghanistan's foreign relations, it is interesting to note that during the 1960s and 1970s, Germany supported Zahir Shah in developing a modern civilian police force and established a Police Academy in Kabul (Perito 2009: 3; Upadhyay and Pawelec 2015: 171).

When, in 1973, the former Prime Minister Mohammed Daud Khan launched a successful coup against his cousin Zahir, Afghanistan's monarchy came to an end. Daud established a republic with himself as President. He was mostly focused on suppressing the reactionary Islamists, but this backfired in 1978 with a coup of his former socialist allies, which

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[1] Andisha (2015: 8) notes that Ahmanullah ended Afghanistan's policy of isolation. He appointed the first Afghan

ensured his death and marked the start of a complex period of anarchy, violence, and war (Barfield 2010: 170).

2.1.3 – Period III: 1978-2001

The third period (1978-2001) began with the installation of a socialist regime by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in 1978. Yet, only one and a half years later, the PDPA's regime was close to collapsing due to internal strife and a growing revolt against its radical policies (Barfield 2010: 171). Trying to stabilise the situation, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979. A ten-year Soviet occupation would follow in which the Soviets and the PDPA fought against the Islamist-led mujahedeen opposition that was backed by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, one million Afghans died and three million fled their homes. When, in 1989, the Soviets withdrew their troops, the PDPA regime under Najibullah remained in power against all odds but eventually dissolved in 1992 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The various mujahedeen factions also lost the support of their American patron, which led to a situation in which both the resources of the Afghan State and the Islamists who opposed it declined simultaneously (Malejacq 2016b: 101). This led to a highly fragmented political order and a bloody civil war in which neither of the rapidly shifting alliances of mujahedeen factions could win (Barfield 2010: 171; Malejacq 2016b: 101).

From a highly chaotic situation in the south of the country, the Taliban emerged in 1994 in Kandahar, claiming they would restore order in the name of Islam. Under the leadership of Mullah Omar, they implemented policies that were equally as radical as the ones of the PDPA, yet in the exact opposite direction. Supported by Pakistan, the Taliban expanded swiftly in the years that followed. By 1996, they took control of Kabul, and by 1999, they seized most of Afghanistan, except for the northeast, which was controlled by the Northern Alliance[2] (Giustozzi 2009: 87). Even though the Taliban controlled most of the country, they only received international recognition from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The Northern Alliance, however, which resisted the Taliban's rule, did set up relations with various foreign governments (Malejacq 2016b: 102-103). Its leader, Ahmad Shah Massoud, was even invited to Strasbourg in April 2001 to meet European officials, parliament members, and to deliver a speech at the European Parliament in which he warned the West of the danger of the Taliban[3] (Malejacq 2016a: 24). On 9 September 2001, two days before New York and Washington D.C. were attacked by Al-Qaeda operatives, Massoud was assassinated. The Taliban's harsh Islamic rule would soon come to an end.

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[2] The various opposition groups fighting the Taliban have been referred to as the Northern Alliance, the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, or simply the United Front. In this report, the commonly used term Northern Alliance is used.

[3] Massoud was accompanied in Strasbourg by Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, who in the post-Taliban period became Afghanistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs between 2001 and 2005 and is currently Afghanistan's first CEO in the National Unity Government headed by President Ashraf Ghani.

2.2 US-led military intervention

With Al-Qaeda operating in Afghanistan, the Taliban was seen by the US and its allies as playing host to international terrorism. Consequently, the Taliban became one of the most important enemies of the United States and a prime target of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), the US-led military campaign of the Bush Administration's Global War on Terror. For the besieged Afghan opposition, most notably the Northern Alliance, this was a welcome development that would play out in their favour from late 2001 onwards, partly because the military strategy that the United States adopted was a combination of air power and a limited amount of Special Operations Forces (SOFs) that fought alongside anti-Taliban militias (Biddle 2003; Suhrke 2011: 37). During the last three months of 2001, the United States brought 767 tonnes of supplies and $70 million to Afghanistan, sufficient to fund and equip approximately 50,000 militiamen to fight the Taliban throughout the country (Giustozzi 2009: 88-89; Schetter 2005). The fight for Mazar-e-Sharif in the north, where US SOFs supported forces loyal to Northern Alliance commander Abdul Rashid Dostum, is a clear example of this dynamic. While American air support was of crucial importance to the rapid defeat of the Taliban regime, the limited presence of foreign troops on the ground made the anti-Taliban militias key players in the post-Taliban power configuration (Giustozzi 2009: 89). Giustozzi (2009: 88) points out that the most striking part of what he refers to as the 'reformation of warlord polities' from 2001 onwards has been the sheer speed of the process. From then on, warlords, strongmen, and political factions that had opposed the Taliban rule from 1996 until 2001 became part of the new ruling coalition.

With regard to the research question, this 'reformation of warlord polities' marks a pivotal point in understanding the social and political processes in which the EU's civilian capabilities in the fields of conflict prevention and peacebuilding have evolved since 2001. Post-9/11, this was the first time foreign interveners in Afghanistan empowered warlords and militias that used to be marginalised under the Taliban's rule. In the following parts of this chapter, it will be demonstrated that this support continued in the years that followed, exposed ambiguities of local ownership, and has had far-reaching consequences for the international community's state-building project in Afghanistan.

2.3 Bonn Conference

By December 2001, the Taliban regime had been removed from power by the United States and its allies but the political future of Afghanistan remained unclear. It was the fourth time in 160 years that a foreign power invaded Afghanistan. While the British had plans to replace the existing regime, and the Soviets chose to preserve a regime they supported, the United States arrived in Afghanistan at a time when the state structure had almost entirely ceased to function (Barfield 2010: 272). Furthermore, contrary to the British and the Soviets who had both selected new Afghan leaders prior to toppling the Afghan rulers they sought to abolish, the Americans had no plan in mind on who could lead post-Taliban Afghanistan (Barfield 2010:283). Woodward (2002: 195) points out that on 4 October 2001, three days before the start of OEF in Afghanistan, President George W. Bush asked his advisors: 'Who will run the country?' For the answer to this question, the Bush Administration turned to the United

Nations, who in turn organised an international conference to discuss the political future of Afghanistan between 27 November and 6 December in Bonn, Germany.

The goal of the Bonn Conference was, broadly, about making sure that Afghanistan could not fall back into becoming a 'breeding ground' and 'safe haven' for transnational terrorism and organised crime (Barfield 2010: 272; Wagemaker 2012: 146). In order to reach that goal, the international community, including most EU Member States, were convinced that reconstruction efforts had to be combined with the build-up of a new Afghan State (Wagemaker 2012: 147). However, rather than a purely altruistic project, this state-building aspiration was largely rooted in the idea that by helping a fragile state such as Afghanistan to become more secure, 'we, the West' were making our own states safer (Einsiedel, 2005: 30). After all, the military campaign to oust the Taliban regime did not come from the ambition to build a liberal democratic state with respect for the rule of law but was instead an abrupt response to the 9/11 attacks that involved close cooperation between the United States and Afghan warlords (Mukhopadyay 2014: 25). The central role of the warlords in the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom won them seats in Bonn and would heavily influence Afghanistan's political future (Braithwate and Wardak 2012).

The Afghans that were present in Bonn were predominantly representatives of the Northern Alliance as well as supporters of former king Zahir and, in smaller numbers, the Cyprus group and the Peshawar mujahedeen faction (Wagemaker 2012: 147). Importantly, the Taliban were excluded from joining the conversation in Bonn, and the Pashtuns in general were poorly represented (Barfield 2010: 283). The United Nations was represented in Bonn by its Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi. The main fruit the Bonn Conference bore was the 'Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions'.[4] The final agreement had a rather process oriented approach with an emphasis on Afghan ownership (Wagemaker 2012: 149). It laid out a transition period with a set of demarcated steps that go from an initial 'interim authority' to a 'transitional authority', followed by the adoption of a new constitution and eventually 'free and fair elections' to establish a 'broad-based, gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative government'.[5] The Northern Alliance, victors of the US-backed war against the Taliban, undeniably got the best deal out of Bonn, taking posts in the most important ministries. About the Northern Alliance, UN Special Representative Brahimi retrospectively said: 'They were in Kabul. They already controlled it. So they dictated the outcome to a large extent. They dictated what happened in Bonn.'[6] It was perhaps somewhat remarkable that the non-Pashtun Northern Alliance that ousted the Taliban regime, which consisted of mostly Pashtuns, did accept a Pashtun to head the new interim authority. Hamid Karzai, a Popalzai Pashtun from Kandahar took on the task and was a month later introduced by President Bush during his State of the Union Address as the 'distinguished interim leader of a liberated Afghanistan'.[7]

Apart from the establishment of an interim authority – and a roadmap towards elections and a new constitution – the Bonn agreement also provided the basis for the

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[4] See 'Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions' S/2001/1154, 5 December 2005.

[5] Ibid.

[6] In Marquardt, A. (Director). (2013). *Afghanistan: The Price of Revenge* [Motion Picture].

[7] State of the Union Address, President George W. Bush, 29 January 2002.

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). With the adoption of resolution 1386 on 20 December 2001, ISAF started with a limited mandate that focused on providing security to the newly established interim authority and the UN in and around Kabul, leaving the periphery to regional strongmen (Mukhopadhyay 2014: 28). Later, by August 2003, ISAF came under the command of NATO, and its limited role expanded to other parts of the country with resolution 1510 on 23 October 2003. The initially limited role for ISAF resulted largely from the American focus on Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan (Wagemaker 2012: 149; Maley 2009: 236) and their preoccupation with the war in Iraq (Barfield 2010: x; Gross 2012: 111).

The establishment of UNAMA came with the adoption of resolution 1401 on 28 March 2002 and had a similarly light footprint. It was framed as a 'political and integrated mission, directed and supported by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, to help implement the Bonn Agreement' (Margesson 2009: 3). It was mainly focused on monitoring and coordinating the work of development organisations and only had a limited supporting role in the governance of the country. UNAMA also worked on reconciliation, monitoring the human rights situation, enhancing the rule of law, gender, and delivering humanitarian assistance and reconstruction efforts. It is questionable, however, given the immense challenges in Afghanistan, whether the emphasis on 'Afghan ownership' and the light international footprint was appropriate (Wagemaker 2012).

2.4 The state-building project

In the wake of military intervention and the Bonn Conference, the international engagement with Afghanistan became driven by two contradicting but mutually entangled forces: firstly, the American-led war on terror; and, secondly, the international community's ambition to construct lasting peace and rebuild the Afghan State (Suhrke 2011). The international state-building project that followed the US-led military intervention has been driven and shaped, however, by different logics, justifications, and approaches that occasionally competed with – or even directly contradicted – each other. Even though it is frequently claimed that 'all good things come together', in practice there were major contradictions and trade-offs involved in attempting to achieve multiple objectives at the same time (Goodhand and Hakimi 2014: 5). These goals of international interveners have comprised, for example: counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, security sector reform, state-building, democratisation, socio-economic development, human rights, counternarcotics, and gender equality. Other factors that are less widely acknowledged are the reorientation of NATO (Hoehn and Harting 2010; Suhrke 2011:48), strengthening (transatlantic) diplomatic relations, and responding to national constituencies in Europe, North America, and elsewhere (De Graaf et al. 2015).

Arguably, the most essential contradiction in the state-building endeavour in Afghanistan since 2001 has been the attempt to build peace while waging war (Suhrke 2011). One may also argue that even the most well-designed and implemented development programmes were likely to fail in the immensely challenging Afghan context or that the failures in the development of Afghanistan can be attributed to mistakes in the implementation. Both arguments have some validity, but in addition to that, it is crucial to underline that from the early days of the intervention onwards, US policy in Afghanistan has contradicted, undercut,

and undermined the liberal state-building project in Afghanistan – including the EU's civilian capabilities – through its continuous support for a set of unaccountable warlords (Peceny and Bosin 2011: 607; Larivé 2012: 198; Hakimi 2013; Malejacq 2016b: 104).

Apart from a contradictory engagement (Suhrke 2013), the international response to Afghanistan has also changed over time. Initially, the intervention started with a limited number of foreign troops on the ground, a high dependency on local proxies, and an overall 'light footprint' approach (Suhrke 2011: 19; Gross 2012: 111). This shifted to a more expansive form of state-building that comprised all the ingredients, and deficiencies, of 'liberal peacebuilding' (Duffield 2001; Paris 2004; Richmond 2006), such as good governance, security sector reform, rule of law, democratisation, electoral reform, institution building, etc. (Goodhand and Hakimi 2014: 5). During this time, the EU also became more prominently engaged with Afghanistan, especially in regards to the police and justice sectors (Gross 2012: 109; Larivé 2012: 191; Pohl 2012: 146). The donor language gradually changed to 'Afghan-led' and 'culturally appropriate' solutions but most practices remained largely the same. Following the arrival of General Stanley McChrystal as the commander of ISAF in 2009, the military doctrine shifted to counterinsurgency and a troop surge and increased financial resources aimed to turn the tide that looked increasingly uncertain (Goodhand and Hakimi 2014: 5). This was followed by a phase in which the drawdown of foreign troops from Afghanistan was prepared, and the Afghan Government gradually became responsible for the strenuous task of fighting the Taliban and providing security for the population. Interestingly, while in 2002 the core of the problem in Afghanistan was defined by the international community as the absence of a strong central state, a decade later the problem was the central state itself, which by then was widely seen as corrupt, unsustainable, and illegitimate by both Afghans and international donors (Goodhand and Hakimi 2014: 6). The remaining part of this paragraph describes in more detail how the international state-building project unfolded, evolved, has been challenged, and has changed over time.

2.4.1 Light footprint

Initially, there was a surprising level of Afghans who supported the US-led intervention. Furthermore, three million Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan with high hopes for the reconstruction of their country (Barfield 2010: 275). However, during the early years of the intervention, the international reconstruction efforts adopted a 'light footprint' approach (Suhrke 2011: 19; Gross 2012: 111). Washington initially only committed 7,000 troops, and ISAF a mere 5,000 (Barfield 2010: 313). As a result, the responsibility for maintaining security throughout the country rested mainly with the Afghans. In the meantime, the Bush Administration still had 'a bigger fish to fry' in Iraq (Giustozzi 2009: 89; Perito 2009: 2; Barfield 2010: 313). For the difficult task of rebuilding Afghanistan after the removal of the Taliban regime, the United Sates explicitly called on the international community to step in – which it did – but the burdensome questions of what had to be done and who should lead it remained. Diverging interests and sober judgements of the situation in Afghanistan led to limited international involvement (Suhrke 2011: 22).

The security situation remained a concern of the international community. While militia leaders were preparing to compete for control of coercion, capital, and political connection in the wake of the Bonn agreement, the G8 members gathered to discuss the security situation

(Mukhopadhyay 2014: 26-27). During a Geneva Conference on security sector reform (SSR) in spring 2002, the G8 followed a 'lead nations approach' with regard to Afghanistan's security sector (Gross 2012: 112). Five individual countries assumed responsibility and took the lead with different elements of the security sector, namely:

- Military reform (United States);
- Police reform (Germany);
- Judiciary reform (Italy);
- Counternarcotics (United Kingdom); and
- Disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (Japan).

While this sectoral approach was supposed to foster security and stability in the early years after the intervention, in practice few resources were committed, progress was slower than expected (Larivé 2012: 188), and it reinforced fragmentation of international efforts (Gross 2012: 112). This fragmentation increased further with the establishment of 'Provincial Reconstruction Teams' (PRTs), joint civil-military forces in the provinces that were also led by individual countries. The PRTs operated primarily autonomously and had strong links to their national capitals but were formally under ISAF command from 2006 onwards (Gross 2012: 111).

Washington's focus on short-term stability and lack of a long-term vision of Afghanistan's security problems repeatedly led, according to Giustozzi (2009: 90), to political compromises which accommodated the interests of both Afghan and international parties by setting up 'façade processes of institution-building reform', which led to something akin to the 'creation of a temporary and hybrid "feudal state"' that allowed for the building of state capacity in the centre, while regional power holders could run their fiefdoms with the approval of Kabul. Stapleton (2008: 5; in Stapleton 2013) emphasises that the outcomes of failing to prioritise security sector reform during the early 'window of opportunity' and the seeming inability to coordinate across closely interrelated security sector processes are now (years later) staring us in the face. While reforming the Afghan State and its security sector was already challenging in the early years of the intervention, and valuable opportunities to do this were squandered, with the resurgence of the Taliban in 2006 the task at hand for the international interveners became ever more difficult (Barfield 2010: 325).

2.4.2 Taliban insurgency

Although the Taliban was defeated quite easily in 2001, by 2005 they were able to reorganise themselves (Barfield 2010: 325). The main reasons for their comeback to Afghanistan as insurgents can be explained as a dynamic in which they were removed from power, excluded from the Bonn process, and denied amnesty by the US-backed Afghan interim authority. Not defeated completely, they sought refuge in Pakistan and prepared their return to drive out the foreign forces from Afghanistan (Suhrke 2011: 50). In 2004 and 2005, there were already some signs of a resurging Taliban and, in 2006, the Islamist group started a full-fledged insurgency campaign, mainly in the southern provinces of Helmand and Kandahar where they exploited the local population's discontent with the Kabul Government, took advantage of the late arrival of international military troops, and adopted a more nationalistic ideology that aimed to oust the 'infidel foreigners' from the country (Barfield 2010: 327-328). Without a

doubt, the resurrection of the Taliban would have been impossible without Pakistani support. While the Pakistani Government officially stopped supporting the Taliban after the US-led intervention in 2001, in reality it never stopped covertly backing them, thereby enabling their gathering of force (Barfield 2010: 328; Suhrke 2011: 50).

2.4.3 Increased international involvement

By mid-decade, the Bonn process was completed and international engagement with Afghanistan evolved into a far more expansive form of military intervention and state-building. From a fragmented landscape of military and civilian mandates, the international community agreed that a common strategy was needed to align international actors and the Afghan Government. At the London Conference of February 2006, the so-called 'Afghanistan Compact' was agreed upon, which asserted that stability could only be achieved through a combination of security measures, good governance, and socio-economic development.[8] However, implementing this was immensely difficult due to a variety of factors including poor donor coordination and 'the pre-eminence of the military response to security concerns' (Peral 2009: 327; see also Gross 2012: 108).

With the US invasion of Iraq, Afghanistan came to be portrayed as 'the good war'. As troops and resources were increasingly committed, the power and reputations of the United States and its allies were in jeopardy and in need of much overdue results. This created a dynamic where more troops and resources were demanded to execute the mission, hoping each time that this time would be the silver bullet (Suhrke 2011: 221). However, over time the prospect of a humiliating withdrawal came to overshadow the intervention's initial aim of fighting terrorism (Suhrke 2011: 219; Murray 2010). This helps to explain how the growing insurgency and other setbacks led to more international engagement rather than less. The 'light footprint' approach of the early years had gradually evolved into a massive liberal state-building project that implicitly believed in the possibilities of social engineering (Suhrke 2011: 117-118; Owens 2013; Braithwaite and Wardak 2012: 8). The policy-makers mantra that development in a failed state such as Afghanistan was only possible in a stable and secure environment made the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) the core focus of the state-building agenda (Sedra 2014: 2).

The engagement of the EU with Afghanistan, particularly with its police and justice sectors, also increased from 2006 onwards in an attempt to gain influence and visibility. The individual European 'lead nations' (Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom) had faced problems with their respective reform efforts in the security sector between 2002 and 2006. Germany, which as previously mentioned had also supported the Afghan police in the 1960s and 1970s (Kempin and Steinicke 2009: 136), established the German Police Project Office (GPPO) in 2002, focused on training the Afghan National Police (ANP), but since it only consisted of 40 German police trainers and an annual budget of 12 million euros, it yielded only limited results (Pohl 2012: 142). The German long-term and top-down approach that focused on the quality at the top of the ANP rather than the quantity of the lower level police officers, came under criticism of the United States when the security situation started to

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[8] See 'The Afghanistan Compact' which was adopted at the London Conference on Afghanistan on 31 January and 1 February 2006.

deteriorate (Peral 2009: 333; Thruelsen 2010: 83). In response to what the Americans saw as the inaction of the Germans, the United Sates itself became increasingly involved in police training but with a much more militarised approach (Wilder 2007; Friesendorf and Krempel 2011). EU Member States had the impression that the United States wanted them to do more in Afghanistan, but European electorates were generally wary of more military engagement (Pohl 2012: 169-172). Within this context, the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL-A) was launched in 2007 with a focus on 'civilian policing'. The increased role for the United States as a police donor and the establishment of the much smaller-scale EUPOL Mission revealed a transatlantic tension between the militarised policing programmes of the United States as a means to support the war effort and the European focus on civilian policing aimed at consolidating peace (Goodhand and Hakimi 2014: 5; Friesendorf and Krempel 2011).[9]

2.4.4 The surge

In January 2009, when President Barack Obama took office, US troops had further increased to 34,000 and its allies – including EU Member States – contributed approximately 30,000 (Suhrke 2011: 59). The insurgency had also grown, however. Geographically, it had expanded to the north, west, and central parts of the country. Their strategy had diversified, the tactics had changed, and more refined Improvised Explosive Device (IED) methods were used. Partly because the war effort in Afghanistan had become increasingly costly in terms of both lives and resources, the focus of the United Sates changed from Iraq to Afghanistan. With the arrival of General Stanley McChrystal as the commander of US and ISAF forces in 2009, a surge in military troops combined with more financial resources was presented as the force that would turn the tide of what by then was labelled as a 'raging insurgency' (Ghosh 2009; Suhrke 2011: 60). The predecessors of McChrystal had also asked for increases in military troops, but contrary to the earlier generals, the unorthodox McChrystal went public with his demands for more troops and a revision of the strategy. He advocated 'the urgent need for a significant change to our strategy and the way we think and operate' (ISAF 2009). While in the years before McChrystal there had already been talk about 'counterinsurgency' or 'COIN', under his command it became the dominant focus of the military campaign (Suhrke 2011: 62-63; McChrystal 2011), and by 2010 US troops in Afghanistan had passed the 100,000 hallmark (SIGAR 2011: 27).

This revised military strategy and the by then intrusive external assistance of mainly Western donors had far-reaching consequences for the liberal state-building project. Suhrke (2013) identifies three sets of tensions that had surfaced by the end of the decade. As mentioned, the conflicting aims of trying to build peace while waging war stemmed from different logics, justifications, and approaches that often directly contradicted each other. For example, the arming of local militias to fight the Taliban was a short-term counterinsurgency measure that directly undermined good governance and the already weak monopoly of force of the Afghan Government (Suhrke 2013: 272; Malejacq 2016b: 107). Sedra (2014: 372) emphasises that, 'while illiberal and realist forms of intervention coexisted from the start with liberal technocratic reform initiatives, the former grew in scope and precedence at the expense of the latter as time went on.' Holtje and Kempin (2013: 2) point out, for example, that in 2009

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[9] In chapter five, the EUPOL Mission will be discussed in more detail.

during the surge, at the height of the ISAF mission, NATO spending totalled €46.1 billion, more than ten times the total amount of international aid in that year. The increasing levels of civilian casualties, night raids, and detentions without trial, contributed to losing many Afghan 'hearts and minds', and while more civilian casualties could be attributed to the insurgency, this did little to console the grief of the families affected (Suhrke 2013: 272).

Secondly, the immense scale of external assistance by the end of the decade contributed to an aid-war economy that had created a 'rentier state condition'. With billions of dollars being poured into the country, the Afghan Government had little incentive to develop local capacity, and arguably, it (inadvertently) facilitated corruption. The mainly Western patrons who provided the military and economic resources had furthermore weakened the legitimacy of the Afghan Government who were increasingly portrayed as Western-backed puppets. This enabled the insurgency to use Islam and nationalism, the two traditional sources of legitimacy in Afghanistan, as the main pillars of their struggle (Suhrke 2013: 271).

Thirdly, the dependence on external military and financial resources also led to a tension between 'Afghan ownership' and 'control'. International donors wanted control over their programmes and reform efforts, while Afghans tried to do the same under the flag of 'local ownership' (Suhrke 2013: 271; see also Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2016: 8). To various levels and degrees, this tension came to the fore. For example, former Minister of Finance, Ashraf Ghani (the current President of Afghanistan), demanded that all foreign aid should be channelled through his ministry. The issue remained contentious, but the World Bank and European donors eventually supported the idea. By the end of the decade, half of their aid went through the government (Suhrke 2013: 277).

2.4.5 The drawdown

During almost ten consecutive years after the intervention in 2001, the international engagement with Afghanistan only grew in volume (Braithwate and Wardak 2012: 8). Putting in more financial and human resources was, after some initial hesitation in the early years, seen as the way forward for both the war and the peacebuilding effort. Yet, by mid-2011, this dynamic changed. The economic costs were staggering, and the loss of lives impacted public opinion and generally contributed to a war fatigue among Western constituencies (De Graaf et al. 2015). Also, terrorism by then seemed to have dispersed geographically to other parts of the world, making Afghanistan less important from a counterterrorism perspective. Furthermore, the Taliban's aims were mainly nationalistic, and contrary to Al-Qaeda they were not involved in international terrorism, which was the primary reason to intervene in the first place. As a result, debates spurred about why the West was fighting this costly counterinsurgency campaign (Suhrke 2011: 221-223).

Shortly after the surge, President Obama announced that US troops would gradually withdraw from Afghanistan beginning mid-2011 until 2014. Other countries, such as the United Kingdom and Sweden, followed suit, while the Netherlands and Germany had already announced their plans to scale down. In the meantime, the US military shifted its focus to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan, where Al-Qaeda and the Haqqani network had relocated. The US Government authorised an increase of drone strikes in these areas, while at the same time it pressured the Pakistani Government to fight militants within its

borders. Yet, withdrawing troops from Afghanistan and hunting down militants in Pakistan would not solve Afghanistan's security problems. Withdrawing from Afghanistan was seen as risky business given the Soviet withdrawal at the end of the Cold War had enabled a full-fledged civil war. In order to prevent a '1990s scenario', international actors advocated a further increase of the number of Afghan National Security Forces. The implicit logic was that a strengthened Afghan force that would be able to fight the Taliban on its own would permit a gradual withdrawal of international troops, while the United States and its allies would maintain a pro-Western government in Kabul (Suhrke 2013: 231). In March 2012, General John Allen, the commander of US and ISAF forces in Afghanistan, said: 'We remain on track to ensure that Afghanistan will no longer be a safe haven for Al Qaeda, and will no longer be terrorised by the Taliban.'[10] Similar to his predecessor General David Petraeus, he emphasised that the training of the Afghan National Security Forces is 'critical to our mission'. He furthermore backed up his claim in classic COIN language by pointing out that:

> Throughout history, insurgencies have seldom been defeated by foreign forces. Instead they have been ultimately beaten by *indigenous forces* [emphasis added]. So in the long run our goals can only be achieved, and then secured, by Afghan forces. Transition then is the linchpin of our strategy, not merely the way out.[11]

In the period from May 2011 until January 2014, the ANSF grew further from 224,000 personnel to approximately 345,000. During this time, international donors lauded their competency in taking over the responsibility for maintaining security while foreign troops were gradually withdrawing (Sedra 2014: 3).

Apart from the international military efforts that had yielded limited results, the peacebuilding and state-building efforts had also progressed slowly. Policy-makers often emphasised the improvements in the health and education sectors, but reforming the police, justice sector, and the state's institutions had proven to be much more difficult (Suhrke 2013: 223). The cost and suffering of the parties involved formed a staggering contrast to the ambitions and hopes generated by the international state-building project (Suhrke 2011: 3). The US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) reported in July 2014 that, 'Adjusted for inflation, U.S. appropriations for the reconstruction of Afghanistan exceed the funds committed to the Marshall Plan, the U.S. aid program that delivered billions of dollars between 1948 and 1952 to help 16 European countries recover in the aftermath of World War II.' Even though the two programs have considerable differences, the SIGAR report did contribute to exposing the enormous scale of the post-2001 US involvement.[12] The high, and perhaps unrealistic, ambitions of the liberal state-building project were, with the announced withdrawal in mind, scaled down by international donors to 'good enough' as main criterion (Suhrke 2013: 223).

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[10] See: C-SPAN. (2012, March 22). *Military Operations in Afghanistan*. Retrieved July 19, 2016, from C-SPAN: https://www.c-span.org/video/?c3225633/clip-military-operations-afghanistan

[11] Ibid.

[12] See for example New York Times Editorial Board. (2016, September 19). *The Afghan War Quagmire*. Retrieved September 18, 2016, from New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/18/opinion/sunday/the-afghan-war-quagmire.html

As the end of the ISAF mission drew closer and US and international troops were withdrawing, Afghanistan prepared itself for Presidential elections in the spring of 2014. The technocrat Ashraf Ghani competed with former aid of Massoud and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Abdullah. The election was marred by systemic fraud, and after months of disagreement about who had won the election, a US-brokered deal was signed between the two electoral rivals (Sedra 2014: 1; Gross 2014a: 1; Upadhyay and Pawelec 2015: 166). The 'National Unity Government' that was formed would be headed by Ashraf Ghani as President, and Abdullah Abdullah was given the newly created post of Chief Executive. The first democratic transfer of power in Afghanistan's history was praised by Ghani and international donors, but it partly masked Afghanistan's security problems that were growing even more pressing (Sedra 2014: 1-2). Within the first 24 hours of his presidency, Ghani signed the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with the United States and the Status of Forces Agreement (SoFA) with NATO, which provided the foundations for the post-2014 NATO mission 'Resolute Support' (Doğan 2015: 164; Upadhyay and Pawelec 2015: 170).

2.5 Resolute Support

After thirteen years of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, NATO's involvement changed to a much smaller 'train, advise, and assist' mission for the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).[13] In 2015, the number of foreign military forces had dropped drastically to 9,800 American and 4,000-5,000 European forces, mainly from the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, and Turkey (Sedra 2014: 10). These numbers were envisioned to decrease further during the initial two-year timeframe (2015-2016) of the Resolute Support mission.

This planning changed in early October 2015 when Kunduz City became the scene of intense fighting between the ANSF (supported by the US), and the Taliban (Cooke and Urwin 2015). The battle became world news after a US air strike 'mistakenly struck' a *Médicins Sans Frontières* (MSF) hospital in the provincial capital.[14] The temporary takeover of Kunduz City by the Taliban was the first time since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 that they had managed to temporarily takeover a major city in Afghanistan. In response to the escalating insurgent violence in Kunduz and other parts of the country, President Obama announced that the US would maintain its current posture of 9,800 troops instead of drawing down further as was initially planned. He asserted:

> As commander in chief I will not allow Afghanistan to be used as safe haven for terrorists to attack our nation again. (...) Afghanistan is a key piece of the network of counterterrorism partnerships that we need from South Asia to Africa to deal more broadly with terrorist threats quickly, and prevent attacks against our homeland (in Lee 2015).

The temporary takeover of Kunduz thus halted the fast pace of the drawdown. As a Kabul-based German analyst put it:

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[13] See NATO. (2015). *Mission*. Retrieved August 5, 2016, from Afghanistan Resolute Support: http://www.rs.nato.int/mission.html

[14] See BBC. (2015, October 7). *Kunduz: Afghan MSF hospital strike a mistake, says US*. Retrieved April 14, 2016, from BBC: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34458270. See also: Reuters. (2015, October 6). *Kunduz Hospital 'Mistakenly Struck': Gen. Campbell*. Retrieved April 14, 2016, from Tolo News: http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/21754-kunduz-hospital-mistakenly-struck-gen-campbell

> From a psychological point of view, the fall of Kunduz was very influential. It had a huge psychological impact. It took the Taliban one day to take Kunduz city, whereas it took the ANSF, with Special Forces, fourteen days to retake the city. It shows people there was no quick response to this.[15]

Sedra (2014: 1) points out that the increasing challenges faced by the ANSF demonstrate 'the premature nature of the international withdrawal that has left the security sector reform (SSR) project incomplete'. The withdrawals of international soldiers and NATO's Resolute Support mission have unfortunately coincided with escalating violence, a growing insurgency, predatory militia behaviour, increased migration flows, and a deterioration of Kabul's reach in outlying districts (International Crisis Group 2014). The temporary takeover of Kunduz City, repeated clashes in Helmand and Uruzgan provinces, and increasingly deadly attacks in the Afghan capital, illustrate these ominous dynamics. Never since 2001 has the Taliban controlled as much territory as it does today, while at the same time the UN (2016) reported that the first half of 2016 showed a record high level of civilian casualties. In response to the challenges in Afghanistan's security sector, NATO announced at the Warsaw summit on 8 and 9 July 2016 that it will continue the Resolute Support mission beyond 2016.

2.6 Talk about talks with the Taliban

Post-2014, a noteworthy change of language by international donors has been the assertion that peace in Afghanistan could potentially be negotiated politically, rather than merely forced militarily. In spring 2016, a senior Western diplomat explained this change as follows:

> They started to admit that there will be no peace without talking to the Taliban. The line of thinking for a long time was, especially with the Americans, and also the British and the Afghan Government: "we will fight them out." That did not work. (…) One therefore had to admit that there should be negotiations with the Taliban.[16]

The talks between the so-called 'Quadrilateral Coordination Group', consisting of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the US, and China, has been the most prominent example of this changed view but has yielded no results so far. The aim of the talks between the four countries has been to negotiate conditions to talk to the Taliban, which seems difficult given the diverging individual interests of the four countries. An EU diplomat in Kabul in April 2016 said: 'There were supposed to be direct talks between the government and the Taliban at the beginning of March [2016]. The quadrilateral talks did take place, but the fight for leadership in the Taliban probably put another obstacle to the talks.'[17] Up until the time of writing of this report there has been no official announcement about direct talks with the Taliban, but unequivocally a

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[15] Interview with a German analyst on 31 March 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.
[16] Interview with a senior Western diplomat on 30 March 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.
[17] Interview with an EU official at 31 March 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.

change took place among international actors and the Afghan Government from the 'we do not talk to terrorists' frame (see Schneckener, 2009: 24-26) to 'talking about talks' with the Taliban.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the international involvement in Afghanistan has been shaped by various competing logics and justifications. Over time, the international involvement evolved from a light footprint to an expansive state-building project that yielded limited results. This genealogy of international involvement in Afghanistan furthermore reveals how this international involvement has evolved, has been challenged, and has changed. Although this report focuses on the EU's engagement with Afghanistan, it is important to underline that the international involvement in Afghanistan since 2001 has primarily been shaped by US policy. Against this background, the EU's engagement in Afghanistan will be discussed in chapter three.

3. EU involvement in Afghanistan

Introduction

This chapter discusses the EU involvement in the conflict in Afghanistan. It starts by painting an overview of what the EU has done since 2001, followed by a more detailed explanation of EU policies in the fields of conflict prevention and peacebuilding in recent years. Key policy documents that are assessed include the EU strategy for Afghanistan for the period of 2014-2016 and the Multi-Annual Indicative programme 2014-2020. In addition, attention will be paid to the Council conclusions on Afghanistan of 18 July 2016 and the outcomes of the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan of 4 and 5 October 2016 in order to sketch the direction EU policy is currently heading.

3.1 Overview of EU engagement in Afghanistan

Since the start of the 2001-US led intervention in Afghanistan, the EU has not had a military role in the conflict. It did adopt a considerable political and economic role, however, and became one of the largest donors in the post-2001 reconstruction of Afghanistan. Interestingly, despite the EU's large presence and significant financial and political contributions, the EU activities have generally not been the focus of attention, which may, according to Gross (2008: 1), be explained by a lack of public diplomacy and the EU's complex institutional policy making structure. Nevertheless, over time, the EU's engagement in Afghanistan developed from a political presence combined with funding capabilities to a somewhat more visible presence and an expansive involvement in governance, the rule of law, and development assistance. Upadhyay and Pawelec (2015: 170) characterise the EU's policies in Afghanistan since 2001 as mostly focussed on the 'root causes of conflict rather than the immediate challenge of coping with the Taliban and terrorism'. This has required far-reaching engagement of the EU in Afghanistan, and major state-building efforts of EU Member States. It is important to note however that while the EU has consequently prioritised civilian engagement in Afghanistan and the United States has been more focused on military engagement, the latter was active in civilian programmes as well. The difference between the EU and the US in this regard thus 'seems to be a matter of degree, not of principle' (Upadhyay and Pawelec 2015: 170).

In 2001, shortly after the Bonn Conference, the EU made substantial financial commitments, and appointed Klaus Peter Klaiber as its first EU Special Representative in Afghanistan in order to exert the EU's political influence in the country (Council of the EU 2001; Klaiber 2002; Gross 2008: 1). His mandate was to support 'the implementation of the Union's policy in Afghanistan', and to support the EU's contribution to the international community's objectives as formulated in the, at the time, recently adopted UN resolutions on Afghanistan. This would have to happen in close liaison with UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Lakhdar Brahimi. Apart from the EU's financial and political contributions in the early years of the intervention, there were also substantial contributions from individual EU Member States. As outlined in chapter three, Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom

bilaterally played leading roles in reforming the security sector, and France worked together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on coordinating efforts in support of the establishment of the Afghan Parliament (Gross 2008: 2). Individual Member States also contributed militarily in various degrees to PRTs, and to the OEF and ISAF missions. The United Kingdom had the second largest contingent of troops after the United States, and the Netherlands, Denmark, Romania, Poland, and Estonia all had troops in insurgency hotbeds in the south and southeast of the country.

After the completion of the Bonn process – at least on paper – on 18 September 2005 with the adoption of a new Afghan constitution and the first democratic elections (see Deledda 2006), the EU-Afghanistan Joint Declaration was signed on 16 November 2005. The Declaration formalised bilateral cooperation and mutual commitments between the EU and Afghanistan and ensured annual meetings at the ministerial level. The Declaration furthermore states that it 'seeks to build on the success of the Bonn Agreement', and the priorities it puts forward are: consolidating a democratic political system, establishing responsible and accountable government institutions, strengthening the rule of law, and safeguarding human rights (including the rights of women) and the development of civil society (Council of the EU 2005: 2).

In that same year, the European Commission (2005: 6) noted, however, that 'real progress towards creating a democratic, stable and prosperous Afghanistan is seriously threatened by the significant deterioration in security, and by the exponential growth in opium poppy production.' In response to these risk assessments, strengthening the rule of law and government structures increasingly became a priority for the EU in Afghanistan (Gross 2009: 22). In this regard, the EU-Afghanistan Joint Declaration presents a commitment of the EU and its Member States to support the national police, the justice sector, and a 'strong framework for the establishment of rule of law in the country' (Council of the EU 2005: 4). Since the EU and the Afghan Government saw that after the completion of the Bonn process many challenges remained to be dealt with, they expressed that: 'Both parties (…) consider that Afghanistan and the international community should draw up a new compact during the forthcoming London conference' in order to sustain their close cooperation (Council of the EU 2005: 2).

The London Conference of 2006, where this 'Afghanistan Compact' was signed, marked a turning point in the EU's engagement with Afghanistan, according to Gross (2012: 109), because it then also actively became engaged with the police and justice sectors. Peral (2009: 327) notes, however, that when there was finally consensus in Brussels to explore the launch of an ESDP mission, the insurgency had not only revived, but also consolidated. Establishing an effectively coordinated mission with a focus on civilian policing was therefore a strenuous task from the onset. The European Commission's Country Strategy Paper for Afghanistan for the period of 2007-2013, moreover, identified 'the growing opium economy and the danger of state capture by narco-interests' as a threat to development, state-building, and the improvement of the security situation'.

Two years later, an additional field of EU engagement emerged with the establishment of an Election Observation Mission (EOM) during the presidential elections of 2009 and financial contributions to the UN fund for electoral support (ELECT). Initially the EU EOM characterised the poll as a 'victory for the Afghan people', but this soon changed when widespread allegations surfaced about corruption, fraud, and security issues. In the end, the

EOM declared that 1.5 million votes could be suspicious (Buckley 2010: 7). With EU EOM, the EU engagement in Afghanistan came to span development assistance, rule of law, and governance by the end of the decade (Gross 2012: 110). The EU's political role was diminishing, however. In Brussels, during the Swedish presidency of the EU in 2009, while the surge was well under way, the EU attempted to do something about its shrinking political influence in Afghanistan. Burke (2014: 5) explains this as a response to the 'immense energy and resources being poured by the US into the country'. On 27 October 2009, EU foreign ministers approved a plan for 'Strengthening EU Action in Afghanistan and Pakistan'. The EU would further expand its pallet of policies by focusing on regional cooperation, a political dialogue in Afghanistan, reintegrating insurgents, civilian capacity building, governance, democratic institutions, the rule of law, civilian policing, and the agricultural sector (Burke 2014: 5). The new EU plan followed the United States in the sense that it by then explicitly started to focus on eastern Afghanistan and the FATA in Pakistan.

In 2010, in an effort to give the EU in Afghanistan more coherence, it started to 'double-hat' the positions of the Head of the EU Delegation and the EU Special Representative, which was enabled by the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty (Buckley 2010: 8-9; Tolksdorf 2013: 484; Muscheidt 2011: 48). With the increase of EU activities between 2001 and 2010, the challenges in coordinating with other international actors in Afghanistan also increased. In addition, insufficient linkages persisted between the EU Delegation in Kabul and Brussels and between Brussels and individual EU Member States (Gross 2012: 110). Gross (2012) therefore concluded in 2012 that while the EU has a considerable capability to fund Afghanistan's reconstruction, the capability to coordinate is inadequate, and negatively affects the EU's capability to act.

When the international presence started to scale down from 2011 onwards, and especially after 2014, the EU's activities came increasingly under pressure by the further deteriorated security situation. Holtje and Kempin (2013: 3) warned in late 2013 that the security vacuum left by the drawdown could make the EU's development efforts 'more difficult, if not impossible'. Their assertion was that EU programmes would run a high risk of becoming under enormous pressure due to these post-2014 challenges. During this time, the EU became more vocal about 'regional stability' and an 'Afghan-led' and 'Afghan-owned' peace process.

3.2 EU policies on Afghanistan (2014 – 2016)

The most important policy documents of the EU in the post-2014 phase are the EU Strategy on Afghanistan 2014-2016 and the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2014-2020. Due to their relevance in understanding the EU's policies after the drawdown, these documents will be explained in more detail. The EU Strategy on Afghanistan 2014-2016 claims to provide a framework to coordinate EU and Member States' civilian engagement in Afghanistan with the overarching strategic goal of developing Afghanistan's institutions to 'provide the platform for a more effective and ultimately sustainable Afghan State'. Within this strategic goal, the EU focuses on:

- Promoting peace, security and regional stability;
- Reinforcing democracy;

- Encouraging economic and human development; and
- Fostering the rule of law and respect for human rights, in particular the rights of women.

The goals largely match with the larger liberal state-building project discussed in chapter three. The strategy further specifies the overarching strategic goal by outlining objectives and planned actions and initiatives to achieve those objectives. The document arguably sets high ambitions given the persistent security problems Afghanistan's faces. About the ambitiousness of the document, an EU diplomat in spring 2016 in Kabul said: 'Yes, it is very ambitious. That was based on a 2013 understanding. So yes, it needs to be updated. The risks were highly underestimated back then.'[18] It is thus important to stress that even though the 2014-2016 strategy is the most recent publicly available strategic document outlining EU ambitions in Afghanistan, developments on the ground have seriously challenged its feasibility. It is nevertheless important to explain what these ambitions were in 2013 in order to understand how both the EU's goals and capabilities have changed, and adapted to Afghanistan's post-2014 state of affairs.

With regard to the governance of Afghanistan, the strategy emphasises the importance for Afghanistan to become a 'stable and functioning democracy' through the development of its institutions. The EU seeks to strengthen democratic and accountable governance, which ultimately should help in creating a more effective and sustainable state. Under the umbrella of the EU's objective of 'reinforcing democracy', it claims to use its engagement and instruments to support the following sub-objectives:

- 'robust electoral architecture and procedures;
- credible parliamentary elections in 2015, with outcomes broadly accepted by Afghans;
- greater accountability of the executive through improved parliamentary and independent oversight;
- building the capacity of sub-national governance, focusing on reducing corruption and increasing accountability in order to improve service delivery and budget administration.'[19]

About its political and diplomatic posture, the EU strategy highlights its support for an 'inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned political settlement that promotes an inclusive peace and reconciliation process'. This is a new element in the EU's strategy compared to its strategy paper for the period 2007-2013. The 2014-2016 strategy furthermore supports talks between the Afghan Government and the major insurgent groups. It does not, however, specifically mention the Taliban. To achieve this, the strategy claims the EU will engage with influential countries in the region, the Afghan Government, and 'other political actors – including Track II initiatives'. The theme of local ownership receives a lot of attention in this regard. The strategy and EU officials have repeatedly stressed that it will support an 'Afghan-led' and 'Afghan-owned' peace and reconciliation process. Somewhat paradoxically, the strategy claims that it will look to work with others in the international community to support this Afghan-led and

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[18] Interview with an EU official at 7 April 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.
[19] See EU Strategy on Afghanistan 2014-2016.

Afghan-owned inclusive process. In the conclusion of the document, the EU stresses further that, 'Afghans themselves will be responsible for whether the transition process is a success and provides the basis for Afghanistan to move towards its goal of self-sustainability.' So, while the EU strategy boastfully sets forth its 'exceptional level of assistance', it places the responsibility for progress largely in the hands of the Afghans.

Regarding the security sector, the EU strategy remains a focus on civilian policing, the rule of law, and human rights. It advocates to support the development of a functioning and effective justice system and to advance human rights, in particular for women and children. According to the EU strategy, 'effective rule of law will strengthen accountability and increase business confidence, but will require significant institutional development.' Additionally, the EU seeks to strengthen 'Afghan-led efforts to increase the quality and sustainability of civilian policing, as an integral part of the justice system'. The EUPOL Mission, which is the most prominent example in this regard, will be further explained in chapter five.

In addition to the EU Strategy on Afghanistan 2014-2016, the EU also articulated policy goals and ambitions in the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2014-2020. An EU diplomat in Kabul explained the relationship between the two documents as follows: 'The EU strategy and the MIP are complimentary to each other. The timespan is the main difference. The strategy is more practical and endorsed by the Member States. The MIP is only accorded by the EU.' Because of the considerable overlap between the strategy and the MIP, only the most important EU objectives are listed. The MIP 2014-2020 focuses on four sectors, namely:

- Sector 1: Agriculture and Rural development;
- Sector 2: Health;
- Sector 3: Policing and Rule of Law; and
- Sector 4: Democratisation and accountability.

These focus areas thus largely overlap with the policy goals and ambitions that are articulated in the EU strategy 2014-2016.

While the EU strategy and the MIP indicate policy goals the EU has had in the past two years, the Council conclusions on Afghanistan of 18 July 2016 give an indication of where EU policy is heading in the future. The Council stated that the overarching strategic goal of the EU and Member States should remain to 'provide the platform for a more effective and ultimately sustainable Afghan State'. The objectives need to be renewed, however, according to the Council, namely:

> to promote security; reinforce democracy; encourage economic and human development; strengthen the rule of law, including the fight against corruption, and the protection and promotion of human rights in particular the rights of women, including in the context of the peace process and continue the fight against the narcotic and drug industry. The Strategy should take into account the regional dimension and maintain the flexibility to respond appropriately to potential changes in Afghanistan. Furthermore, as migration has become a priority for the EU in its overall relations with Afghanistan, the EU's actions should help address the root causes of Afghan irregular migration.

While the Council calls for a renewal of the objectives, it has to be noted that the above-mentioned objectives are largely the same as the ones put forward in the EU Strategy on Afghanistan 2014-2016. This is thus nothing new. Nevertheless, the Council conclusions of 18 July 2016 do indicate an increased emphasis on the flexibility of the strategy to respond to changes in the situation on the ground. It also puts much more emphasis on migration from Afghanistan.

Based on these 'renewed objectives', the Council welcomes a follow-up strategy of the 2014-2016, for the period 2017-2020, which is expected to be endorsed by the first quarter of 2017. The new strategy for the period 2017-2020 should, according to the Council, respond to the envisaged Afghan National Peace and Development Framework as well as the related Afghan National Priority Programmes and the mutual commitments identified in the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF) and the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development. With this multiplicity of policy documents, coordinating the division of labour amongst the EU, Member States, and other international donors will likely remain challenging in the upcoming years, but various EU officials and other Western diplomats indicated that the smaller foreign presence and smaller budgets in Afghanistan may improve the coordination of international efforts because of a stronger need to work together.

3.3 Brussels Conference on Afghanistan

The most important recent development with regard to the EU's policy goals in Afghanistan has been the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan that was organised and hosted by the EU on 4 and 5 October 2016. International donors gathered to discuss their political and financial support for the eleventh time at an international conference since 2001 (AAN 2016). Prior to the Conference, an EU official in Kabul said that their line in Brussels would be that 'more of the same won't lead to new results'.[20] Ambassador Franz-Michael Skjold Mellbin, the Head of the EU Delegation to Afghanistan and the EU Special Representative in Afghanistan, said:

> We hope that the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan will signal two key changes in the international approach. The first pivot is to change the narrative from winning the war to winning the peace. The second pivot is to have regional actors take more responsibility for Afghanistan's peace and stability (AAN 2016).

The days before the Conference were marked by several notable developments on various fronts. On the battlefield, there was a sense of *déjà vu* with renewed fighting in Kunduz City. The new Taliban attacks on the provincial capital did not come completely unexpected but nevertheless demonstrated the 'continued vulnerability' of the Afghan National Security Forces (Ali 2016). In Kabul, at the presidential palace, a peace deal was signed by Ashraf Ghani and

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[20] Interview with an EU official at 7 April 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar,[21] the leader of Hezb-e Islami. The outcome of six and a half years of negotiations was hailed by the Afghan Government, but it remains unclear if this deal will have any influence on possible talks with the Taliban (Osman 2016). Finally, in the days before the Brussels Conference the EU and Afghanistan signed a 'state-building contract' worth 200 million euros of assistance and a controversial migration deal with the dubious title 'Joint Way Forward on migration issues between Afghanistan and the EU'.[22] Initially, the signing of the document was planned for Thursday, 29 September but Afghan Minister of Refugees, Balkhi, blocked the signing of the agreement. A day earlier, the signing of a bilateral German-Afghan readmission agreement had also been cancelled. According to Bjelica (2016), the 'Concern in the European capitals was so high that German Chancellor Angela Merkel called President Ghani on 28 September 2016 asking him to ensure the agreements were signed.' After several attempts within the Afghan Government to come to an agreement, the deal was finally signed on 2 October 2016, two days before the start of the Brussels Conference. The document provides a basis for EU Member States to accelerate the return of Afghans who have not been granted asylum. Critics of the agreement warn that it allows the EU to send back Afghans in large numbers, many of which have spent a long time in 'bureaucratic limbo' (Bjelica 2016). Furthermore, critics have rightfully questioned the EU's assertion that at least parts of the country are safe enough (Bjelica 2016). The deal was also controversial because observers believed the deal was used as leverage for the Brussels Conference. According to Al Jazeera (2016), some Afghan Government officials indeed felt pressured to sign the deal. EU officials allegedly told them that not signing the deal could affect the levels of aid Afghanistan gets. The Afghan Finance Minister, Hakimi, also said to Afghan parliamentarians prior to the signing of the deal that, 'If Afghanistan does not cooperate with EU countries on the refugee crisis, this will negatively impact the amount of aid allocated to Afghanistan.' Salahuddin Rabbani, Minister of Foreign Affairs, said of the deal, 'European countries told us: you should either receive our aid [in the form of aid] to Afghan refugees in our countries, or for development projects in Afghanistan; you can choose between these two options. They asserted very clearly that they cannot help Afghanistan in both areas' (Bjelica 2016). After the EU used its stick by means of pressuring the Afghan Government to sign the migration deal, it was time for the carrot in Brussels.

On the morning of 5 October 2016, a wide range of high ranking officials, ministers, and heads of state gathered in Brussels to discuss their financial and political support for Afghanistan in the upcoming years. When HR/VP Mogherini made her arrival, she said to the press there was not any conditionality or relationship between the aid pledges in Brussels and the Joint Way Forward migration deal. She stated: 'There is never, never a link between our development aid and whatever we do on migration.' The HR/VP also mentioned that during a dinner the night before, she had had 'found common ground' for the Afghan peace process with key regional players including China, India, and Pakistan.[23]

At the start of the Conference, President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, highlighted during his opening statement that 'Financial support is very welcome but far more

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[21] President Ghani was at the presidential palace in person, but Hekmatyar spoke and signed in a pre-recorded video (Osman 2016).

[22] In 2015 and 2016 over a quarter of million Afghans migrated to Europe (AAN 2016).

[23] See Mogherini, F. (2016, October 2016). *Brussels Conference on Afghanistan – Doorstep*. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/FedericaMog/status/783620414329221120

important is to support the efforts of those pushing for peace.'[24] Many other speakers praised the improvements in the education and health sectors and the long-term commitment of the international community, while the security situation, governance, and rule of law remained points of concern. During the Conference, EU officials repeatedly emphasised the importance of the regional dynamics of an Afghan-led peace process. During her closing remarks, HR/VP Mogherini stated:

> Security obviously remains a key factor. Security is a matter of capabilities, we know that well, and we keep supporting the training of Afghan security forces. But security is also - and maybe even more sometimes - a matter of politics. It depends on a meaningful peace process and it depends on a positive regional environment. Let me say clearly that security only exists if it is for all countries in the region and that security only exists if all countries in the region create the conditions for it.[25]

Finally, at the end of the Conference, EU Commissioner Neven Mimica, who is in charge of the EU's international cooperation and development, announced that over 15 billion dollars were pledged by international donors for the period of 2017-2020, thereby staying close to the previous pledges made in Tokyo 2012.

Conclusion

This chapter indicates how the EU's engagement with Afghanistan has developed since 2001. It shows how even though the EU has not been directly involved militarily in the conflict, it did adopt a considerable political and economic role in the post-2001 reconstruction of Afghanistan. Over time, the EU's engagement in Afghanistan developed from a donor with a political presence to a more visible presence and increased involvement in governance, the rule of law, and development assistance. The assessed EU policies on Afghanistan demonstrate that the overall goal of the Union in Afghanistan has remained largely the same with an emphasis on supporting state institutions. A new element is the EU's focus on migration flows from Afghanistan to the EU, illustrated by the Joint Way Forward migration deal that was signed in the lead up to the 2016 Brussels Conference on Afghanistan. Apart from this focus on migration recent developments also suggest that supporting a regional peace process will be high on the EU's agenda in Afghanistan.

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[24] Tusk, D. (2016, October 5). *Remarks by President Donald Tusk at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan*. Retrieved October 7, 2016, from European Council: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/10/05-tusk-remarks-conference-afghanistan/

[25] Mogherini, F. (2016, October 5). *Closing remarks by HR/VP Federica Mogherini at the closing session of the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan*. Retrieved October 7, 2016, from European External Action Service: https://eeas.europa.eu/node/11199_en

4. Selected EU interventions in Afghanistan

Introduction

After outlining the overview of the conflict and its international involvement in chapter two and discussing the EU involvement in the conflict in chapter three, this chapter discusses two selected EU interventions in more detail. The interventions that are assessed are the role of the EU Special Representative in Afghanistan and the EUPOL Afghanistan Mission.

4.1 EU Special Representative in Afghanistan

The EU Special Representative (EUSR) in Afghanistan has been, since 2001, the political presence of the EU in Afghanistan. The instrument of EUSRs was established under Article 1 of the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty. EUSRs are appointed by the Council with the aim of representing the EU in 'troubled regions and countries' and 'to play an active part in promoting the interests and the policies of the EU' (European Scrutiny Committee 2010: 318). The mandates, however, differ considerably (Adebahr and Grevi 2007: 56). In Afghanistan, the focus of the position evolved from giving the EU a voice in a political field that was dominated by the United States to an effort focused on coordinating the contributions of the EU and its Member States (Gross 2009: 22).

The post, in relation to the EU institutions, other international actors, and the conflict in Afghanistan, changed considerably and will be explained in the following sub-sections. In doing so, the rather limited literature on the role of the EUSR in Afghanistan reveals how different EUSRs articulated the challenges in Afghanistan and reflected on the strategies and objectives of the Union. There are also considerable limitations, however, especially with regard to how the various EUSRs used the political weight of the EU in interactions with Afghan and international counterparts. The previously mentioned Brussels Conference on Afghanistan provided insights on how the EUSR and his team negotiated on behalf of the EU and used the Union's leverage over the Afghan Government to push through a controversial migration deal, but in plentiful occasions it has remained elusive if and how the EUSR in Afghanistan used its political presence. Finally, the diverging views on the role of the EUSR will be assessed, and a reflection on the genealogy of the EUSR instrument in Afghanistan will be provided.

4.1.1 Klaiber gets appointed (2001-2002)

As mentioned in chapter three, the EU appointed Klaus-Peter Klaiber as its first EU Special Representative in Afghanistan (Council of the EU 2001). During the Bonn Conference, German Foreign Minister, Joshka Fischer – who hosted the Conference under the auspices of the UN – said that, 'The European Union is ready to make a considerable long-term contribution towards Afghanistan's economic and social recovery.'[26] According to Klaiber (2002: 1), it was also Fischer who decided after the conclusion of the Bonn Conference that the Union should send

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[26] Opening speech by Joshka Fischer, German Minister for Foreign Affairs, 27 November 2001.

a representative to oversee the transition in Afghanistan. Klaiber (2002: 1) stressed that the US-led removal of the Taliban regime in response to the 9/11 attacks made clear to the EU that, 'if it wants to play a role politically, it cannot shy from issues of major international contention.' The Council of Ministers agreed to the creation of the post of EUSR in Afghanistan under the EU Presidency of Belgium with the general aim of working under the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), Javier Solana, and to assist the Presidency, which was scheduled to change from Belgium to Spain in January 2002 (Quigley 2007: 200). On 10 December 2001, four days after the closure of the Bonn Conference, the Council adopted the appointment of Klaiber as EUSR in Afghanistan (Council of the EU 2001).

The mandate of Klaiber was to support the implementation of the Union's policy in Afghanistan, and to support the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Lakhdar Brahmini (Council of the EU 2001). The political dimension of the mandate consisted, according to Klaiber (2002: 2), of supporting the new interim authority, women's rights, fighting drug trafficking and production, and to convince Afghanistan's neighbours that 'their interference in this process was unwelcome'. After the EU and other international donors promised a long-term commitment and pledged billions of dollars in humanitarian aid and reconstruction at the Tokyo Conference in January 2002, this established, according to Klaiber (2002: 2), 'effectively a political contract' between the international community and the new interim authority. Klaiber was only appointed for a period of six months, after which he was offered a diplomatic post elsewhere by the German Government (Quigley 2007: 201). Looking back on his role as EUSR, Klaiber (2002: 7) said, 'Diplomacy *must* be pitched in multilateral terms if the EU's agenda is to be advanced (…) It takes huge effort to gather the various member country views and then promote them with one voice.' Five years after his time as EUSR, Klaiber (2007: 10-11) furthermore signalled that the objective of the EUSR of 'speaking with one voice jointly with the representative of the EU Commission' had not yet been achieved.

4.1.2 Vendrell's years (2002-2008)

In May 2002, the mandate of the EUSR in Afghanistan was extended, and on 25 June 2002, the Spaniard, Francesc Vendrell, was appointed as the new EUSR for, initially, a period of six months (Council of the EU 2002). Former political adviser at the Office of the EUSR for Afghanistan, Joanna Buckley (2010: 2), emphasised that as the former personal representative for Afghanistan of the UN Secretary-General, and former head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA) until December 2001, Vendrell was 'particularly influential'. He was intimately involved in preparing the political agreement of the Bonn Conference. Together with a small team of political advisors, the political reporting by the EUSR has been, according to Buckley (2010: 2), regarded 'as some of the most informed amongst diplomatic missions' and a crucial source of information for embassies of smaller EU Member States (see also Grevi 2007: 73-74; Quigley 2007: 203; Burke 2014: 4).

Quigley (2007: 202) points out, however, that a review conducted in the Political and Security Committee (PSC) in 2003 exposed some of the potential weaknesses of the EUSR instrument. Officials noted the need for better coordination between the EU Member States' diplomatic missions and the Office of the EUSR. The PSC also had to decide if Vendrell should

be allowed to propose policy recommendations for EU interests in Afghanistan, which was, according to Quigley (2007: 202), at the time 'a controversial proposal'. Earlier, in December 2002, Vendrell was asked to monitor the aid pledges of international donors and provide the PSC with recommendations on possible further support of the Afghan interim authority. In June 2004, the Council asked Vendrell to assess the Presidential elections that would take place in October. In the meantime, Vendrell himself advocated a greater role for the position of EUSR in order to improve EU relations with the Afghan Government. Eventually, EU Foreign Ministers gave Vendrell a role in developing a framework with the European Commission for EU-Afghanistan relations after the completion of the Bonn process. The consultations with Vendrell contributed to the signing of the EU-Afghanistan Joint Declaration in November 2005. During Klaiber's, and especially Vendrell's, time in office, it became clear that the role of the EUSR was gradually expanding (Quigley 2007: 202) and so was its mandate (Council of the EU 2006; Gross 2008: 1). Burke (2014: 4) furthermore notes that, according to EU officials in Afghanistan, EU HR for CFSP, Javier Solana, largely delegated 'autonomy of action' to the highly experienced Vendrell between 2002 and 2007. When Vendrell left his post as EUSR in August 2008, he was the longest serving foreign diplomat in Afghanistan (Buckley 2010: 2).

While lauded for his experience, Vendrell faced serious problems in Afghanistan. Frustrated with the lack of a shared vision, he said, 'I failed to get foreign ministers to speak with one voice' (in Mock 2009). With regard to the EUPOL Mission and the EU's rule of law efforts, Vendrell argued that the EU had not been able to live up to the expectations of the Afghan people:

> Frankly, Afghans cannot really understand how with all the assistance that Europe gives, we cannot ensure that there is far less corruption, that warlords are prevented from playing a significant role and that we begin to establish the kind of rule-of-law that the Afghans want (in Mock 2009).

Looking back on his time in Afghanistan, Vendrell (2009) stated: 'The most crucial mistake was to continue to consort with the warlords and commanders who had brought ruin to Afghanistan in the 1990s and to continue to favor them.' Furthermore, he emphasised that it was a mistake 'to do nothing to ensure that the Government of Afghanistan — the Government in Kabul — had a monopoly on the use of force. I think that has been the key flaw of the whole exercise' (Vendrell 2009).

4.1.3 Sequi becomes EUSR for Afghanistan and Pakistan (2008-2010)

Vendrell was succeeded by Ettore Francesco Sequi as EUSR in Afghanistan on 24 July 2008. Sequi could also draw on previous experience in Afghanistan, since he had been the Ambassador of Italy in Kabul from 2004 until 2008 (Buckley 2010: 2). Following the appointment of Richard Holbrooke as the US Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan and several EU Member States who had appointed their own special 'Af/Pak' representatives – including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Denmark – coordinating EU and wider international efforts became even more difficult. For some time, the European special envoys even held coordination meetings among themselves (Buckley 2010:

6). On 15 June 2009, Sequi's mandate was also extended to Pakistan, and henceforth, he became the EUSR for Afghanistan and Pakistan. In an Explanatory Memorandum of 3 June 2009, the UK's Minister for Europe, Caroline Flint, said that the decision to include Pakistan in the mandate of EUSR Sequi 'reflects the direction of international debate on Afghanistan and broader regional challenges, particularly on Pakistan'. Furthermore, the minister supported 'pushing the EU to increase its engagement in both Afghanistan and Pakistan and to see the problems in both countries as interlinked' (European Scrutiny Committee 2010: 320). When the plan to strengthen EU action in Afghanistan and Pakistan was adopted in October 2009, it mentioned that, 'To achieve greater involvement of the EU in support of democratic processes in Pakistan, and taking into account recent expansion of the EUSR for Afghanistan's mandate, the EU will strengthen the EUSR's role and presence in Islamabad.'[27]

Earlier that month, on Tuesday, 6 October 2009, Sequi addressed members of the EP Foreign Affairs Committee in Brussels. A major problem the EU was facing in Afghanistan was, according to the EUSR, that the EUPOL Mission needed greater resources. Sequi argued that in order to achieve the objective of setting up 'a real police force capable of conducting investigations', EUPOL had to be 'beefed up' (in Albertini 2009). He furthermore stressed that the Union should maintain a presence in Afghanistan but that some areas should gradually be transferred to the Afghans themselves. Sequi explained what he called the 'Afghanisation' of security forces as one of the 'conditions needed to improve the situation on the ground' (in Albertini 2009). During Sequi's address, he was questioned about the electoral fraud during the elections of August 2009. The EUSR responded by saying that there were indeed 'irregularities', but he did not want to speculate on the scale of the fraud (in Albertini 2009). Earlier that year, with regard to the issue of coordination, Sequi had refuted the idea that the international community was not speaking with one voice. The EUSR said he saw 'neither a crack, nor fragmentation' (in Buchsteiner 2009).

The mandate of Sequi was due to come to an end by 31 March 2010. In the first quarter of 2010, debates flared up about who should take over the important political post. According to Bolzen (2010), nobody ever heard anything from Sequi. The experienced diplomat and former foreign minister of Lithuania, Vygaudas Ušackas was the strongest contender to step up the EU's political profile in Afghanistan (Bolzen 2010). The candidacy of Ušackas was controversial, however, because he had been dismissed as Lithuania's Minister of Foreign Affairs in January 2010. Ušackas was forced to leave his post as minister after a scandal in which he allegedly covered up the existence of illegal CIA prisons in Lithuania (Magone 2010).

4.1.4 The 'double-hatting' of Ušackas (2010-2013)

Once Ušackas was officially chosen by the Council of the EU on 22 March 2010, HR Ashton said: 'He is a fantastic appointment (...) I am a hundred percent satisfied that this is the right person and there's nothing that I need to be worried about' (Magone 2010). The Council decision of 22 March 2010, marked yet another change in the role of the EUSR. Similar to his predecessors, he was mandated to 'contribute to the implementation of the EU-Afghanistan Joint Declaration' of 2005 and 'lead the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Afghanistan

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[27] Council of the EU, 'Strengthening EU Action in Afghanistan and Pakistan', 27 October 2009.

and Pakistan' of 2009. However, the new EUSR was only allowed to work on the implementation of the plan 'so far as it concerns Afghanistan' (Council of the EU 2010). With the appointment of Ušackas, the EUSR position thus went back from 'Af/Pak' to the old role of EUSR in Afghanistan. This would not be the only change.

Perhaps more significant was that Ušackas became the first 'double-hatted' EU representative in Afghanistan by merging the posts of the EUSR and the Head of the Commission delegation (Buckley 2010: 8-9). This 'double-hatting' was enabled by the Lisbon Treaty and was supposed to give the EU in Afghanistan more coherence. The separated representation of the EUSR and the Commission delegation prior to the appointment of Ušackas in 2010 had created widespread confusion amongst Afghan Government officials and others who were not aware of the EU's complex institutional arrangements (Buckley 2010: 5). At the 'Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board', the most important coordination body between the Afghan Government and foreign governments and institutions, both the Office of the EUSR and the Commission delegation were represented, together with several EU Member States (Buckley 2010: 5). Hence, it was often unclear who spoke on behalf of the EU (Buckley 2010: 5).

The EUSR had generally been seen as the Union's political presence, but the Office of the EUSR had no budget to support policy decisions. All direct EU funding came through the Commission, so the Commission delegation in Kabul reported to the Commission in Brussels, while the EUSR had to report to the PSC and the Secretary General/High Representative of the EU. The Lisbon Treaty resolved some of these issues but not all (Buckley 2010: 5). In 2010, Buckley (2010: 8-9) argued that efforts had to be made to not only combine the political staff of the EUSR and the Commission delegation in Kabul but also to 'pursue the same political priorities.' Yet, in 2016, an EU official in Kabul still stressed that 'the cooperation between the Office of the EUSR and the delegation is not that good', and characterised it as an 'institutional anomaly'.[28]

During Ušackas' time as EUSR and Head of the delegation, corruption was widely perceived as highly problematic in Afghanistan. In July 2010, the EU suspended 600 million euros of aid,[29] and in November 2012 Ušackas announced that 25 million dollars aimed to reform the justice sector would be deferred because of a lack of progress.[30] Ušackas emphasised: 'If the European Union is deeply committed in supporting Afghanistan, it needs to stress that in the spirit of the Tokyo agreement, support will be increasingly conditional of the delivery of the Afghan Government on the agreed reform agenda.'[31] The relationship with Karzai and the international community – including the EU – by that time had deteriorated. Ušackas called Karzai, 'part of the reality (…) with whom we have to deal'.[32] At the end of his time as EUSR, Ušackas (2013) highlighted that 'the level of corruption at all levels of society is staggering', but he also noted that, 'the Commitments of the International Community to the Afghan Government extend well beyond 2014.'

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[28] Interview with an EU official on 31 March 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.
[29] NOS. (2010, July 13). *EU-hulp aan Afghanistan opgeschort*. Retrieved August 8, 2016, from NOS: http://nos.nl/artikel/171749-eu-hulp-aan-afghanistan-opgeschort.html
[30] Al Jazeera. (2012, November 12). *EU suspends aid to Afghanistan*. Retrieved August 7, 2016, from Al Jazeera: http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2012/11/20121112174158197304.html
[31] Ibid.
[32] DW-TV. (2010, November 28). *Vygandas Usackas, EU Special Envoy for Afghanistan | Journal Interview*. Retrieved August 4, 2016, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKqGCOcUPxI

4.1.5 Mellbin and the peace agenda (2013-present)

As the December 2014 deadline of the military drawdown was getting closer, Franz-Michael Skjold Mellbin became the new EUSR and Head of the Commission delegation on 1 September 2013 (Tolksdorf 2013: 473). Mellbin had served prior to his new EU post as Ambassador of Denmark to Afghanistan and Danish Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. The official EUSR mandate stayed largely the same, namely to promote the Union's policy goals in Afghanistan.[33] This encompasses contributing to the implementation of the EU-Afghanistan Joint Declaration of 2005 and leading the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Afghanistan and Pakistan of 2009, in so far as it concerns Afghanistan. The mandate of Mellbin further stressed the need to work together with the representatives of the EU Member States and to support the United Nations (UN) in Afghanistan 'with particular emphasis on contributing to better coordinated international assistance.'[34] During visits to the highly fortified compound of the EU delegation and the Office of the EUSR in Kabul in spring 2016, an EU official explained the mandate of the EUSR as follows: 'The EU Special Representative has a very open mandate, some sort of blank check. He is only accountable to Mogherini. He is a good and experienced ambassador with good contacts and a lot of influence.'[35] He furthermore asserted that the 'EUSR has more freedom than the delegation.'[36] Another EU official pointed out that, 'His profile far outweighs any EU Ambassador. I would put us above the UN. He is so respected.'[37]

Shortly after Mellbin's appointment as EUSR, Afghanistan was preparing itself for Presidential elections in spring 2014. When, by August 2014, there was still no clarity on who would be the next President, the EU and other international donors were getting increasingly agitated. Mellbin urged Ghani and Abdullah to form a national unity government, which he saw as 'the only realistic option.'[38] After the deal was signed in September 2014, Mellbin said: 'We are going to see a significant shift from Karzai who has been a very difficult partner for the West for a long time' (in Rasmussen 2014). The EUSR and other international actors were concerned about the level of fraud and corruption that took place during the 2014 Presidential elections. With regard to the next parliamentary elections, Mellbin said: 'I think, it would be a problem that without reforms we financially support Afghanistan's upcoming elections. This is a basic issue and we and other donors are emphasizing our positions' (in Rahmani 2015). During his time as EUSR, Mellbin has repeatedly stressed the need to fight corruption. He stressed in an interview that Afghanistan needs leadership that 'shows the will to end this

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[33] The current mandate of Mellbin ends on 28 February 2017 but may be extended once again (Council of the EU 2015).

[34] EEAS. (2016, June 14). *EUSR in Afghanistan*. Retrieved August 8, 2016, from European External Action Service: http://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/3606/eu-special-representatives_en

[35] Interview with an EU official on 31 March 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Interview with an EU official on 7 April 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.

[38] Haroon, A. (2014, August 8). *NATO working for National Unity government in Afghanistan*. Retrieved August 10, 2016, from Dispatch News Desk: http://www.dnd.com.pk/us-eu-offering-ashraf-ghani-abdullah-abdullah-form-national-unity-government-without-delay/73722

cancer that is spreading in the Afghan body and eroding the state'.[39] Furthermore, he warned that it alienates Afghans from their own government.[40]

In addition to the corruption, Mellbin has repeatedly stressed the dire security situation in Afghanistan. Apart from the Taliban, Mellbin also drew attention to the danger of ISIS in Afghanistan. In an op-ed for the Huffington Post the EUSR argued an immediate counterstrategy is needed to avoid the group from growing and developing further. Mellbin (2015) concluded: 'We got ISIS wrong in Syria at tremendous cost. We can still get it right in Afghanistan.' In an interview with the Atlantic Council he explained that ISIS in Afghanistan is 'still limited in scope and size and we should make sure that it remains that way' (in Sen 2015).

In order to improve the security situation, the EUSR has repeatedly urged the Afghan Government, regional actors, and the international community to direct their efforts to a peace process. An adviser of the EUSR stressed that, 'From a political point of view, peace is the only thing that will make a change.'[41] This official further explained that after handing over responsibilities to the Afghan Government in 2014,

> the assumption, hope, or prayer was that Afghans would do something if things would go bad. People were shocked of how little happened from the Afghan Government's side. We simply disrupted things too much. Now it is up to Afghans to figure out a system. We can't do more of the same. Peace is as much a prayer as a policy. That is how it came to the table.[42]

Another adviser explained that President Ghani talked to Pakistan and the Taliban in 2015 and that the international community had signalled they would stay in Afghanistan. 'Hopefully, by summer 2017, we could have a mutually hurting stalemate,' he asserted.[43]

In an interview with the Afghan news channel TOLO news, Mellbin was asked about the position of the EU towards the Taliban. The EUSR said: 'They are our enemies. We have defined them as enemies for many years. They remain our enemies today. The pursuit of violence for political aims, or criminal aims, (...) is absolutely unacceptable to us.'[44] With regards to a possible peace deal with the Taliban in the future, Mellbin stressed he thought it would be possible but that it would take a long time. Two red lines that he identified were that the Taliban would have to break their links with international terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda and that the rights of Afghan women should be respected. Advisers of the EUSR in Kabul stressed the need to include the Taliban in a peace process.[45] One of them stressed that, 'we [the international community] have been so late in realising that we should talk to the Taliban. That should have been the case in Bonn. Policy has been driven by the military

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[39] RFE/RL. (2015, April 30). *EU Calls For Concrete Steps Against Corruption In Afghanistan*. Retrieved September 21, 2016, from RFE/RL: http://www.rferl.org/a/eu-calls-for-action-on-afghan-corruption/26987173.html

[40] Ibid.

[41] Interview with an EU official on 7 April 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Interview with an EU official on 7 April 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.

[44] TOLOnews. (2015, August 30). *Interview With EU Ambassador to Afghanistan, Franz-Michael Mellbin*. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhYqX0e30Sc

[45] Interview with an EU official on 7 April 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan; Interview with an EU official on 7 April 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.

however since 2001.'[46] When asked whether the EU maintained contacts with opposition groups, the official said: 'There is so many ex-Taliban here. Every embassy or international organisation has contact with the Taliban.'[47]

The EUSR has not been invited to join the quadrilateral talks between Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States, and China but, according to one of his advisers, '[he] knows what is going on there.'[48] The Office of the EUSR stressed, similarly to Mellbin, that a potential peace deal could take a long time. One adviser stated: 'If we are looking at peace in 2020 we are happy. We need to be smart about governance and politics. In some aspects, Afghans are born negotiators.'[49] Up until that time the peace efforts of the Office of the EUSR were about trying to make people think about what they call the 'end-state of peace'.[50] In this vein, Mellbin has repeatedly encouraged the Afghan and Pakistani governments to come together. He furthermore warned that, 'in the end, the two state actors moving away, or even widening the gap would only create new space for those who are against the two states, who are the enemies of the people of both Pakistan and Afghanistan to operate. Nobody can have that interest.'[51] This so-called 'regional approach' is important according to Mellbin. He explained the reasoning behind this approach as follows:

> If we analyse the problem as one of foreigners influencing different groups of Afghans in order to counterbalance other regional interests, then unless everybody in the region agrees on what an Afghanistan at peace looks like, then someone will always be able to spoil it. And it is very easy to spoil (in Nielsen et al. 2015: 199).

Furthermore, he added that, '(...) unless there is a good common understanding and balance between the interests of Pakistan and Iran, China and India, it is simply not going to work out' (in Nielsen et al. 2015: 199).

With regard to the role of the EU in Afghanistan, Mellbin stressed that, '(...) the EU plays a more important role than people sometimes think' and that the comprehensive approach is very important (Nielsen et al. 2015: 198). The EUSR explained that there had been, 'a lot of stark examples of lack of a comprehensive approach in Afghanistan.' While there have been some individual partners who had some success in this regard, Mellbin emphasised that, '(...) clearly the ones who count are the Americans because they are the ones who are putting the resources into Afghanistan, at a level which cannot be compared to all the others together. It doesn't really matter what anybody else does' (Nielsen et al. 2015: 198). Albeit, in Afghanistan, Europe and the United States have closely cooperated, which, according to the EUSR, allowed them to maximise their ability to influence the situation. According to Mellbin: 'Sometimes the US can engage in a way that the European side cannot; sometimes the

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[46] Interview with an EU official on 7 April 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Interview with an EU official on 31 March 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.
[49] Interview with an EU official on 7 April 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.
[50] Interview with an EU official on 7 April 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.
[51] TOLOnews. (2015, August 30). *Interview With EU Ambassador to Afghanistan, Franz-Michael Mellbin*. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhYqX0e30Sc

European side can also engage in a way that the US is not able to because it simply has another policy implication when the same things are said from the US side' (in Sen 2015).

4.1.6 Assessment of the EUSR in Afghanistan

From the appointment of Klaiber as the first EUSR in Afghanistan in 2001 to the current appointment of Mellbin both the mandate, and the actual role of the EUSR have expanded significantly. An obvious but nevertheless important strength of the EUSR instrument in Afghanistan that has been identified in the academic and policy literature is that it has given the EU a political presence in a crowded field of international actors (Gross 2008; Klaiber 2002; Quigley 2007; Buckley 2010). However, giving substance to that role in the complex context of Afghanistan has proven to be an extremely difficult task, especially because of the fundamental disagreements between Member States on the course of action to be followed.

In the wider literature on the EUSR instrument, a distinction is made between the EUSR's internal and external functions (Grevi 2007: 11; Adebahr 2008: 25; Tolksdorf 2013: 475; Tolksdorf 2015: 72). The internal functions consist of being the EU's 'eyes' and 'ears', while the external functions consist of being the EU's 'face' and 'voice'. From the genealogy of EUSRs in Afghanistan, it may be concluded that some of the men who took on the job had better eyes and ears and a better face and voice than others. Personal skills thus seem important. Vendrell was especially complimented for his exceptional skills in acquiring information and providing insightful analysis to the he PSC and the HR for CFSP. His experience in Afghanistan and prominent role in the UN prior to his appointment as EUSR gave him valuable access to a variety of domestic, regional, and international actors (Quigley 2007: 203). Sequi and Mellbin could also draw on previous experience in Afghanistan, and hence they were also able to use their already existing networks.

With regard to the internal function of coordinating within the EU, all EUSRs seem to have faced considerable challenges. Buckley (2010: 3) emphasises that, 'The EU's confusing institutional structure has not helped' in this regard. The plethora of EU institutions and Member States that have been involved in Afghanistan, with often diverging political agendas, have made it difficult for the EUSR to coordinate the EU's policies and strategy (Buckley 2010: 3). The 'double-hatting' of the posts of the EUSR and the Head of the Commission delegation since 2010 seems to have mitigated this problem somewhat, but the literature and additional interview data collected for this report suggest that coordinating with and between Brussels, Member States, the Office of the EUSR, and the Commission delegation is still difficult (Buckley 2010: 8-9; Gross 2012: 110).

Externally, the 'double-hatting' does seem to have improved the EUSR's function of 'face' and 'voice' in the field. The literature shows that prior to 2010, it was often unclear who was speaking on behalf of Europe. Was it the EUSR or the Head of the Commission delegation? During the appointment of Sequi, this problem was compounded with the appointment of several 'Af/Pak' special representatives of EU Members States. While, since the appointment of Klaiber, the EUSR in Afghanistan has been mandated to coordinate and cooperate with EU Member States and other international actors, in practice this has been extremely difficult for all EUSRs in Afghanistan (see also Gross 2012: 110), in part due to the highly political nature of these coordination efforts.

The literature and interview data for this report suggest that the EUSRs have been trusted with a relatively high degree of autonomy in this regard. While many questions remain as to how exactly EUSRs have used the political weight of the EU in Afghanistan vis-à-vis other international actors and vis-à-vis the Afghan government, anecdotal evidence has provided some valuable insights. For example Vendrell's reflections on his time as EUSR in Afghanistan suggest that he was unable to change the United States' policy of supporting warlords. The literature also provides examples of EUSRs who used EU aid as leverage over the Afghan government. Statements by Ušackas and Mellbin for example suggest that aid conditionality has been used as a means to pressure the Afghan government to initiate reform. Similarly, EU pressure on the Afghan government appeared with the signing of the Joint Way Forward migration deal, where various sources suggest that the amount of EU development assistance that would be pledged during the Brussels Conference would depend on whether or not the Afghan government would sign the migration deal.

A final important issue that kept recurring for the EUSRs was the EU's limited visibility in Afghanistan. Klaiber signalled it in 2002, and so did Mellbin thirteen years later. Paradoxically, the EU and its Member States have committed exceptionally high levels of assistance to Afghanistan since 2001, but this happened in a context that was predominantly led by US-military interests (see Peral 2011: 5). In that military arena, the EUSRs in Afghanistan have fought an uphill battle to draw attention to the EU's civilian profile, which has been further complicated by the limited support of Member States. On the other hand, EUSRs in Afghanistan also seem to have had a clear interest in keeping part of their work outside the public eye, for example with regard to EUSR efforts aimed at facilitating peace talks. While it is clear EU policy aims are currently focused on facilitating a peace process with relevant regional players, much of what the Office of the EUSR exactly does in this regard remains unknown.

An EU intervention in Afghanistan that has received far more academic attention than the EUSR instrument is the EUPOL Afghanistan Mission. In the following paragraph attention will paid to how the mission was established, implemented, and changed over time.

4.2 EUPOL Afghanistan Mission

As briefly stipulated in chapter two, the EUPOL Afghanistan Mission was a civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) mission that from 2007 until 2016 sought to support reform efforts of the Afghan Government in building a civilian police service. The Mission aimed to contribute to the EU's overall political and strategic objectives in Afghanistan, especially with regard to reforming the security sector. EUPOL has arguably been the most important EU effort in that regard. EUPOL Afghanistan's support between 2014 and 2016 was delivered mainly through advising at the strategic level to the Afghan Ministry of Interior,[52] but prior to 2014, the Mission was also focused on training Afghan National Police (ANP) officers. While this section focusses on EUPOL, it has to be noted that police reform in Afghanistan has been a multi-stakeholder process that was also shaped by 25 individual countries and various international organisations – including NATO, UNDP, and UNAMA – alongside the EU (Upadhyay and Pawelec 2015: 171).

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[52] See EUPOL Afghanistan. (n.d.). *About EUPOL*. Retrieved March 31, 2016, from EUPOL Afghanistan: http://www.eupol-afg.eu/node/2

In the following sub-sections, attention will be paid to how the German police reform efforts of the early years became 'Europeanised' and how EUPOL was established, implemented, and the many challenges it encountered. Finally, there will be a reflection on the transatlantic competition with regard to building up the Afghan National Police (ANP) and the assessment of the EUPOL Mission by various stakeholders.

4.2.1 Europeanising German police reform

As discussed in chapter two, Germany became the 'lead nation' for reforming and building up the Afghan National Police (ANP) in 2002, but their efforts became 'Europeanised' by mid-decade (Pohl 2012: 154).[53] Pohl (2012) vividly explains this process. In short, the Europeanisation was the outcome of a complex set of factors, including (transatlantic) pressure on EU governments to do more, some EU actors wanting to gain more visibility in Afghanistan, European electorates that were generally averse to more military engagement, and disagreements among EU Member States over the appropriate strategy (Gross 2009: 28; Pohl 2012: 143-144).

When the 'light footprint' approach of the early years made way for more expansive contributions of the United States and NATO to Afghanistan in response to a deteriorating security situation, debates sparked over burden sharing and the transatlantic division of labour. For example, the Bush Administration's first special envoy to Afghanistan, James Dobbins, wrote in September 2005 in a commentary for the International Herald Tribune: 'It is time (...) to stop asking what NATO can do for the EU, and begin asking what the EU can do for NATO. And Afghanistan is the place to start.'[54] In addition to external pressure, there were also so-called 'Atlanticist' governments within the EU such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Denmark. With their pro-US stance, they pushed for greater EU engagement in Afghanistan in the form on an ESDP mission (Pohl 2012: 145; see also Gross 2009: 28).

France opposed the launch of an ESDP mission, stressing the multitude of problems the mission would likely encounter. Furthermore, the French questioned whether an ESDP mission could achieve anything meaningful when Washington spent 1 billion dollars on policing in Afghanistan and the overall budget for all CFSP activities was only a quarter of that (Pohl 2012 150-151). The French position was, by the EU Member States with a pro-US stance according to Pohl (2012: 151), interpreted as 'Gaullist anti-Americanism'. In short, London wanted to use an ESDP mission to support US and NATO policy in Afghanistan, while Paris emphasised the importance of EU autonomy. These diverging views put Germany in a decisive position.

Apart from being the lead nation concerned with the building up of a new Afghan police force, Germany was also preparing to take over the Presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2007 (Pohl 2012: 151). At the outset, Germany was split between diverging positions about a potential ESDP mission in Afghanistan. The German Ministry of Interior, who was in charge of the German Police Project Office (GPPO), was reluctant to give up its efforts, but the Federal Foreign Office was in favour of the mission (Gross 2009: 28). Contrary to

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[53] Gross (2012: 112) refers to the 'EU-ization' of police and justice reform.

[54] See Dobbins, J. (2005, September 30). *NATO Peacekeepers Need a Partner*. Retrieved October 3, 2016, from RAND: http://www.rand.org/blog/2005/09/nato-peacekeepers-need-a-partner.html

London and Paris, which had focused their arguments for and against an ESDP mission on transatlantic relations, Berlin's decision making was mostly guided by domestic factors. The potential Europeanisation of Germany's police efforts gave rise to resentment within the German Ministry of Interior because it was seen as an indirect admission that their efforts had failed. On the other hand, in the German domestic political arena, there was a need to emphasise the importance of civilian engagement and the potential role that an ESDP mission could play (Pohl 2012: 151-152).

In the face of US criticism of the inadequate German contributions to police reform (Wilder 2007; Friesendorf and Krempel 2011), the German Government was presented with a dilemma. On the one hand, it had to alleviate the notion that Germany was not taking up its responsibility in Afghanistan, while, on the other hand, it was unable to respond to the US demand to do more because of a widespread disapproval in the domestic political arena of the militarised US engagement in Afghanistan (Pohl 2012: 152). The way out for the German Government was to continue emphasising the importance of civilian engagement. When Germany finally decided to support the mission, the debate in Brussels was decided (Pohl 2012: 152). While France resented the strategic objective of supporting NATO in Afghanistan with EU instruments, from then on it tolerated the establishment of an ESDP mission because it did not want to block the strong wish of a number of EU Member States, and, moreover, it wanted to show support for the nearing German Council Presidency of 2007 (Pohl 2012: 154).

At the start of the Finish EU Council Presidency in the second half of 2006, a first exploratory mission was sent to Afghanistan (Peral 2009: 327; Pohl 2012: 145). This was followed by a Joint Council/Commission EU Assessment Mission (JEUAM) in September and another mission by the Political and Security Committee (PSC) between 27 November and 14 December to assess the feasibility of an ESDP mission. Subsequently, the Council approved the Crisis Management Concept (CMC) on 12 February 2007 and the Concept of Operations (CONOPS) in April 2007 (Peral 2009: 327-328). By that time, during the German Council Presidency in the first half of 2007, Germany had become the strongest supporter of an ESDP mission in Afghanistan (Pohl 2012: 153). The reason Germany threw its weight behind the mission was the result of a compromise within the German Government. Even though the German Government decided to support the mission, the German Ministry of Interior continued to resist the blame for its policing project in Afghanistan. Their buy-in for an ESDP mission was essential, however, for the rest of the government, since the German MoI controlled all the necessary resources, such as policing expertise and staff (Pohl 2012: 154).

The MoI insisted that Europeanisation of its policing project was only acceptable if the ESDP mission would explicitly build on the German project and be at least three times bigger (Pohl 2012: 154). For the rest of the German Government, this condition was better than the previous principled resistance of the MoI, but it undeniably pressured the German Government to turn EUPOL Afghanistan into a success. If it would be able to do so, it could silence both the external critics of its policing project (the United States and 'Atlanticist' EU Member States) and the internal ones (German Ministry of Interior). The German Government was focused on creating that success during its own Council Presidency, so it pushed for a speedy start of the mission (Pohl 2012: 154-155). On 30 May 2007, Joint Action 2007/369/CFSP was adopted, which provided the legal basis for the establishment of EUPOL Afghanistan with a mandate to contribute to the development of the Afghan National Police (ANP) (Peral 2009: 327-328). The EUPOL mandate was broad but different from the German mandate in the sense that it

focused less on training and more on strategy and coordination (Upadhyay and Pawelec 2015: 173).

Pohl (2012: 171) concludes that by transforming Germany's police reform efforts into an EU mission, 'Berlin solicited implicit international legitimisation for its earlier work, flaunted its willingness to bear a greater share of international responsibility, and emphasised the civilian character of its Afghanistan engagement.' Through the establishment of EUPOL-A the German Government furthermore demonstrated to their national electorate that it did not align itself with the militarised approach of the unpopular Bush Administration. The Europeanisation also allowed the sharing of increasing costs and possible blame for problems in the future (Pohl 2012 171). Nevertheless, the Germans did remain a crucial player in the mission, illustrated, for example, by the fact that the first two Head of Missions were Germans (Peral 2009: 328) and the mission initially started out with a predominantly German staff (Pohl 2012: 154).[55]

4.2.2 Mandate

The first mandate of the Mission, as it was adopted on 30 May 2007 by the Council, outlined the objectives to: '(...) significantly contribute to the establishment under Afghan ownership of sustainable and effective civilian policing arrangements, which will ensure appropriate interaction with the wider criminal justice system, in keeping with the policy advice and institution building work of the Community, Member States and other international actors. Further, the Mission will support the reform process towards a trusted and efficient police service, which works in accordance with international standards, within the framework of the rule of law and respects human rights' (Council of the EU 2007). The tasks of EUPOL to achieve these objectives were formulated as follows:

- 'work on strategy development, while placing an emphasis on work towards a joint overall strategy of the international community in police reform (...);
- support the Government of Afghanistan in coherently implementing their strategy;
- improve cohesion and coordination among international actors; and
- support linkages between the police and the wider rule of law.'

The Mission had to be operational from 15 June 2007 onwards with an envisaged minimum time frame of three years. In the years after the start of the Mission, EUPOL's mandate was changed several times in line with changing priorities and an evolving situation on the ground. The European Court of Auditors (2015: 21) concluded eight years after the start of the Mission that whilst the mandate was relevant, in practice it was difficult to implement.

4.2.3 A difficult start

The EUPOL Afghanistan Mission officially started on 15 June 2007. The Mission had a difficult, problematic, and premature start however (International Crisis Group 2008: 10; Gross 2009: 30; Peral 2009: 331; Perito 2009: 10; Buckley 2010: 4). Buckley (2010: 4) stresses that

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[55] For a more elaborate discussion of how the German police reform efforts became Europeanised see Pohl (2012: 141-172).

because of the German Government's wish to let the transition from GPPO to EUPOL occur during its EU Council Presidency, it 'rushed EUPOL into launching long before it was ready'. At the same time, concern grew among Member States about the 'operational risks' of the Mission due the deteriorating security situation. In an attempt to limit these operational risks, the EU put strict security regulations in place for the transport and housing of EUPOL staff, thereby making the Mission highly dependent on specific types of equipment (Gross 2009: 34; Peral 2009: 334; Buckley 2020: 4; Pohl 2012 155). However, the EU's impractical procurement procedures hindered the Mission in swiftly acquiring the armoured cars and containers that it needed (Bloching 2012: 19; Pohl 2012: 155; Buckley 2010:4). Once the material was finally delivered, EUPOL staff was only allowed to travel in two-car convoys with armed guards – even in Kabul – which made it very difficult for them to interact with Afghan and international counterparts (Buckley 2010: 4).

In addition to these challenges, EU Member States were slow to deploy qualified personnel that could have worked on these procurement issues (Pohl 2012: 155). Initially, EUPOL only had four staff members in Kabul, without vehicles, and no access to the internet. Most EUPOL staff back then were in fact police officers that belonged to missions of individual EU Member States who had quickly re-badged their staff with limited instructions on how the EUPOL Mission differed from their old bilateral missions (Buckley 2010: 4). An advantage of EUPOL over the German police efforts was that it was supposed to cover all of Afghanistan, but, because of the security situation – which was increasingly deteriorating – this aspiration was dependent on the support and protection of NATO (Pohl 2012: 156). Reaching an agreement on an arrangement between the EU and NATO was incredibly troublesome, however, because Turkey blocked official EU-NATO relations outside the so-called 'Berlin Plus' framework, which excludes Cypriot representation (Pohl 2012: 156). As a consequence, the EU had to negotiate with each individual PRT where it wanted to work to get the medical, security, and logistical support it needed (Pohl 2012: 154; Council of the EU 2007; Peral 2009: 334). While NATO had pressured the EU to step up its presence in Afghanistan, it did not result in giving EUPOL priority at the PRTs. This further impeded the start of the Mission and negatively affected views on the EU's engagement in Afghanistan (Gross 2009: 31). To make matters worse, by fall 2007, the EUPOL's first Head of Mission had resigned after a dispute with Vendrell, the EU's Special Representative at the time (Perito 2009: 10).

Apart from operational challenges, EUPOL also faced internal problems within the EU at the start of the Mission. When the Mission was about to commence, the Council Secretariat in Brussels went through a process of reorganisation. A civilian planning and conduct capability (CPCC) was introduced to support the then challenging upcoming ESDP missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan. Nevertheless, it hindered EUPOL because an imperfect, yet working, structure was broken up at a time when support for the Mission was most needed (Pohl 2012: 156). Another problem EUPOL faced, related to its relationship with Brussels, was that it was not able to fund equipment for the Afghan police. This funding capability lay with the Commission. This put EUPOL in a complicated position (Pohl 2012: 157). EUPOL's implementation was dependent on the receptivity of the Afghan Government, but without significant political or financial incentives it was hard to get the attention of Afghan counterparts, especially at a time where the United States was hastily spending large sums of money on police reform (Gross 2009: 33-34).

In sum, EUPOL had a difficult start, due to a lack of consensus in Brussels, strict security measures, delayed deployment of staff, procurement issues, insufficient support from both EU institutions in Brussels and the Member States, and a mandate that was in practice difficult to implement on the ground (Peral 2009: 335). In 2008, International Crisis Group (2008: 10) argued that because of this multitude of problems, EUPOL was widely seen as a disappointment.

4.2.4 Implementation

In the years after the difficult start of the Mission, the problems were far from over. The implementation of the Mission continued to be hindered by Member States who failed to provide sufficient staff (Larivé 2012: 192-193). For November 2007, the target was to have 195 international personnel in Afghanistan, but only 80 staff members were actually deployed. Also, when the deadline for the 195 staff members was extended to March 2008, EUPOL did not live up to its expectations with only 95 staff members on the ground. Interestingly, there was a disproportionate amount of Germans and Scandinavians among them, while the United Kingdom and the Netherlands did not put their money where their mouth was (Pohl 2012: 157). By December 2008, one and a half years after the start of the Mission, EUPOL was still below its first target of 195 personnel. EUSR Vendrell argued that France, Italy, and the Netherlands had furthermore undermined the Mission by launching their own bilateral police training exercises instead of supporting EUPOL (Mock 2009). Vendrell stated, 'We must keep ensuring that what we're doing is actually helpful to the Afghan people. We are just not doing that.' He furthermore advocated that EUPOL needed at least 2,000 staff members to tackle the situation (Upadhyay and Pawelec 2015: 174). Larivé (2012: 193) notes that apart from the quantitative problems, there was also a qualitative problem due to the lack of specialised staff needed to implement the mandate. According to a EUPOL official, that qualitative problem has persisted and highlights that specific competences are necessary to do the job. He further explained that most staff that is seconded by the Member States are police officers, but 'a detective is not necessarily a good trainer or analyst.'[56]

Although it was already difficult to get to the target of 195 staff members, the Council decided in May 2008 to double the original amount of experts working on the Mission (Council of the EU 2008). This decision was induced by German pressure to give the Mission a boost and the hope was that Member States and Washington would take the Mission more seriously. While nearly all other Member States were open to strengthening EUPOL, they opposed the idea of doubling EUPOL's staff, which seemed a mission impossible given its problematic track-record. However, the German Government pushed it through, and other Member States gave in to the German pressure (Pohl 2012: 161). Even though EUPOL continued to be understaffed compared to the target of 400 police officers – let alone Vendrell's plea for 2,000 EU experts – by 2011, it consisted of more than 300 international staff, seconded by 23 EU Member States and four so-called 'third states' (Pohl 2012: 162).

In May 2010, the mandate of the Mission was extended for another three years. By that time, some of the challenges of the early years of the Mission were addressed with some more specific agreements with the Afghan Government about EUPOL's assistance.

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[56] Interview with a EUPOL official on 7 April 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Coordinating EUPOL and other international efforts remained difficult, however, illustrated by the fact that there was still no formal EU-NATO agreement (Pohl 2012: 163). The House of Lords (2011: 27) reported that, 'we [United Kingdom] still believe that the lack of a formal cooperation agreement between the NATO forces in Afghanistan and EUPOL on the security of EUPOL personnel has increased the risk to the lives of EUPOL personnel (...)'.

4.2.5 Scaling down

Similar to the overall trend of international engagement in Afghanistan, EUPOL scaled down its presence from 2012 onwards. Whereas in 2012, EUPOL had 341 international staff, in 2014, this number had dropped to 235 (ECA 2015: 16). By that time, 400 million euros had been spent on the Mission since its inception in 2007 (ECA 2015: 12), and roughly 1,400 courses for about 31,000 trainees had been provided (ECA 2015: 24). The EU opted to further phase out EUPOL and end the Mission at the end of 2016. As a result, the rule of law component of the Mission was closed and transferred in much smaller form to the Office of the EUSR[57] (Gross 2014b: 3-4). An EU official who worked for EUPOL at the time said the, 'closing of the rule of raw component happened too soon.'[58] By 31 December 2017 the Mission officially ended after almost ten years of EU investments to reform the ANP.

While EUPOL has faced many internal problems since its inception, its capabilities have also been challenged by the extremely difficult context in which the insurgency grew, and the EU and the United States had fundamentally different approaches with regard to police training. The transatlantic competition is a recurring external challenge in the literature on EUPOL and will therefore be explained in more detail in the following sub-section.

4.2.6 Transatlantic competition

Essential in understanding the external challenges EUPOL faced have been what Larivé (2012: 196) characterised as an 'unconstructive competition between the US and the EU'. Over time, EUPOL was increasingly overshadowed by the much larger police training efforts of the United States (Friesendorf and Krempel 2011: 13). The US-led police programmes in Afghanistan had a fundamentally different approach to that adopted by the EUPOL Mission. While the EU was focused on training, mentoring, and capacity building for a civilian police force, the United States and NATO had a much more militarised and quantitative approach in which the police were part of their counterinsurgency strategy (Goodhand and Hakimi 2014: 5).

The United States has been involved in reforming the Afghan police since 2003. The US State Department set up a police-training centre in the Afghan capital and seven more regional training centres. During this time, the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL) led the police training programme with support of the private security company DynCorp International (Perito 2009: 4). Overall, international police assistance programs in Afghanistan during that time lacked agreement on the strategic objectives of the assistance, coordination between Germany and the United States was poor, the Afghan MoI's leadership was inadequate, and there were insufficient

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[57] Interview with an EU official on 31 March 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.
[58] Ibid.

funds. In 2002, the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOFTA) was established for donor contributions to police salaries, but by 2004, only 11.2 million dollars of the 65 million dollars that were requested had been contributed (Perito 2009: 4-5).

When, in 2005, Germany's efforts were increasingly seen as insufficient (Upadhyay and Pawelec 2015: 172), Washington transferred the responsibility for its police training programmes from the Department of State (DoS) to the Department of Defense (DoD) and sent approximately 100 military staff to the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A). The CSTC-A was already responsible for training the Afghan National Army (ANA), and, while it from then on was also responsible for training the police, State/INL and DynCorp remained involved in what had evolved into large-scale police training programmes (Perito 2009: 5; Thruelsen 2010: 83). Like EUPOL, the US-led police training programmes also faced a wide range of challenges. An Interagency Assessment of the DoS and DoD in 2006 stressed that despite the 1.1 billion dollars that was spent – mostly on the contract with Dyncorp – coordination and accountability issues remained, and the ANP's readiness to carry out its basic responsibilities was deemed far from adequate (Inspectors General 2006: 1).

In 2007, in an attempt to improve the police training programmes, the United States launched the Focused District Development (FDD) initiative that sought to enhance the capabilities of ANP officers in a district, all at once, as a unit. The curriculum consisted of seven weeks of instruction in military tactics, the use of weapons, survival strategies, counterinsurgency tactics, and only one week of basic police skills (Perito 2009: 5). This approach was thus much more focused on acquiring military skills than the civilian EUPOL Mission. Interestingly, EU Member States such as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands increasingly started to support the FDD programme instead of EUPOL (Kempin and Steinicke 2009: 145). In addition to the FDD programme, NATO and the United States created the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan (NTM-A), which also became involved in police training, again with support of EU Member States. In 2009, CSTC-A and NTM-A came under a single command to strengthen the programme (Upadhyay and Pawelec 2015: 172).

The American militarised approach to police training also manifested itself in the establishment of the controversial Afghan Local Police (ALP) programme[59] in August 2010 (Goodhand and Hakimi 2014: 12; Belcher 2013: 73). The idea was to deploy US and Afghan special forces to villages where they would train and support 'village defence forces' to resist the Taliban insurgency (Moyar 2014: 9-15). The EUSR Ušackas emphasised, in light of the high risks of the programme, that, 'We [EU] are not participating in this,' but his protest could not dissuade the United States from its plan (Friesendorf and Krempel 2011: 28). Additionally, President Karzai himself opposed the idea, 'warning that such groups could become militias in a country already plagued by warlordism' (Lawrence 2010; Partlow and De Young 2010). However, when General David Petraeus took command of ISAF in July 2010, he managed to persuade Karzai to sign a presidential decree in August of that year, authorising the ALP

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[59] From the start of the 2001 US-led intervention in Afghanistan, various local policing and community militia experiments succeeded one after the other, including, for example, the Afghan National Auxiliary Police, the Afghan Public Protection Program (APPP or AP3), the Community Defense Initiative (CDI), the Critical Infrastructure Program (CIP), and eventually, the Afghan Local Police (ALP) (Friesendorf and Krempel 2011: 27; Goodhand and Hakimi 2014: 9). According to Friesendorf and Krempel (2011: 27) the ALP program was inspired by a program called the 'Sons of Iraq' in which the US supported militias in Iraq.

programme.[60] In the years following its implementation, the militias that were recruited were providing local security services in some areas, but they were also increasingly reported to prey upon the local people they were supposed to guard, including cases of extortion, corruption, robbery, rape, abuse, and other forms of physical violence (Human Rights Watch 2011; Hakimi 2013; Goodhand and Hakimi 2014; International Crisis Group 2015; Human Rights Watch 2015).

The American police training programs have therefore been critiqued by many observers – including EU officials – for being too focused on the military aspects of policing with too little oversight (Friesendorf and Krempel 2011; Goodhand and Hakimi 2014). A EUPOL officer in Kabul, for example, said about the American trained Afghan police officers that, 'They could only shoot and salute.'[61] He further stressed that the United States has had mainly a 'train and equip approach', and that the misbehaviour of both the ANP and the ALP has fuelled the insurgency instead of making it smaller.[62] 'The Americans are responsible for this to a large degree. They support warlords and the Northern Alliance,' he said.[63] Another EU official reasoned that, 'Our American friends' objective is to fight terrorism and insurgents. That also plays a role.'[64] An adviser of the EUSR stated, 'I think there is a tacit acknowledgement that fighting is necessary, but this does not bring peace.'[65] He also stressed that, '(…) we can't all be police bobbies, [but] we say let's try to do more civilian policing in stable areas to make it more sustainable.'[66] This adviser claimed that the US is open to that direction but that 'they are afraid of losing the fight'.[67] Upadhyay and Pawelec (2015: 175) express that the American conception of the Afghan police as a security force may have undermined the EU's civilian approach.

4.2.7 Assessment of the EUPOL Afghanistan Mission

The establishment of EUPOL Afghanistan was political to the core at various levels. The eventual mandate for the Mission was the result of a complex interplay between Member States and their national electorates, negotiations within governments, compromises between Member States, and pressure from across the Atlantic to do more in Afghanistan. As Pohl (2012) vividly explains Germany was a crucial Member State in that process, in which the concerns and needs of Afghans seem to have been secondary to national political interests and international diplomatic relations. The politics in the phase prior to the Mission, and Germany's wish to push through the start of the Mission during their Council Presidency gave EUPOL a difficult start in a challenging context and crowded field of stakeholders involved in police training. Larivé (2012: 198) argues along similar lines that a considerable portion of the blame for the lack of success goes to Brussels and the European capitals.

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[60] Interior ministry Decree P-3196, 16 August 2010. See page 83 of US Department of Defense (DOD). (2012). *Special Plans and Operations: Assessment of U.S. Government and Coalition Efforts to Develop the Afghan Local Police.* Alexandria, VA: US Department of Defense, Inspector General.
[61] Interview with a EUPOL official on 7 April 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Interview with an EU official on 31 March 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.
[65] Interview with an EU official on 7 April 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

Nevertheless, despite the many flaws, some authors point to EUPOL's positive contributions to police reform in Afghanistan (Peral 2009; Gross 2009; Gross 2012). These authors point to the Mission's flexibility in adapting to the complicated field of stakeholders on the ground (Peral 2009: 336) the EU's increased operational role in Afghanistan (Gross 2009: 43), and the Mission's civilian focus compared to the military focus of the United States (Gross 2012: 117).

Yet, overall EUPOL is widely assessed as a failure, or at least a mission marred with difficulties that did not live up to its expectations (Dempsey 2008; International Crisis Group 2008: 10; Gross 2009; Peral 2009; Buckley 2010: 4; Pohl 2012: Upadhyay and Pawelec 2015: 175; ECA 2015; Aarten and Wolf 2014: 155). The reasons that are mentioned in the literature for this failure or disappointment can be roughly grouped into external and internal challenges. The external challenges that the Mission faced were enormous. The rising insurgency and general instability created an insecure working environment for EUPOL staff, and over time the American militarized police training programmes overshadowed the EU's civilian efforts. Furthermore, the dire state of the ANP made effective police training extremely difficult. However, as Upadhyay and Pawelec (2015: 181) strikingly point out 'many deficits have also been homegrown.' These internal challenges are primarily rooted in a lack of political will among Member States to support the Mission, which manifested itself in a limited budget, a lack of qualified staff, and Member States who set up bilateral policing programmes and supported US police reform efforts. These problems were further compounded by the strict security measures, short staff postings, diverging visions on policing, and a lack of coordination with NATO and other international actors. Larivé (2012) therefore concludes that EUPOL Afghanistan illustrates the 'difficulties between EU Member States to agree on one strategy and contribute to the shaping and the maintenance of a powerful, effective, and credible mission.'

5. Preliminary reflections on EU capabilities

This desk study report has discussed the EU's capabilities in Afghanistan in the fields of conflict prevention and peacebuilding by situating the EU's efforts in the social and political processes in which they have developed. In doing so, it has touched upon various overarching clusters and cross-cutting themes of the WOSCAP project, namely local ownership, multi-stakeholder coherence, and security sector reform (SSR). EU capabilities within these realms are, as previously mentioned, understood as the ability and capacity to achieve objectives in relation to the overall mission. Hence, these capabilities need to be explained in relation to the expectations and ambitions articulated in the EU's stated policy goals (Martin et al. 2016: 16). In Afghanistan, where the EU has arguably put forward rather high expectations and ambitions, it follows that the EU has needed relatively great capabilities to realise these goals. Whitman and Wolff (2012: 11) distinguish the capability to act, to fund, and to coordinate and cooperate. In this final chapter, some preliminary reflections on EU capabilities in Afghanistan are provided on the basis of the main findings of this report.

From the overview of Afghanistan's history in the twentieth century, it became clear how in an almost dialectical process modernist and traditionalist forces have competed for power and invoked increasingly violent reactions to each other's attempts to rule the country. This dynamic has persisted in the post-2001 era where, in the wake of US-led military involvement, the EU and other international actors became increasingly involved in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. After a period of international disengagement with Afghanistan in the 1990s, following the attacks of 9/11, powerful foreign actors once again sought to influence the country's domestic affairs. This time, the external involvement was rooted in the idea that fighting terrorism in Afghanistan and simultaneously building up a new Afghan State would not only make Afghanistan a safer place but would more importantly also safeguard Western states from 'breeding grounds' and 'safe havens' for transnational terrorism.

The close cooperation between the United States and Afghan warlords to oust the Taliban regime determined the political future of the country to a large degree, since the warlords were not merely part of a military strategy to get rid of the Taliban but also became heavily involved in managing the institutions of the new Afghan State. While the Bonn Agreement put forward the ambition to create a 'broad-based, gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative government', in practice this was never realised. International donors – including the EU – who had state-building ambitions were confronted with the central dilemma of working with or against the warlords, and as the international involvement in Afghanistan evolved from a light footprint approach to a much more intrusive form of external state-building, a complex field of Afghan and international actors emerged in which some focused on building peace, while others sought to wage war. This fundamental tension illustrates how the international state-building project that unfolded became driven and shaped by different logics, justifications, and approaches that competed, or even directly contradicted, each other. Moreover, within that complex field of stakeholders, national political interests of international actors and (transatlantic) diplomatic relations often trumped the concerns and needs of ordinary Afghans. This increasingly revealed the ambiguities of 'local ownership' in Afghanistan.

Within that complicated and increasingly adverse context, the EU has been confronted with many external challenges that have affected its overall capabilities in the fields of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. In the shadow of a US-led war, the EU has sought to build

peace and support a liberal state-building project. It has sought its role in the civilian domain, but has nevertheless been highly dependent on what happened on the battlefield. Since 2006, the insurgency has grown, civilian casualties have increased, and even though the EU's assistance to Afghanistan since 2001 has been of tremendous proportions, it has been overshadowed, and repeatedly undermined, by an ongoing war between insurgents, and the United States, NATO, and the ANSF. This dynamic thus points attention to the contentious nature of a civilian mandate in a context that continuously hinders its implementation.

With that civilian mandate, the EU has consistently advocated the need to strengthen Afghanistan's state institutions. While this support certainly contributed to capacity building of the Afghan State in various sectors, it has also been questioned for strengthening structures that were highly corrupt. In recent years, the EU has therefore been more vocal about combatting corruption in Afghanistan, but it omits that it has (inadvertently) contributed to the problem by pouring in billions of euros in aid to institutions with a limited capacity to absorb such large amounts of money. So while the EU has undeniably helped to support the Afghan State with a fairly large capability to provide funds, it has also contributed to the culture of corruption it seeks to abolish. The EU's support for a state with such limited oversight and accountability mechanisms reveals a central dilemma the Union has faced in Afghanistan.

In addition to these external challenges, EU efforts have also been challenged by EU Member States, in great part because instead of supporting EU initiatives, they were generally more focused on their own bilateral assistance to Afghanistan and their military contributions to NATO and OEF. Moreover, since EU Member States had considerable disagreements about the appropriate strategy to deal with Afghanistan, it was extremely difficult to coordinate the efforts of Member States and, moreover, to represent the Union in Afghanistan with one voice. This troublesome effort has been illustrated by describing how the EUSR instrument developed in Afghanistan. EUSRs in Afghanistan have had the strenuous task of giving a political presence to a Union with Member States that have had fundamental disagreements on the course of action to be followed. These coordination problems are thus not merely technical but also highly political. Coordination issues were further compounded by internal strife between the Commission delegation and the Office of the EUSR and poor cooperation between Brussels and the EU delegation in Afghanistan. In sum, the EUSR's capability to coordinate and cooperate has thus been limited, at best.

All above-mentioned external and internal challenges came together in the EUPOL Afghanistan Mission. By analysing the drivers behind the Mission, it became clear that the establishment of EUPOL was highly political at various levels. The Mission was the outcome of a complex interplay between national political arenas, bargains between ministries, compromises between Member States, and US pressure on Europe to take up a greater responsibility in Afghanistan. Once EUPOL finally started, its implementation was marred with difficulties. In an increasingly insecure environment, American militarised police training programmes overshadowed the EU's civilian efforts, and, without a much needed agreement with NATO, effective police training became extremely challenging. At the same time, however, EUPOL faced many problems that were homegrown. The wide range of internal challenges have primarily been rooted in a lack of political will among Member States to support the Mission. Hence, EUPOL never lived up to its expectations and is widely seen as a disappointing EU-SSR effort. The EU's capability to act in this regard has thus been highly problematic.

Overall, there has been a considerable gap between the EU's stated policy goals and ambitions in Afghanistan and its capabilities in the fields of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. While the EU may have contributed to considerable improvements in, for example, the education and health sectors, reforming the country's governance and rule of law has proven to be far more complicated. Perhaps this gap between policy goals and capabilities is not necessarily a problem, since one may argue that these goals merely guide EU actions and that, in practice, their implementation is only partially feasible. Nevertheless, it draws attention to questions of where the Union can realistically make a difference in Afghanistan, what it is technically capable of doing, and for what type of activities it can count on the political support of Member States. Confronting the deeply political questions inherent to peacebuilding in an adverse context is vital for the EU if it is truly interested in supporting an 'Afghan-led' and 'Afghan-owned' peace process in a war that has taken so many lives and has provided so little benefit.

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