



ATLANTIC MEMO # 1

Afghanistan: How the EU Could Do More

Members of the Atlantic Community commented on the appropriate role for the EU in Afghanistan. There was consensus among Alexander Skiba, Jan Techau and Michael John Williams on the three recommendations below, and a respectful dissent from Ulrich Speck, who noted that none of the three central European actors—France, Britain or Germany—is willing or capable to shoulder the responsibility and take the necessary leading role. Speck recommended that the United States provide the unilateral leadership that is still required in a multilateral warfare framework such as Afghanistan.

Julianne Smith (CSIS, Washington DC) proposed on May 14th that EU member states play a leading role in the stabilization and reconstruction process in Afghanistan. Most importantly, the EU should attempt to reduce corruption by coordinating the efforts already undertaken by numerous institutions and convene regional players for a dialogue about Afghanistan's future and border security - a vitally important initiative which the United States cannot currently pursue. By thus proving its diplomatic competency, the EU could live up to its positive image as an honest broker.

These are the three main policy recommendations from the authors and commenters on Atlantic Community:

1. Europe should play a central role in coordinating NATO resources and NGOs.

By pursuing a common foreign policy with a united front, Europe could act more capably and credibly. Williams urges more effective management of NATO resources and inclusion of international and non-governmental organizations in reconstruction efforts. These actors are often better suited to address long-term needs in crisis regions. One way for the EU to constructively engage in the process would be to develop a Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit, linking the various EU member states, militaries, foreign and international development offices. Williams generally emphasizes the need for more unity in European foreign policy: Europe, he argues, would be more capable and credible if it acted with a united front.

2. The transatlantic agenda must be synchronized.

Techau argues that many of the problems the alliance is facing in Afghanistan and Iraq arise from a lack of transatlantic agreement. Although the military has undergone a restructuring process on both sides of the Atlantic, political doctrines such as nation-building have yet to be harmonized. This is critical to successful collaboration, especially within NATO.

3. Interventions have to unite military and civilian efforts.

Skiba criticizes the "division of labor" concept Smith's suggestions would amount to. He emphasizes that good civilian-military relations are paramount for the nation-building process in every post-war society. Consequently, he disapproves of dividing the roles between the US and Europe as well as of separating military operation and civilian reconstruction generally.

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Atlantic Memos showcase the best ideas and arguments from debates in the Open Think Tank on atlantic-community.org. All policy recommendations in this document were made registered members of the Atlantic Community.