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# The “5,000-kilometre screwdriver”: German and French police training in Afghanistan through the EU and NATO

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# The “5,000-kilometre screwdriver”: German and French police training in Afghanistan through the EU and NATO

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## ABSTRACT

This article investigates the policing assistance provided by Germany and France in Afghanistan through the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Despite being members of both organizations, Germany and France varied in their engagement with the two organizations' missions as well as in their strategies about police training in Afghanistan. Whereas Germany was a leading contributor to the EU mission, it did not formally operate under NATO mission's command. On the other hand, France was a key contributor to the latter mission, whilst being more reluctant to take part in the first. Using evidence drawn from the documents at national, EU- and NATO-levels, US cables, academic and news articles as well as interviews with practitioners and experts, this article argues that these two member states' police training strategies were shaped primarily by their domestic politics and broader foreign policy orientations, rather than the local conditions and realities on the ground. A key policy recommendation is that, while paying attention to the local environment of police training is crucial, policymakers should also plan the delivery of policing assistance by considering the political dynamics in their own constituencies.

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## Introduction

Afghanistan has been struggling with a legacy of decades-long conflict that affected the country's civil society, governance and economy (Boyd & Marnoch, 2014, p. 253). As a result, the country's political transition relied significantly on the support of international community. In the April 2002 donors conference in Geneva, it was decided that five willing nations will take the lead in the reconstruction of Afghanistan in justice (Italy), disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (Japan), counternarcotics (the UK), the building of a new Afghan army (US), and police reform (Germany) (UNODC, 2006, p. 1).

Within these efforts, police reform has been an area of Afghan reconstruction cutting across various aspects of foreign policy, diplomacy, defence and the politics of state-building (Heiduk, 2011; Sinclair, 2015). Among the major multilateral frameworks of

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policing assistance to Afghanistan were the missions of the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). At the same time, countries that could provide training to the Afghan police through both missions differed in their choices. For instance, despite being among major members of the EU and NATO as well as having previous involvement in Afghanistan's security sector reform, Germany and France varied in their engagement with the EU and NATO training missions. Whereas Germany was a leading contributor to the EU mission, it did not formally operate under NATO mission's command. On the other hand, France was a key contributor to the latter mission, whilst being more reluctant to take part in the first.

Against this background, this article investigates the policing assistance provided by Germany and France in Afghanistan through the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL) and the NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan (NTM-A). It argues that assisting states' police training strategies are shaped primarily by their domestic politics and broader foreign policy orientations, rather than the local conditions and realities on the ground. To illustrate, Germany's willingness to adhere to its own culture of civilian-led policing that sought to minimize the use of force as well as dynamics within its domestic decision-making made Berlin to rule out military involvement in key areas of police training, for which Germany preferred the EU mission and its bilateral projects. In contrast, France's preference about the role of NATO as an international security provider and its contingent relations with NATO and the US facilitated the implementation of a paramilitary training approach to police training through the NATO mission, which France also saw more suitable given the increasing insurgency in Afghanistan.

To support this line of argument, this article uses evidence from publicly available documents at national-, EU- and NATO-levels, US cables, as well as interviews with German, French, EU and NATO officials involved in relevant decision-making processes at the time of the two missions, and an expert who observed processes about these missions. By looking at the political and operational aspects of the assisting state's strategies, this article seeks to complement the existing research demonstrating the importance of gaining a sense of local environment in examining the international policing assistance to Afghanistan (e.g. Marnoch, 2020)

The next section outlines the mandates and tasks of the EU and NATO training missions in Afghanistan. After providing a background for Germany's and France's involvement in Afghanistan's security sector reform, the article then elaborates on German and French strategies about the EU and NATO missions. The concluding section summarizes the key findings and makes brief policy recommendations.

## **EU and NATO training missions in Afghanistan**

Launched in 2007, the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (hereafter EUPOL) aimed to

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. (Council, 2007)

EUPOL's training and mentoring work was mainly applied in two pillars of ANP: Afghan Uniform Police (AUP), which was Afghanistan's principal enforcement body, and the

Anti-Crime Police, which was a civilian element of the ANP, responsible for criminal investigations (HM Government, 2011).

NATO entered the policy space of developing the ANP in 2009 with the NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan (hereafter NTM-A). The tasks of NTM-A included mentoring, partnership, supporting, advising and training of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), which included not only ANP but also the Afghan National Army (ANA) at district and municipal levels (NATO Public Diplomacy Division/Press and Media Section, 2010). NTM-A was also mandated “to deliver the large-scale recruitment, equipping and training of all ANA and ANP across the country, which includes addressing issues of attrition and illiteracy” (HM Government, 2011). Additionally, this mission sought to coordinate international efforts to train and equip Afghan security forces to help the Afghanistan government in developing sustainable security structures (Caldwell, 2011).

Despite differences in their mandates, the EU and NATO missions came to mentor the same elements of Afghan police over time. For instance, while EUPOL took the lead in the training of AUP, NTM-A was also involved in the recruitment and training processes of this element of the Afghan police. Furthermore, both missions contributed to ministerial development programmes such as training, leader development, anti-corruption, promotion of living quality and working conditions, as well as to the doctrinal development, training and advising of the ANP (Dalenberg & Jansen, 2016, p. 235; NATO, 2010, p. 16). Such task-based overlap between the two missions presented the EU and NATO member states an option to choose the most convenient operational arrangements in line with their preferences (Çelik, 2020). In this respect, whilst Germany was a key and active contributor to the EU mission without operating formally under the NATO command, France was a key player in the NATO mission, without committing substantial resources to the EU mission. That said, both countries took part in police training in Afghanistan prior to the launch of the EU and NATO missions.

## **A background of German and French involvement in police training in Afghanistan**

As stated, Germany was the “lead nation” in police reform in Afghanistan already before the launch of the EU and NATO missions. Germany initially implemented its police training efforts in the country through the German Police Project Office (GPPO). Started out mainly as a consulting organization for the Afghan Police Academy in 2002, GPPO began its work “with a team of about 10 German police officers from the German Federal Police (Bundespolizei), Federal Investigation Department (Bundeskriminalamt) and from the State Police Forces (Länderpolizeien)” (Feilke, 2010, p. 7). GPPO also placed mentors in the Afghan National Police (ANP), while supporting two main US-led training programmes, namely Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) and Focused District Development programme (FDD) (Fescharek, 2013, p. 14). Within Germany’s such initial efforts, only several dozen of German police trainers were deployed to Afghanistan, and “a little over 10 million euros spent annually during the first few years” (Fescharek, 2013; Friesendorf, 2013, p. 338). Hence, Germany’s international policing assistance through its bilateral mission and before the EU and NATO missions was considered “modest”, including

an average of 40 police trainers between 2002 and 2009 with 70 million euros spent on police reform (Noetzel and Rid, 2009, p. 73; ICG, 2007, p. 7).

France's involvement in the training of the Afghan police was of a different nature. In contrast to Germany's leadership in police training, France did not sign up as a lead nation in a specific area of the Afghan reconstruction. However, it did have a training trajectory in the reform of the wider Afghan security sector. As part of its own *Epidote* mission, France provided training and advice to the Afghan National Army (ANA) between 2002 and 2014 (La France en Afghanistan, 2015). Over time, *Epidote* was incrementally upgraded to a "mentoring" and "advising" mission and began to focus on Afghanistan's National Military Training Academy, Command and Staff College, and Combat Service Support School to provide logistics, financing and human resources courses (Cizel & von Hlatky, 2014, p. 359). After assuming the responsibility of military operations in Kapisa and Surobi districts in 2008, France doubled its budget for civilian cooperation from 20 million to 40 million euros and released another 15 million euros for development projects, though its civilian aid amounted to only 1 percent of the total efforts in this area (Fescharek, 2015, p. 132; Ministère des Armées, 2011).

## **German and French strategies in engaging with the EU and NATO training missions**

This section elaborates on Germany's and France's strategies about the EU and NATO training missions in Afghanistan. As the EU mission was launched before its NATO counterpart, each subsection first analyses the two member states' initial engagement with EUPOL, then proceeding with their strategies vis-à-vis the two missions after the launch of NTM-A.

### **Germany**

#### ***Initial engagement with EUPOL***

After several years of bilateral engagement, Berlin sought to externalize the "difficult task" of police reform to the EU (interview with former senior EUPOL 1) with a view to "beef up" its own efforts and generate a "momentum of change" (interview with German official 2). During its Presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2007, Germany acted as a promoter of the EU mission with a view to complement "the successful work of Germany in the reform of the Ministry of Interior and accelerates the training of the Afghan National Police" (Die Bundesregierung, 2007, pp. 11–12). In her November 2007 visit to Kabul, Chancellor Angela Merkel underlined that "if there is one area in which Germany should do more, it is in building up the police force" (Die Bundeskanzlerin, 2007).

In addition to its potential to serve as a leverage for Germany's bilateral police reform efforts, Germany also engaged with the EU mission within the parameters of a civilian- and human rights-centred approach to policing. In the words of Frank Walter-Steinmeier, Germany's foreign minister of the time, Germany sought to provide the people of Afghanistan "a life of freedom and dignity [which] is becoming more and more intense in civilian terms, and perhaps even weaker in military terms" (Deutscher Bundestag, 2007, p. 11522). This approach resonates with Germany's broader foreign policy

orientation which endorsed a “culture of reticence”, referring to an avoidance from use of force and tendency towards moderation and restraint in multilateral crisis management operations (Malici, 2006, p. 38).

In parallel, Germany framed the EU mission as a way “to help build a police force that has the confidence of the people, follows constitutional principles, guarantees human rights and increasingly meets security requirements in Afghanistan” (Die Bundesregierung, 2007, p. 25). Emphasizing the need to commit more in the civilian aspects of police reform, Walter-Steinmeier later stated that Germany should expand its “civilian engagement in addition to the military commitment” in Afghanistan (Bundestag, 2008, p. 20341). In line with this argument, the EU mission was tasked with “[assisting] and supporting the development of a police service which citizens trust, which works with integrity within the framework of the rule of law and which respects human rights” (Council, 2008, p. 13). Therefore, Germany thought that, with Berlin’s leadership, the EU mission would be in line with its domestic culture of policing based on minimizing the use of force (interview with German official 1).

However, the EU mission had a rather rocky start. A particular challenge for Germany as the main promoter of EUPOL was the expansion of the mission’s tasks and geographical scope. Within the first year of the mission, there was a pressing need to extend its efforts to districts outside Kabul, as most of the local population lived in small rural villages across Afghanistan or in a provincial capital (US Embassy Berlin, 2008b). In particular, the US urged Germany “to accelerate the deployment of EU trainers to Afghanistan, increase the number of trainers, and broaden the geographic range of activities” (US Embassy Berlin, 2008a). At the same time, German troops and trainers in Afghanistan were facing attacks from an increasing insurgency and sought more force protection to respond to the growing number of attacks (Merz, 2007, p. 11). In turn, German police officers under the EU mission were deployed to relatively safe districts of Afghanistan in order to avert further security risks. This choice also “allowed German police officers to enact their identity as civilian police”, a “normative understanding” shared by German diplomats at the Kabul Embassy (Friesendorf, 2013, p. 340).

Furthermore, there were also inter-ministerial divergences in Berlin about Germany’s policing assistance to Afghanistan. As the key governmental agencies in terms of determining Germany’s contribution to international police missions, the Federal Ministry of Interior (*Bundesministerium des Innern*, BMI) and the Federal Foreign Office (*Auswärtiges Amt*, AA) were divided on whether Germany should deliver police training via its bilateral efforts or under a collective European framework. Seeking to demonstrate that “it can do things outside of Germany’s borders”, BMI was reluctant about bringing Germany’s police training efforts under an EU mission, since it believed that such an option could compromise its control over the German police deployment in Afghanistan (interview with senior EUPOL official 1). In contrast, supported by the Chancellery, the AA “promoted Europeanisation behind the scenes, using EU structures to overcome [AA’s] resistance” (Pohl, 2014, p. 103). Similarly, the Federal Ministry of Defence (*Bundesministerium der Verteidigung*, BMVg) argued that “the civilian police expertise available to EUPOL [...] seems appropriate and in line with the German government’s vision of EUPOL’s role in police building in Afghanistan” (Die Bundesregierung, 2010a, p. 23).

These divergences also reflected the dynamics of Germany’s coalition politics, where the federal foreign office is often held by the junior coalition partner (Hofmann, 2019;



Oppermann & Brummer, 2020). Held by the leading coalition partner Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) during the second Merkel cabinet (2009–2013), BMI and BMVg were “always eager to cooperate with each other” on Afghanistan (interview with German official 1). On the other hand, AA was held by Free Democratic Party (FDP). While sharing common views with CDU/CSU on a number of foreign policy issues, FDP more explicitly advocated for the continuation of Germany’s civil reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan through the EU (AG *Frieden-forschung*, 2009; FDP, 2013).

However, “there was no fundamental divergence” within the Federal Government around the civilian nature of Germany’s training provision (interview with German official 4). More importantly, “some ministers were interested more than others in Afghanistan” and that policing assistance to the country was “a purely domestic problem, nothing to do with Afghanistan” (interview with German official 1).

### *The launch of NTM-A*

With the launch of NTM-A in 2009, differences between civilian and military methods of police training became a more prominent issue in Germany’s police reform efforts in Afghanistan. Because the German constitutional law separates police and military roles, engaging with a new multilateral military operation under the NATO framework would require an additional Bundestag mandate. At the same time, Berlin had to ensure that the funding for military projects was not used for civilian initiatives such as police training, as securing a parliamentary consent for civilian projects was easier than securing approval for military projects (interview with German official 3). Although Bundestag’s influence over Germany’s contributions to multilateral civilian mission is not as significant as it is in multinational military operations, it still had an important role “especially when it came to broader budget issues and the number of personnel that is sent” (interview with German official 4).

Thus, the Federal Government did not favour creating new structures such as a training mission under a NATO framework especially before the approaching federal elections in September 2009 (US Embassy Berlin, 2009). Given Berlin’s such reluctance, US officials reassured their German counterparts that rather than creating new police training structures, the US was proposing to “dual hat” the command of existing US-led CSTC-A, to which Germany was already contributing resources (US Embassy Berlin, 2009). Consequently, Germany “welcomed” the NATO mission “as [a] step toward the goal of bringing all military operations under one command (ISAF) and thereby improving unity of effort” (US Embassy Berlin, 2009).

Apart from Germany’s concerns about parliamentary approval, the new NATO mission also fed off the different policing approaches between Germany and the US, as well as between the EU and NATO missions. Although exhibiting differences, US and NATO approaches mainly sought to prepare the Afghan police for counterinsurgency by increasing the number of the police officers, which was justified by an increase in police casualties at the time (Friesendorf, 2013, p. 338). Similar to the US approach that “focused on rapid training rather than fostering long-term institutional change”, the NATO mission had a rather short-term perspective based on fast and visible recruitment of Afghan police officers (Gross, 2009, p. 27). In contrast to this “US-style training that was relied on basic training for the use of force only”, Germany’s approach adopted more



civilian- and human rights-focused methods, as stated earlier (interview with German official 4).

At the same time, Germany's targets such as a minimum of three-year training became untenable given the staff constraints encountered by the EU mission (interview with senior EUPOL official 2). Key tasks associated with this mission such as mentoring and advising were "long term measures [and] not easy to control and to evaluate", whereas the NATO mission could determine and achieve more quantifiable targets (Feilke, 2010, p. 10). The NATO mission also provided "by far the largest number of internationally deployed trainers for the training, equipment and payment of Afghan security forces" (Die Bundesregierung, 2010b, p. 19) as it had a "special significance in terms of human and financial resources" (Die Bundesregierung, 2010b, p. 25). On the other hand, the training provided by the EU mission was limited to Afghan police officers mainly based in Kabul, whereas the NATO Mission provided "field police training in Afghanistan with Police Operational Mentor Liaison Teams", responsible for the start-up of a functioning police force (Olsthoorn et al., 2014, p. 254).

Although Germany also provided combat training to Afghan police officers, this was seen as a necessity to "ensure that Afghan police officers can survive at the checkpoints when the insurgents were coming" rather than an underlying approach to police training (interview with German official 2). In the words of a German official, Berlin was against "confusing the butcher and baker" when it comes to international policing assistance in Afghanistan, implying that the involvement of military should not detriment the prominence of the civilian approach (interview with German official 2).

Moreover, Germany argued that its cooperation with NTM-A should be separated from its involvement in the aforementioned US-led initiatives, as a move in the opposite direction "would cross a red line for German civilian police officers, serving as trainers/mentors, to be put under military command" (US Embassy Berlin, 2009). The view that the police should not be under military command reflected Germany's said domestic culture of policing and historical experience (interview with German official 1). The Federal Government was also pressed to follow civilian rather than military approaches of police training by parliamentary opposition. For example, a group of Bundestag members from *Die Linke* (The Left) fraction pointed out that "it is not clear to what extent the German police officers are able to detach themselves from the predominantly militarily motivated deliberations of the leading NATO Training Mission Afghanistan" (Die Bundesregierung, 2011, pp. 1–2).

Under these circumstances, Germany decided to increase its contribution to police reform in Afghanistan through the EU mission (Westerwelle, 2010). At the same time, it maintained its bilateral efforts to minimize the shortcomings of the EU mission (interview with German official 1). While tolerating the NATO mission as part of the military engagement in Afghanistan as a pragmatic means to complement the EU's civilian policing assistance, Germany's civilian police trainers did not formally operate under the NATO command. Instead, they engaged with NATO mission's staff at a personal level and "discussed how to divide the military aspects from the police aspects of training what can military do for the civilian police, such as shooting training" (interview with German official 2). Despite working "very closely" with the NATO mission, Germany's

primary preference to support the civilian-led EU mission was US-led initiatives such as CSTC-A and FDD that provided more “robust civil police training” compared to the NATO mission (interview with German official 2).

## France

### *Initial engagement with EUPOL*

A logic based on France’s long-term orientations about the role of the EU and NATO as international security providers would expect France to be an active supporter of EU instruments than those of NATO in the area of crisis management (e.g. Irondelle & Schmitt, 2013). Indeed, the EU has been a central platform for France to contribute to “rebuilding an effective and democratic military, police and judiciary [and] restoring or consolidating stability and prompting a return to political and economic normality” in fragile states (France Cooperation, 2007, p. 3). According to the French Government, “making an active contribution to the principles developed in this field in the different fora in which France participates – especially the European Union – is crucial” (ibid).

Yet, in contrast to Germany, France did not commit significant resources to the EU mission, while being an active contributor to its NATO counterpart. France’s contributions to EUPOL were considerably lower than those of Germany: Whilst Germany deployed on average 26 personnel during the years the mission had been operable (2007-2016), this figure was 5.1 for France.<sup>1</sup> Although the EU mission focused on quality rather than quantity in policing and “strategic level” advice to the high-ranking staff rather than field-level training, key managerial positions of the EU mission, such as the (deputy) mission heads, were provided initially by Germany and subsequently by other member states, rather than France.

Throughout this rather low profile presence in the EU mission, France was suspicious about the German-led approach of the EU mission, which Paris perceived to be overly prudent and civilian-focused (expert interview). From the inception of EUPOL, France argued that the security environment in Afghanistan required the local police to be able to undertake counterinsurgency tasks (interview with French official). In this sense, high-ranking French diplomats viewed the EU mission essentially as a “German-but not our-baby” and that it was “a logistical failure [and] Europe [was] simply not prepared yet for such a theatre” (Fescharek, 2015, p. 133). Moreover, while supporting the development of civilian instruments of crisis management in the EU, Afghanistan was not France’s preference to use such instruments. Instead, Paris considered West Africa as a primary area for using civilian EU instruments and committed to “present proposals directed towards that region” (Assemblée Nationale, 2008c).

Thus, France’s engagement with EUPOL before the launch of the NATO mission can be seen as a balancing to respond to a dilemma: On the one hand, an EU civilian policing mission initially appeared to be suitable for France’s support to the further development of the EU’s civilian capabilities. On the other hand, France thought that the EU’s training approach was not in line with the necessities of security conditions on the ground, and that the EU’s civilian capabilities should be used elsewhere, rather than in the training of the Afghan police forces.

### *The launch of NTM-A*

To examine France's strategies about NATO's involvement in the training of the Afghan police, two topics are of significance: Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and European Gendarmerie Forces (EGF).

*France's position on Provincial Reconstruction Teams.* Introduced in 2002, PRTs were hybrid structures formed of civilian–military units and based on the idea of extending the legitimacy and authority of the Afghan government beyond Kabul and to facilitate reconstruction (Stapleton, 2010, p. 11). Rather than direct protection to Afghan civilians or development actors in Afghanistan, PRTs were initially geared towards the protection of the civilian and military reservists who provided the reconstruction and development expertise in the country (Stapleton, 2010, p. 11). The tasks of PRTs also included infrastructure development and delivery of basic services needed to boost Afghanistan's economy (Morelli & Belkin, 2010, p. 499).

Whilst some member states including Germany accepted PRTs as key instruments of their contributions to NATO in Afghanistan, France did not follow the PRT model in its contributions to the Afghan reconstruction (Morelli & Belkin, 2010, p. 21). Instead, Paris chooses to focus on its own rotating military task forces, which took over responsibility for Kapisa province, making France among the top troop contributors to NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) (Foust, 2012, p. 94). Against this background, although a common practice was based on the idea that European countries would run their own PRTs while US troops would provide the main battlefield force, France's refusal of PRTs brought about a unique partnering situation by leaving civilian actions to an American PRT and conducting combat operations to French military forces (Foust, 2012, p. 88; Schmitt, 2017, p. 582).

This French model reflected France's stance within the broader debate on NATO's adoption of a comprehensive approach to crisis management to complement the Alliance's military-led crisis management toolbox with civilian instruments. The issue of embedding a "comprehensive approach" comprised of civilian and military instruments into NATO's crisis management operations pitted those allies that wanted to ensure direct NATO access to civilian means against those more suspicious of a transformation of NATO towards a more civilian–military actor. In this debate, France insisted that NATO "should neither develop civilian capabilities of its own nor attempt to coordinate other international organisations or actors" and that the military should also undertake reconstruction and training tasks (Simón, 2013, p. 219). Furthermore, although statements from key French decision-makers suggested that the EU "is the only body with the full range of resources, including police forces" and "the notion of complementarity [between the two organisations] has become crucial" (Assemblée Nationale, 2008a), French decision-makers also acknowledged that "the solution to the Afghan file can only be military" (Assemblée Nationale, 2008b).

As a position France consistently pursued in the North Atlantic Council at the time, this approach was an obstacle for NATO's aspirations to incorporate civilian instruments into its crisis management portfolio (interview with NATO official 1). Paris preferred that NATO's global role would remain mainly as a collective defence and military alliance, and civilian areas of crisis management would be a remit of the EU (interview with NATO official 1). In contrast to this view, PRTs watered down the purpose of

what is supposed to be a defensive European Alliance by making NATO more as “an offensive statebuilding Alliance” (expert interview). Therefore, France was sceptical about the civilian components of PRTs which “would bolster NATO’s strategic role in civil-military affairs and thus turn the EU into NATO’s handmaiden” (Rynning, 2012, p. 100) and rejected the involvement of the NATO mission in the mentoring of the ANP at a civilian and ministerial level (Mattelaer, 2013, p. 123). In line with France’s strong objections against embedding civilian instruments into NATO’s crisis management toolbox, NATO’s planning for a comprehensive approach in Afghanistan became closer to the military spectrum of crisis management (interview with NATO official 1).

Against this background, and in contrast to Germany, France became a key contributor to the NATO mission. Importantly, French trainers and mentors under NTM-A were mainly gendarmerie forces with a paramilitary nature as France argued that the nature of training required by the ANP aligned with the model of France’s *Gendarmerie Nationale* (interview with French official). French gendarmerie is based upon a model dating back to the Napoleon era as a hybrid structure with a police and military status (interview with French official). In its modern form, its *Provost* branch was used for overseas deployments of *Gendarmerie Nationale* (interview with French official).

In line with this model, Alain Juppé, France’s foreign minister between 2011 and 2012, stated that ANP “plays more of a gendarmerie role than police proper [and] this is a profession different from that of weapons [...] if the army aims to destroy an adversary, the gendarmerie aims to protect the population” (Assemblée Nationale, 2012). Indeed, “the skills required for ANP personnel on the ground were more paramilitary in nature, as their main job concerned the protection of the local population against insurgents’ (Mattelaer, 2013, p. 125). EU officials also acknowledged that French gendarmerie forces’ police background fit with the training of the Afghan police in a counterinsurgency context (interview with senior EUPOL official 2). France was also among NATO Allies who argued that the EU mission was confined to Kabul without an organized training scheme comparable to that of NATO (interview with NATO official 1). Therefore, while not following the PRT model, in June 2009, France voted in favour of NATO’s involvement in the training of ANP. Importantly, it was clear from the outset that NATO’s such role would be through Police Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (POMLTs), which consisted mostly of military rather than civilian personnel (Mattelaer, 2013).

*The option of using EGF.* Yet, deploying using its gendarmerie deployment in Afghanistan under the NATO command was not the first option for France, which initially preferred to use the European Gendarmerie Force (EGF) for this task. The idea of creating a European Gendarmerie Force (EGF) was first proposed by the then French Minister of Defence Michelle Alliot-Marie during an EU defence ministers meeting in Rome on 3 and 4 October 2003 (Lalinde, 2005, p. 1). Rather than an EU-wide proposal, the framework was to include France and four other European states with paramilitary police forces, namely, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

Initially, the deployment of EGF into Afghanistan encountered a Franco-Italian divergence on the relationship between EGF and NATO. Although Italy proposed that a Multinational Specialised Unit (MSU) concept (developed and implemented within NATO

under the Italian *Carabinieri* leadership) adopted within the EGF, France rejected this proposal due to its preference for EGF as a European framework (Arcudi & Smith, 2013, p. 5). Bernard Kouchner, France's foreign minister at the time, proposed at an informal EU-level meeting in March 2009 that EGF presence in Afghanistan should be an "independent European contribution" and NATO support to it should be kept on an ad hoc basis (US Embassy Berlin, 2009). Accordingly, France would accept the deployment of EGF under NATO's command only as a "last resort" after attempting to pursue two options: To make EGF work through the EU and to secure force protection from ISAF via an ad hoc arrangement (US Embassy Berlin, 2009). Put differently, "from the beginning France proposed a 'European' structure rather than a bilateral national initiative to facilitate the participation of other European partners" (US Embassy Paris, 2009).

Nonetheless, the option of using EGF under an EU framework faced problems within the Union due to the questions it raised about the "costs should lie where they fall" principle (interview with EUPOL official 2). Furthermore, a major counterargument to France's position was voiced by Germany, who was very much aware of the obstacles behind the EU and NATO training missions in Afghanistan. According to Berlin, NATO rather than the EU would be the ideal framework for the proposed EGF deployment in Afghanistan, as doing so would meet the necessary logistical requirements and establish force protection from NATO (US Embassy Berlin, 2009).

In addition to divergences within the EGF and EU, France's prioritization of military rather than civilian tasks of police training also made it more untenable to deploy its *gendarmerie* under the civilian-led EU model. Among the elements of ANP, French *gendarmerie* was heavily involved in the training of the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) which was more of an elite, paramilitary police component for counter-insurgency operations and riot controlling that replaced local ANP units when the latter were under training. A French official involved in the training of Afghan police noted that his NATO and the US counterparts highly regarded France's contribution as a means to provide the "robust training and advise" for the Afghan police and as a force that is easily deployable in conflict situations (interview with French official).

Moreover, Paris argued that providing training to the Afghan army would be more in line with the security conditions on the ground. According to Hervé Morin, France's Minister of Defence at the time,

it is more difficult to train police than military. Indeed, the former do not only carry out security operations: they must also know the judicial procedure, be able to conduct interrogations, have good contact with the people and be respected by it. (Assemblée Nationale, 2010)

In addition, a key French objective was to help recruit more trained personnel to the Afghan National Army (ANA) and ANP "to reach a workforce of 400,000 men able to guarantee the stability of the country" (ibid). France argued that its *gendarmerie* and military in Afghanistan should undertake these tasks through reconstruction and development projects (ibid).

Consequently, with France's approval, EGF started training the ANP under NTM-A's command in December 2009. Despite its initial preference to keep EGF contribution as an independent European framework and outside of the NATO's command structure in

Afghanistan, France's support to this "last resort" option reflected its adaptation to the changing context of police training in Afghanistan. This policy recalibration helped France pursue two elements of its broad orientations about the roles of the EU and NATO as international security providers: First, it helped keep NATO as distanced as possible from the civilian side of police training. Although a number of French decision-makers acknowledged that the Afghan reconstruction would be a "civil–military enterprise", they also differentiated the civilian and military aspects of police training in Afghanistan, which was evident in preferences about PRTs and EGF. Accordingly, deployment of the French gendarmerie would be suitable to provide a fast and visible training while maintaining NATO's military focus in Afghanistan. After all, even throughout the French Gendarmerie's mentoring to the Ministry of Interior, which was a civilian branch of the Afghan government, France maintained the military status of its policing assistance to Afghanistan (interview with French official). Through such policy adaptation, France managed to prevent NATO mission's involvement in the civilian domains of police training in Afghanistan.

Second, France's decision to embed the EGF deployment to the NATO mission was affected by a concern "to show the real value of the EGF" as well as President Sarkozy's willingness "to show US that France is integrated to the NATO military command" (interview with French official). Sarkozy attempted to use France's engagement with NATO in Afghanistan to consolidate France's return to the Alliance's military structures. It is, therefore, no coincidence that France's return to NATO's integrated military command was officially welcomed in the 2009 Strasbourg-Kehl summit, where the launch of NTM-A was also announced (NATO, 2009).

## Conclusion

The preceding discussion confirms the claim that decisions about international policing assistance are significantly affected by the domestic politics and broader foreign policy orientations of the assisting states, rather than the local conditions and needs about the delivery of international policing. As the evidence suggests, even the technical and operational decisions on the ground can be shaped by dynamics cutting across the assisting state's preferences about their own policing models, domestic politics and foreign policy orientations. As seen in the case of Germany, a willingness to follow a domestic culture of policing and a highly decentralized policymaking process where interest aggregation is mostly left to professional ministries can make it difficult to reconsider entrenched strategic concepts such as the use of militarized methods of police training. Indeed, when we zoom in on Germany's policing assistance strategies in Afghanistan, we see that the dominance of a heavily civilian policing logic as well as the politics of decision-making in Berlin presented challenges for Germany in terms of adjusting to on-the-ground realities in Afghanistan. As a consequence, Germany led the EU mission and maintained its bilateral efforts, which were of a civilian nature, while seeing the military-led NATO Mission mainly as a pragmatic instrument enabling the Afghan police to resist against insurgency as well as putting together the military training operations under ISAF command.

In contrast, France's policies more explicitly demonstrated an acknowledgement of the "dual nature" (i.e. both civilian and military) of police training in Afghanistan.



The French experience of paramilitary training made it possible for France to adapt to operational realities such as the deployment of French gendarmerie under the NATO mission. Nonetheless, this was not a major shift in France's traditional orientation about the roles of the EU and NATO as international security providers. In fact, despite France's return to NATO's military command, a motivation for the French decision to deploy its paramilitary trainers under NTM-A's command was to keep NATO as a military alliance. At the same, by actively contributing to the NATO Mission, France demonstrated its commitment to NATO at a time when it returned to the military structures of the Alliance after a decades-long absence. Finally, relations with the US have also played a certain role, as the expertise brought by the French gendarmerie was highly regarded by the US officials on the ground.

This discussion suggests that policymakers of the assisting states should acknowledge that the politics of decision-making in their national capitals can both be an enabler and disabler of operational planning of police training on the ground. International policing assistance of countries with high stakes in the issue (as seen in the example of Germany) can be hampered by their sectorized decision-making processes, whereas the strategies of assisting countries with less stakes but more centralized policymaking (as seen in the example of France) can be more adaptable to operational realities. Therefore, although understanding the local level is key in making sense of the specific training requirements and contexts, policymakers should plan the delivery of policing assistance by also considering the dynamics in their own constituencies. In the words of a practitioner, assisting states conduct their policies with a "5,000 kilometre screwdriver" that reaches from their national and institutional capitals to aid-receiving states.

## List of interviews

Interview with German official 1: 20.02.2020

Interview with German official 2: 11.06.2020

Interview with German official 3: 31.07.2020

Interview with German official 4: 21.08.2020

Interview with French official: 27.02.2020

Interview with EUPOL official 1: 11.02.2020

Interview with EUPOL official 2: 08.07.2020

Interview with NATO official 1: 16.02.2021

Expert interview: 29.05.2020

## Note

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