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Comparing Caveats: Understanding the Sources of National Restrictions upon NATO's Mission in Afghanistan[1]

Stephen M. Saideman

McGill University

and

David P. Auerswald

National Defense University

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is the most robust and deeply institutionalized alliance in the modern world, yet it has faced significant problems in running the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. Specifically, the coalition effort has been plagued by caveats: restrictions on what coalition militaries can and cannot do. Caveats have diminished the alliance's overall effectiveness and created resentment within the coalition. In this article, we explain why ISAF countries have employed a variety of caveats in Afghanistan, focusing on the period from 2003 to 2009. Caveats vary predictably according to the political institutions in each contributor to ISAF. Troops from coalition governments are likely to have caveats. Troops from presidential or majoritarian parliamentary governments tend, on average, to have fewer caveats, but specific caveats depend on the background of key decision makers in those countries. To demonstrate these points, we first review key limitations facing military contingents in Afghanistan. We then compare the experiences of Canada, France, and Germany and find that our institutional model does a better job of explaining the observed behavior than do competing explanations focusing on public opinion, threat, or strategic culture. We conclude with implications for both research and North Atlantic Treaty Organization's future.

There are very few things over which Donald Rumsfeld and Canadians concur, but the problem of caveats in Afghanistan is one of them.[2] There are somewhere between 50 and 80 known restrictions that constrain North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) commanders in Afghanistan.[3] The number of informal and unstated caveats is not known. Policymakers in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere have spent much time and effort cajoling their allies to lift restrictions that limit the coalition's contingents in Afghanistan. They argue that the number of NATO troops on the ground is quite small relative to the challenges they face; therefore, any military caveat significantly hampers operational flexibility. ''Gen. John Craddock … says these caveats 'increase the risk to every service member deployed in Afghanistan and bring increased risk to mission success.' They also are 'a detriment to effective command and control, unity of effort and … command.'''[4] Indeed, the combination of troop limitations and caveats has given insurgents breathing room and forced the United States to nearly double the number of troops deployed to Afghanistan in 2009 (Lafraie 2009).

[1] *Authors' notes*: The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council has funded much of this project as has the Canada Research Chair program, including the very helpful research assistance of Bronwen De Sena, Sarah-Myriam Martin-Brûlé, Jenyfer Maisonneuve, Mark Mattner, Ora Szekely, and Lauren Van Den Berg. Portions of this research were funded by the US Department of Defense. We owe a great many debts to people in Canada, the United States, France, and Germany for helping to set up and participate in interviews. We are very grateful for feedback we received when we presented earlier versions of this paper at Queen's University, London's Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, Canada's Department of National Defence's Security and Defence Forum, the University of Ottawa, Berlin's Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, the Canadian Political Science Association meeting in Vancouver, the International Studies Association meeting in San Francisco and New Orleans, and the American Political Science Association meetings in Chicago and Toronto. Richard Boucher, Rob Brown, Sarah Kreps, Mark Mattner, Victoria Nuland, Otto Trønnes, Michael Tierney, and William Wood, provided useful comments along the way. Errors are those of the authors. *The views expressed here are those of the authors and not the National War College, the National Defense University, the US Department of Defense, any other agency of the US government, nor the Canadian Department of National Defence.*

[2] For example, see ''Canada Handling More Than Its Share in Afghanistan: O'Conner.'' *CBC News*, September 7, 2006. Available at http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2006/09/07/nato-reinforcements.html. (Accessed January 26, 2007).

[3] These figures come from General James Jones, when he was Supreme Allied Commander, Europe at an event hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, DC on October 4, 2006; and from a World Security Network interview with General Karl-Heinz Lather, Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, in Mons, Belgium, on June 30, 2008.

[4] Arnaud de Borchave. (2009) Commentary: NATO Caveats. UPI.Com, July 10. Available at http://www.upi.com/Emerging_Threats/2009/07/10/Commentary-NATO-caveats/UPI-47311247244125/. (Accessed July 15, 2009).

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Restrictions on the battlefield have led to political divisions within NATO over the fact that some troop-contributing nations are bearing a greater burden and paying a higher cost than are others. This has led to the derogatory term ''rations-consumers,'' being applied to national contingents that occupy space and use resources but, because of caveats, are not making a big difference on the ground.[5] Indeed, caveats have shifted the burden-sharing debate within NATO from budgets in the 1980s to body bags in the twenty-first century (Olson and Zeckhauser 1966; Palmer 1990; Murdoch and Sandler 1991; Hartley and Sandler 1999).

Despite the very high profile of caveats in the past few years (Jones 2009), and the fear that these restrictions might even put NATO as an institution at risk (Thies 2009), caveats, their sources, and efforts to mitigate them are poorly understood. This is surprising, as several NATO summits focused to a large extent on decreasing caveats. From an academic perspective, the question of discretion in military operations is central to the civil–military relations literature (Huntington 1957; Janowitz 1961; Avant 1994; Desch 1999; Feaver 1999; Zegart 1999). More broadly, understanding operational restrictions is important if we want to comprehend the limits and effects of international cooperation during conflicts (Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Hawkins 2006). Yet scholars have focused on other challenges raised by coalition warfare (Bensahel 2003, 2006; Weitsman 2004; Tago 2009). Perhaps as a result, the variation in national caveats both over time and across contingents presents something of a mystery.

We adopt a two-step approach to explaining caveats, focused first on each International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) member's political institutions and second on the individuals operating in those institutions. Our approach is inspired by writings on principal–agent relations and studies that examine how domestic variables affect conflict behavior. Principal–agency theory (Calvert, Mccubbins, and Weingast 1989; Kiewiet and Mccubbins 1991; Epstein and O'Halloran 1999) is important, in that it attempts to explain how much *discretion* is given to agents via contingent delegation contracts.[6] In the abstract, caveats are examples of contingent delegation. During conflicts, officials delegate authority over military missions to their deployed forces. Caveats restrict the scope of the military's delegated authority—i.e., discretion—by limiting what the military can do on behalf of the nation. The question is why some principals delegate significant authority to their military agents while others do not. To answer that question requires examining the preferences and motivations behind a principal's decision, considerations outside principal–agent models.

A first step toward uncovering a decision maker's preferences is to discover who has control over conflict decisions in any particular country, and for help here we turn to the literature on domestic institutions and conflict behavior (Bueno de Mesquita, Siverson, and Woller 1992; Bennett, Lepgold, and Unger 1994; Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995; Smith 1996; Auerswald 2000, 2004; Goemans 2000). When considering how the basic organization of the democracies in question affects conflict behavior, the most important distinction, as we will discuss in the next section, is between coalition parliamentary governments and either presidential or majoritarian parliamentary systems. In coalition governments, decisions on sending troops into danger are made by collective decision makers, requiring compromise. We expect that collective entities will impose more caveats than will individual decision makers, all else being equal, because the more actors that must approve force, the harder it is to get that approval without conditions attached. Conditions mean caveats. Presidential systems and parliamentary governments with single-party governments empower individuals—such as presidents or prime ministers—to decide how much authority is delegated down to the commander on the ground.

To understand when and why these latter governments impose caveats, then, requires consideration as to why individual decision makers decide whether or not to impose caveats. The scholarship on individual decision making contains a variety of (often conflicting) expectations on this front (Goldgeier 1994; Byman and Pollack 2001). We found that key individuals varied in their approach to these missions abroad based on their past experiences. So in presidential and majoritarian parliamentary systems, we look at individual lessons of personal history to explain caveats.

We start by addressing the scope of this article and how we conducted the underlying research. After defining caveats and asserting their relevance for multilateral military efforts in general and those in Afghanistan in particular, we explain how institutions and individuals interact to determine the constraints facing a country's military contingent. To illustrate the utility of this approach, we compare the caveats and other restrictions on Canadian, French and German contingents in Afghanistan from the outset through 2009.[7] We then briefly consider a series of potential competing explanations, to include balancing against threats, tailoring actions to public support, and the role of national culture, and suggest why they are not particularly helpful. We conclude by addressing the implications of this study for future research, the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, and other coalition efforts.

[5] Interview with Canadian senior officer.

[6] Principal-agent models also examine oversight and sanctioning, though we do not consider these here.

[7] We restrict the temporal scope of the article, as this article was written and reviewed in 2010.

Scope and Methods

We chose to examine Canada, France, and Germany for a number of reasons. First, they have been among the largest non-US force contributors since 2002 under both Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and the multilateral NATO ISAF. As a result, any caveats they impose will affect the overall performance of ISAF. Second, these three countries vary significantly in their institutions and, as a result, their civil–military decision-making processes. France has a semi-presidential system that empowers the president to a significant degree in foreign relations. Germany has coalition governments with a powerful parliament. Canada would be a model of the British-style majoritarian parliament except it has largely been led by a minority government through most of the relevant period. That said, Canada serves as an exception that proves the rule, as its politics has largely empowered individual leaders to make key decisions. Third, there is variation within and across countries in the lessons learned from past experiences by individual decision makers.

Fourth, and as an additional bonus, these three countries demonstrate considerable variation in our dependent variable of discretion/restriction. Canada and Germany appear in 2009 to be at opposite ends of the flexibility spectrum, with Germany facing notoriously tight restrictions on what their troops are allowed to do on the ground, while Canadians are viewed as quite flexible. This was not always the case, as Canada once had fairly tight restrictions.[8] France is an interesting intermediate case, as its various contributions have had different levels of discretion, with much more flexibility as of late. These variations provide us with some leverage to assess not only why the militaries of some countries have more or less flexibility, but also why countries sometimes alter the level of discretion over time.

Fifth and finally, practical research considerations contributed to our case selection. The information in this paper is based on approximately 85 interviews with senior civilian officials and military officers from ISAF-contributing nations. Civilians included a former prime minister, two former defense ministers, and a variety of lesser, but still senior, policy officials. Military officers included two overall ISAF commanders, two overall commanders of US OEF forces, dozens of general and flag officers, and a few influential colonel equivalents. In all, we interviewed over 30 Canadian, 15 German, 10 French, a dozen US, and 11 British officials, as well as the heads of eight ISAF delegations serving at US Central Command.[9]

Before proceeding, it is worth mentioning what this paper is not. We do not seek to explain here why countries chose to get involved in this conflict (Stein and Lang 2007). We do not address the restrictions facing special operations units working in Afghanistan as there is little unclassified information available regarding those units. This is a significant omission as some leaders may rely more heavily on special operations precisely to avoid the restrictions inherent in their political systems, but we simply lack the necessary information to evaluate special operations units here. Due to the need for brevity, our focus here is on the discretion delegated to the officers on the ground, not on whether the officers exceeded their discretion or how deployed units were monitored—that is, oversight. We address those issues in a larger project of which this is but one part. Finally, focusing solely on the experience of contingents in Afghanistan may limit its applicability to other cases of multilateral intervention. Because many of the officers we interviewed also served in other multilateral missions (especially NATO efforts in the Balkans) and reported similar experiences in those efforts, we are confident that the Afghan experience is not unique.[10] Moreover, the ISAF mission provides us with a great deal of variation over time, across individual countries and among the contingents, allowing us to tease out the impact of the organization, the mission, and the countries themselves.

Caveats

Countries participating in multilateral military operations always have been able to refrain from individual missions. For NATO, this holds true even when a member state is attacked directly. According to Article V of the Washington Treaty, an attack on one is an attack on all, but each member state is free to decide whether and to what extent it will respond militarily.[11] In Afghanistan, as in previous NATO operations, each national contingent designates an officer to hold that nation's so-called ''red card,'' allowing that officer to inform the multilateral chain of command that his/her country cannot or will not participate in an operation. These officers base their decisions on instructions from home about the kinds of missions that are considered acceptable by their government. Such instructions are commonly known as caveats. In this paper, we use caveat and restriction interchangeably although the former term has become politically loaded.[12]

[8] At the time of the writing of the final and post-review draft of this piece (May 2011), Canada is planning to redeploy its forces in Afghanistan out of harm's way, and this will require significant restrictions to be imposed upon the troops and commanders.

[9] Some interview subjects agreed to be cited by name. The majority, however, shared their views on the condition that we protect their anonymity. Interview subjects were asked to keep their comments at the unclassified level. Whenever possible, we verified claims with multiple sources before including them in this paper.

[10] Indeed, caveats also limited what some allies could do in Iraq, revealing that not all members of a coalition of the willing were all that willing.

[11] Article V obligates members to ''assist the party or parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually, and in concert with the other parties, *such action as it deems necessary*, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area'' (emphasis added).

[12] Other factors may limit the discretion and decisions of commanders, including limited capabilities and national agendas. We focus on caveats here for simplicity and brevity.

Often instructions are clear cut: Do not operate in a specific locale. Do not fire unless fired upon. Do not engage in particular types of operations. At other times, a contingent's participation may be at the discretion of the country's senior officer on the ground (usually the holder of the red card). And quite frequently, the officer might have to call home for permission, which can take time and create controversy both in theater and at home.

Caveats can be official and written or unofficial and unwritten. It is a standard procedure for countries to give notice of their official restrictions to the multilateral organization under which they are operating and to other contingents on the scene. Contributing countries are often less open about their unofficial restrictions. Unofficial caveats may only be discovered over time as dictated by circumstances. For example, Kosovo's declaration of independence in early 2008, and subsequent violence in Mitrovica, may have revealed previously unstated caveats among some members of the NATO Kosovo Force.[13] Finally, there exist what some officers called ''soft caveats,'' which are self-imposed restrictions by deployed military units in anticipation of or in response to political debates back home. Deployed units refrain from certain operations or activities to avoid what they believe will be a political backlash in their own countries. More than one senior commander called unstated caveats ''insidious,'' which does not bode well for future operations in Afghanistan.[14]

NATO anticipated national caveats during early Afghanistan operations whenever possible, leading to a plan that ''was written broadly enough to allow nations to opt in or out of rules of engagement or missions in which the nations did not want or could not legally allow their troops to participate (Beckman 2005).'' Still, this has been quite a sore point in alliance relations in Afghanistan and makes it difficult for ISAF to behave consistently across regions and contingents. Given the limited NATO footprint in Afghanistan, restrictions on any ISAF contingents significantly constrain what can be done by the alliance as a whole. Working around these caveats is ''extraordinarily frustrating.''[15]

Sources of Caveats

To explain why some military commanders in theater have a relatively wide or narrow band of discretion, we explore two dimensions—the institutions that determine who has a say over the deployment of military forces abroad, and the preferences of the individuals empowered by these institutions. We first consider domestic political institutions.

Presidents, Prime Ministers, and Coalitions

Democracies vary in how power is distributed across government: to a single individual elected by the people; to a single person elected by a legislative body; or to a group of individuals beholden to different parties (Shugart and Carey 1992). We expect foreign policy behavior will vary as power distribution across government varies. Two types of ultimate decision units (Hermann and Hermann 1989) are important for our purposes: individual and collective decision makers. The former is where one individual is empowered to make decisions that direct those below in the chain of command. The latter is where a group must come to a decision among themselves before deciding how to direct their subordinates. The institutions of a political system determine whether specific ISAF nations are directed by an individual or collective decision maker.

Presidential and majoritarian parliamentary institutional systems empower individual decision makers. Presidential systems empower individuals with fixed terms to make decisions on when to use force and *how* to deploy force, even if decisions to send troops abroad are sometimes subject to legislative consent. The important point is that presidents are usually empowered to make the key decisions about what the troops can and cannot do, or choose to delegate that decision to somebody lower in the chain of command. Majoritarian parliamentary systems can also empower individuals. Often, parliaments with British-style electoral laws, such as first-past-the-post electoral systems, result in a single party having a majority of legislative seats, empowering the prime minister to make the key decisions or to delegate decision making to subordinates (Kaarbo and Hermann 1998). Indeed, prime ministers in such situations may have more foreign policy power than presidents since the opposition has few avenues to block policy (Auerswald 1999, 2000, 2004).

Coalition or minority parliamentary governments generate collective decision making. Coalition government requires internal bargaining (Hagan, Everts, Fukui, and Stempel 2001), and bargaining usually involves compromise. In coalition governments, the need to bargain among members of different parties can greatly complicate foreign policymaking, as Kaarbo and her collaborators have demonstrated (Beasley, Kaarbo, Hermann, and Hermann 2001; Kaarbo and Lantis 2003; Kaarbo 2008; Kaarbo and Beasley 2008). In the pulling and hauling among parties, it is likely that there will be differences of opinion about the merits of any military mission, the depth of the commitment to be made, and levels of risk acceptance or aversion. The less enthusiastic members of a coalition can demand conditions for acquiescing to the deployment of forces (Tsebelis 2002). The more committed members will have to relent to some degree. Otherwise,

[13] This event was referenced in conversations with several NATO officers.

[14] We often do not list specific caveats, as many countries regard their rules of engagement as classified information. We can and do develop relative assessments based on accounts in the media as well as upon our conversations with politicians and experts. We have also been able to obtain some documents that specify caveats.

[15] Interview with Canadian LTG Andrew Leslie, who had served as Deputy Commander of ISAF in 2003–2004.

their country will not deploy forces or the government may collapse, as the Dutch experience of 2009–2010 illustrates. For our approach, compromises mean conditions placed on the deployment of forces, and conditions mean caveats.

This argument is consistent with Lijphart (1999), who argues that consensual democracies make decisions based on inclusiveness and compromise, whereas decisions in majoritarian democracies are much less inclusive. Coalition parliaments are more consensual than presidential or majoritarian parliamentary governments. Our expectation is that the former will impose caveats. Further, once bargains are struck over caveats, they become hard to change since one is likely to need the consent of more than one actor to change policy (Tsebelis 2002). Getting such consent is particularly difficult when the collective decision maker is heterogeneous in some fashion, whether ideologically, culturally, or economically (Lijphart 1999). So caveats, once imposed by coalition governments, are likely to stick.

Translating that for our purposes, we expect countries with coalition governments to engage in collective decision making and impose tighter caveats. The more diverse is the governing coalition, the greater should be the restrictions imposed on the military. Conversely, presidential or majority party-run parliamentary systems empower individual decision makers with less incentive to compromise, all else being equal. These leaders have the freedom to impose whatever caveats they so choose, or none at all, depending on their individual preferences.

Table 1 suggests that this deductive, institutional logic holds true for ISAF operations in Afghanistan. The top half lists the countries that have deployed at least 500 soldiers to Afghanistan and have coalition parliamentary governments during at least part of the ISAF operational period. All but one of them (Denmark) had significant caveats on their in-theater military during their operations in Afghanistan.[16] The eight countries in the bottom group either had presidential or single-party, majority parliamentary governments. Of those eight countries, three had relatively loose caveats, two had restrictive caveats, one was a blend (Australia),[17] and the caveats of two changed over time. In short, government institutions seem to bias coalition governments toward restrictive caveats, as we would expect. Additional information is needed, however, to explain the remaining eight states' behavior.

Individual Preferences

We expect individual decision makers to have a significant effect on caveats in presidential and single-party parliamentary governments. But to understand those effects requires a fuller understanding of what motivates key individuals (Peterson 1996; Kaarbo 1997). The second element of our approach, therefore, focuses on how individual decision makers make choices. Yet because the vast literatures on cognition and personality do not point to a single way to theorize about individuals (Jervis 1976; Khong 1992; Levy 1997), we used inductive research at this level. Our interview data suggest that the key factor driving attitudes toward military discretion is prior personal experience. Specifically, as individuals went through their careers, they observed and experienced the effect of specific patterns of military discretion. When these individuals rose to positions of authority, they made decisions based on those experiences.

To simplify for the purposes of generalization, we distinguish between decision makers who focus on military *outcomes* on the ground and those that focus instead on the *behavior* of the military, irrespective of outcomes (Fassina 2004). The former impose few caveats; their focus is on helping the military achieve its mission by whatever means are necessary. Either these officials trust their military's professionalism or the ends for these officials justify the means used to achieve those ends. Conversely, decision makers will impose caveats if they are more concerned with their military's behavior than with military outcomes. For these officials, the success of the actual mission is less important than is military conduct during that mission. The ends never justify the means. These categories of outcome- or behavior-oriented decisions allow us to code individuals based on interviews with them and/or people who work with them. Our focus on prior experience simplifies what would otherwise be a quite difficult job of coding and helps us avoid tautology (Schafer 2000).

Figure 1 diagrams the relationship between domestic institutional and individual levels of analysis. We begin by looking at specific domestic institutions of governance in each ISAF contributor. As discussed above, the use of armed force by coalition parliamentary governments often requires compromises across parliamentary factions and compromises yield caveats.[18] This is the top pathway in Figure 1. Presidential or single-party parliamentary governments empower select individuals to make conflict decisions. Here we need to explore the preferences of those individuals, which take us to the individual level of analysis and the lower pathways in Figure 1. We expect that individuals concerned with their troops' behavior, regardless of whether they accomplish their mission, will impose caveats. Empowered individuals that care about foreign policy outcomes more than their military's behavior will impose few caveats. Together, these two variables provide a relatively complete and parsimonious explanation of why some nations

[16] We explore the Danish case at length in the larger book project.

[17] We examine the Australian case at length in the larger book project to assess whether membership in NATO matters.

[18] Minority party governments may act like coalition governments or single-party majority governments, depending on whether they need cooperation from opposition parties and whether the opposition parties can cooperate with each other. We address this further when we consider the Canadian case.

TABLE 1. Government Institutions and Caveats

Country[*]	*Institutional Type*	*Caveats*[†]
Belgium	Coalition Parliament	Tight
Denmark	*Coalition Parliament*	*Loose*
Germany	Coalition Parliament	Tight
Italy	Coalition Parliament	Tight
Netherlands	Coalition Parliament	Medium
Norway	Coalition Parliament	Medium
Sweden	Coalition Parliament	Medium
Turkey	Coalition Parliament until 2002, then Majority Parliament[‡]	Tight
Australia	Coalition Parliament until 2007, Majority Parliament	Medium
Canada	*Minority Parliament*[§]	*Medium, then Loose*
France	Premier-Presidential	Medium, then Loose
Poland	Premier-Presidential	Loose
Romania	Premier-Presidential	Tight
Spain	Majority Parliament	Tight
United Kingdom	Majority Parliament	Loose
United States	Presidential	Loose

(*Notes. Italics* indicates cases that are exceptions.
*The table lists only those contingents larger than 500 as of December 2009. Figures are from the official North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ''placemat'' at http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/placemat.pdf, accessed January 11, 2010.
[†]Caveats range from loose to tight, focusing mostly on geographic restrictions and limits on offensive operations.
[‡]Turkey has moved from a parliamentary system to a premier presidential system in 2007, but it is not yet clear whether this has made a significant difference in how troops are deployed and managed.
[§]Canada has had a minority government for much of this time. We discuss the Canadian experience in the cases below.)

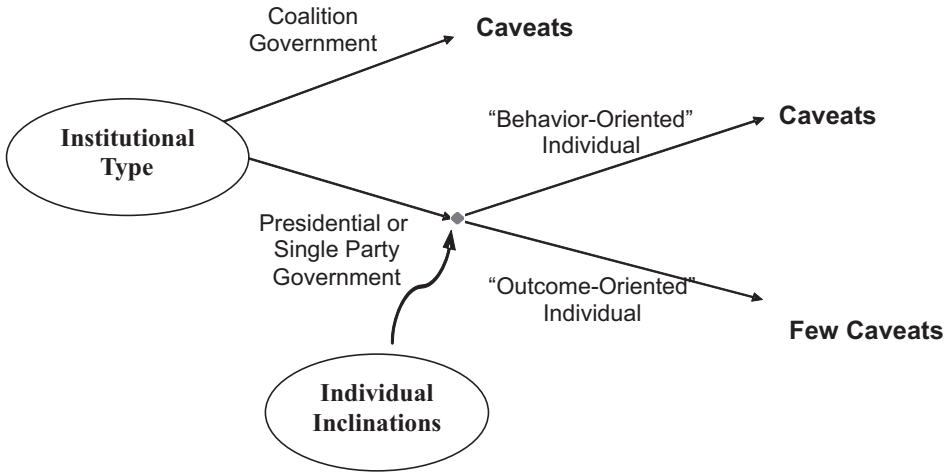

FIG 1. Institutions, Individuals, and Caveats.

impose caveats on their deployed forces, while others do not.

Unilateral and Multilateral Efforts in Afghanistan

Before moving to our cases, we briefly review the missions in Afghanistan. In late 2001, the United States led a small coalition of countries under the banner of OEF to overthrow the Taliban government and hunt down Al-Qaeda operatives. After the fall of the Taliban, OEF remained an ongoing operation. A parallel and often complementary approach was taken by the international community. At the end of 2001 in Bonn, Germany, an agreement was negotiated to develop a force, called the ISAF, under the auspices of the United Nations. ISAF began with a limited mandate. It would provide security in and around Kabul and help the new Afghan government increase its governing capacity. ISAF eventually became a NATO mission with military contributions from members as well as other countries. The original UN mandate allowed for the possibility of ISAF spreading its coverage beyond Kabul, and the mission expanded in a series of steps between 2005 and 2006.

International Security Assistance Force and OEF continued to coexist, with ISAF focused on peacekeeping, stability operations, and counter-insurgency, and OEF focused on counter-terrorism and

training Afghan National Army (ANA), yet that distinction often became very blurred, very quickly. Countries might operate under different chains of command (ISAF or OEF) but largely engage in the same enterprise. Regardless of the command, Afghanistan requires operating in a difficult environment against serious opposition. It is much more fraught with peril than is peacekeeping in Bosnia or Kosovo (although that danger varies across the country). Indeed, ISAF countries that had signed up for what they envisioned as peacekeeping duties have found themselves in an increasingly hostile environment. Their reactions to that environment have varied tremendously.

Caveat Emptor: Canada, France, and Germany in Afghanistan

In this section, we consider three of the major contributors to the ISAF mission: Canada, France, and Germany. In 2009, Canada was among the least constrained, Germany was among the most constrained, and France was an interesting intermediate case. While all three countries have shifted policies over time, Canada and France have both made rather remarkable changes in how much discretion their troops have on the ground, providing us with variation over time. We examine each country in turn, first indicating some of the more significant restrictions and changes in caveats, and then examining the sources behind these policies (Figure 2).

Canada: From "CANTBAT" to Out-in-Front[19]

Canadian military commanders have had varying degrees of freedom since the advent of hostilities in Afghanistan. Ironically, given Canada's 2008 appeals to its allies to do more in Southern Afghanistan, its commanders initially faced very tight restrictions on what they could do. These restrictions would be relaxed over time.

In 2002, Canadian forces served as part of American-led OEF, with very limited discretion. Canadian ground commanders, bomber pilots, and special-forces units were required to get advance approval for any mission that might risk collateral damage. This essentially meant a phone call home anytime the battle group was to leave the base. Lieutenant Colonel Pat Stogran, commander of Canadian forces in Afghanistan in early 2002, feared that micromanagement from home might create a disaster akin to events in Bosnia and Rwanda, where officers had to stand by and watch war-crimes take place.[20] Major General Andrew Leslie, the deputy commander of ISAF and the Canadian contingent commander in 2003, had to ask Ottawa for permission for operations where there was a significant chance of collateral damage, the potential for lethal force, significant casualties, or strategic failure.[21]

Restrictions continued into 2004. Brigadier General Jocelyn Lacroix led the NATO effort in Kabul during the first half of 2004. Lacroix's official national guidance stated: ''*NDHQ* (*National Defence Headquarters*) *authority is required*, prior to committing CF (Canadian Forces) personnel to *any operations*, wherein there is a reasonable belief that CF units or personnel may be *exposed to a higher degree of risk*.''[22] Officials in Canada were very slow to respond to field requests, sometimes taking up to 24 hours or more.[23] On a few occasions, Lacroix had to face the galling situation of needing to find an alternative to the Canadian contingent while waiting for deliberations in Ottawa to conclude.

When Canadian Lt. General Rick Hillier became overall ISAF commander, overlapping with Lacroix's Kabul rotation, he faced a very frustrating situation. Canadian officials gave Hillier the authority to act as a NATO commander but little influence over Canadian forces in Afghanistan. Instead, a Canadian colonel was the commander of the nation's contingent, forcing Hillier to call Ottawa should he want to override decisions made by this colonel. This was problematic, since the colonel was operating under relatively strict caveats, leading Hillier to refer to the Canadian contingent in Afghanistan as CAN'T BATs (instead of the usually NATO term CANBAT for a Canadian Battalion). Hillier frequently used other national contingents that were far more flexible.[24]

Things changed in 2005. Colonel Steve Noonan, the senior Canadian on the ground in 2005–2006, had far more latitude than previous commanders: ''wide arcs of fire,'' as he called it. Noonan faced a new command philosophy, enunciated by the new Chief of the Defense Staff (CDS), none other than the freshly promoted General Rick Hillier. Noonan was allowed to act first if necessary and then explain his actions later.[25] His successor, Brigadier General David Fraser, found a similar situation. ''Everything I did over there was notification, not approval … If I had to go outside the boundaries of the CDS intent,

[19] This section is largely based on a series of interviews with most senior Canadian military officers who commanded in Afghanistan as well as a handful of key politicians.

[20] Interview with Colonel (ret.) Pat Stogran, conducted when he was vice president of the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, April 25, 2007.

[21] Interview with LTG Leslie, March 8, 2007. Strategic failure refers to the possibility of a tactical effort potentially undermining the NATO mission and/or the Afghan government. Leslie found that approval was almost always granted, often immediately. Yet permission sometimes took longer if the Deputy Chief of the Defense Staff (DCDS) had to consult with the Chief of the Defense Staff (CDS) or the Defense Minister. The Minister of National Defense at the time, Bill Graham, did not recall having to give permission for any operations during Leslie's time. Interview conducted in Ottawa on April 19, 2007.

[22] DCDS Intent Task Force Kabul, 19 December 2003, A0241084, p. 6, acquired via Access to Information request. Italics is added.

[23] Interview with BG Jocelyn Lacroix, in Kingston, Ontario, on February 6, 2007.

[24] General Rick Hillier, Speech to the Conference of Defense Associations Institute, February 22, 2008.

[25] Interview with Colonel Steve Noonan, Ottawa, Ontario, January 11, 2007.

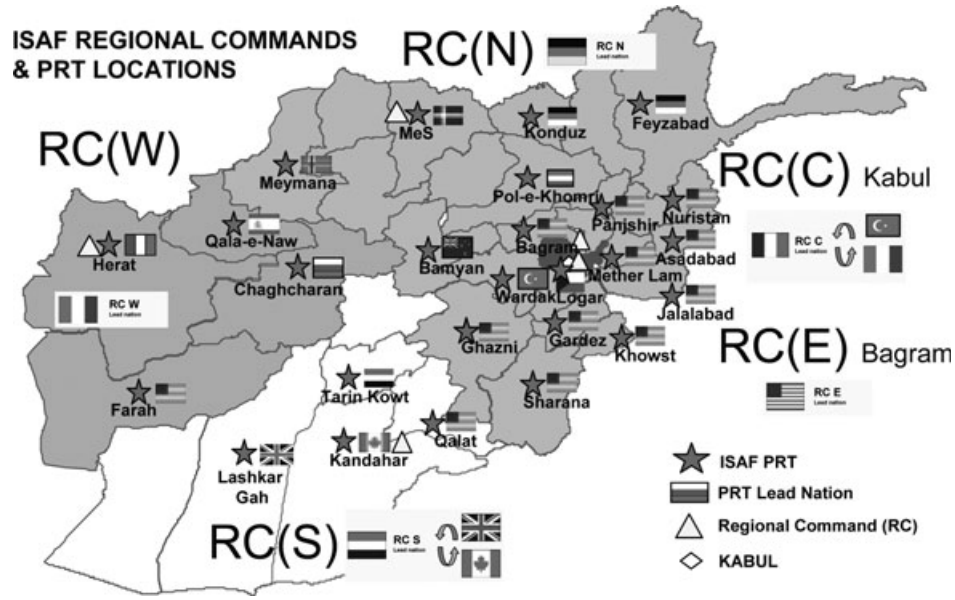

FIG 2. Division of Responsibilities in Afghanistan.[26]

then I would have to get approval. I never got to a boundary.''[27] The official *Letter of Intent* given to Fraser said:

> Within the bounds of the Strategic Targeting Directive, you have *full freedom to authorize and conduct operations as you see fit.* In the interest of national situational awareness, *whenever possible* you are to inform me (CEFCOM) in advance of the concept of operations for any planned operations, particularly those likely to involve significant contact with the enemy.[28]

This was most notable as Fraser led Canadian forces during Operation Medusa in the summer of 2006, Canada's most intense combat since the Korean War.

This pattern of increased discretion and delegation continued into 2010. BG Tim Grant replaced Fraser and found that he ''was empowered to make 99% of the ops-related decisions in theatre.''[29] Grant could and did send Canadian troops out of Kandahar province to the other parts of Regional Command South to assist the British in Helmand. At no point did Grant have to reject a NATO request, because of constraints from Canada.[30] It is clear that the pattern of wide ''arcs of fire'' is continuing under the new Chief of the Defense Staff, General Walter Natynczyk.[31]

Explaining the Evolution of Canadian Restrictions

On the surface, Canada presents a puzzle for our approach. It has become one of the most forward-leaning countries despite operating in the most dangerous area and being led by a minority government from 2004 to the present. One would expect a coalition government to compromise with its coalition partners to stay in office and avoid or win confidence votes. However, Canada is the exception that proves the rule. Canadian minority governments have actually been empowered by the inability of opposition partners to coalesce around restrictions on Canadian forces in Afghanistan, with the notable exception of an end-date to the mission of 2011.

Limited Compromise: Minority Government and Divided Opposition

In theory, the formal commander-in-chief of the Canadian forces is the governor-general, who represents the king or queen of the United Kingdom. In reality, Canada's prime minister holds the real power, drawing his authority from the majority party in parliament. The parliamentary rank and file has little influence over daily conflict decisions and exercises practically no oversight over military operations. Indeed, members of parliamentary

[26] For the latest International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) ''placemat'' with numbers of troops from each country, see http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/placemat_archive/isaf_placemat_090608.pdf (accessed July 21, 2009).

[27] Interview with BG David Fraser, Edmonton, Alberta, January 29, 2007.

[28] Commander's Directive to Commander, Task Force Afghanistan, Rotation 2, (3350-165/A37) A0232107, acquired via Access to Information. Page 14; emphasis added.

[29] Interview with MG Tim Grant, February 7, 2008.

[30] Interview with MG Grant. Grant did point out that allies not only had caveats but their own agendas, of which one had to be conscious.

[31] Given Natynczyk's comments when we interviewed him when he was the Vice-Chief of the Defense Staff, we did not expect significantly decreased discretion. An interview with the new CEFCOM LTG Marc Lessard on January 8, 2010 bears this out and conversations with other commanders provide additional verification.

committees on defense do not even have security clearances, making it difficult for them to know what questions to ask or decisions to take were they ever given power over conflict decisions.

That parliament is a relatively weak player when it comes to military caveats may seem surprising given recent Canadian election results. The Liberal majority party government elected in 2000 was followed by minority party rule under the Liberals in 2004 and the Conservatives in 2006 and 2008. One would think that minority government cabinets would be sensitive to opposition party concerns, if only to avoid no-confidence votes, giving parliament significant influence over how the military can be used. That has not been the case, however, in large part because the makeup of the four major political parties makes it nearly impossible to form a stable opposition coalition. The two main parties, the Conservatives and Liberals, are on opposite sides of most issues. The Bloc Quebecois party is not an appealing or viable partner due to its separatist agenda and instead has been a spoiler to the hopes of a left-leaning coalition of the Liberals and the New Democratic Party (NDP). The result is that Canadian prime ministers, even when leading minority governments, are in a strong position to themselves make policy, or delegate that authority to a trusted surrogate, which has been the CDS during Afghan operations.

That said, because it is a minority government, parliament must periodically reauthorize the overall Canadian mission in Afghanistan, which, in theory, allows parliament to exert some influence over the Canadian mission in Afghanistan.[32] Prime Minister Harper has had to ask parliament to extend the mission in Afghanistan on a couple of occasions, with the mandate expiring in 2011.[33] Yet that has not translated into parliamentary influence over how the mission is conducted although it has influenced duration. The Liberals are divided enough on Afghanistan that Harper has been able to get enough votes for short extensions of the mission. Moreover, failing to authorize Canadian participation is a very blunt stick. Somewhat less blunt alternatives, such as caveats, have not been required by parliament. There was some brief discussion during the last mandate debate about restricting the Canadian forces from engaging in offensive operations, but this did not get very far.

The day-to-day management of Afghan operations, to include caveats, is in the hands of the CDS and his subordinates. The CDS, a four-leaf officer, is selected by the prime minister and serves at his pleasure. The CDS is best thought of as the prime minister's trusted agent. The CDS has decided how Canadian forces operate recently, yet the CDS must consider what the prime minister will tolerate or else be replaced.

A striking feature of Canadian efforts in Afghanistan through 2010 is that nearly all caveat decisions were intramilitary. Canadian civilians delegated to the senior military leadership nearly all decisions, except for the decisions to deploy to particular places in the first place. The CDS, along with other top officers (the Deputy Chief of the Defense Staff prior to 2006 and the commander of Canadian Expeditionary Command [CEFCOM] since), determine the flexibility of the forces on the ground, to include caveats. Thus, to explain shifts in Canadian discretion on the ground, we need to consider the personalities involved and their experiences.

Individuals in the Canadian Chain of Command

In our interviews with past and current military officers, former Prime Minister Paul Martin, and two former ministers of defense, it was quite clear that Canadian caveats depended on who was serving as the Chief of the Defense Staff. Changes in caveats coincided with a change in the CDS from Ray Henault (2001–2005) to Rick Hillier (2005–2008). Under CDS Henault and DCDS Maddison (2001–2005), officers in Afghanistan had little discretion. When General Hillier replaced Henault in 2005, officers on the ground quickly gained significantly more discretion. Hillier imposed fewer and less restrictive caveats on theater commanders than did Henault.

These two officers had very different attitudes toward risk and delegation based on their past professional experiences. Henault's views were shaped by Somalia.[34] In that intervention, Canadian soldiers beat an arrested Somali to death, leading to a crisis within the military, the disbanding of the unit involved (the Canadian Airborne Regiment), and the resignations of consecutive chiefs of defense staff and the minister of national defense (Bercuson 1996). Maddison likened Somalia to My Lai,[35] with the result that the Henault/Maddison team focused on avoiding risks by managing the behavior of the Canadian forces. Conversations with senior civilians who served in the Ministry of National Defense at the time

[32] This is not a constitutional requirement as it is in Germany, but is instead required by the politics of minority government. Our understanding of this has been greatly informed by conservations with Phillipe Lagassé, an expert on the ''Crown prerogative.''

[33] During the week this article was revised for the last time to be submitted for publication (mid-November 2010), Prime Minister Harper announced a new mission after July 2011—one that is going to be purely non-combat, focused solely on training behind the wire. This means a highly caveated mission. At this moment, he is not likely to take this to a vote in Parliament, and has Liberal support for these positions—for a training mission and for no vote to be held. Space and time limit an exploration of this process here, but the basic elements in play reinforce our basic point here—that minority governments can be strong or weak, depending on whether a decision requires the government to cooperate with other parties (more restrictions) or the opposition parties need to cooperate to impose their will upon the government (less likely to have significant restrictions).

[34] In the course of interviews with past and present Canadian officers, Vice Admiral (ret.) and former DCDS was the first to mention Somalia in our interview on June 19, 2007, in Montreal. After this article was reviewed, we interviewed General (ret.) Henault in Ottawa on November 4, 2010, and he concurred with the idea that the Somalia experience influenced his decisions.

[35] Interview with Maddison.

support the view that Henault and Maddison were quite risk averse.

By contrast, Hillier learned more from Canadian *reactions* to Somalia than from Somalia itself. He and his entire command group had operational experience in Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, Somalia, and Afghanistan. They all found the tight constraints of previous caveats, particularly in the Balkans, enormously frustrating. In Croatia during the days of UN mission, Canadians had to deliberately place themselves in harm's way before they could use their weapons. In Bosnia, the Canadians were in Srebenica before the Dutch, but redeployed because they saw what was coming and knew they could not respond given Canadian (and United Nations) caveats. In Afghanistan, as mentioned above, Hillier, as commander of ISAF, had to ask permission from a colonel to use the Canadian forces and was often refused.

Consequently, when Hillier replaced Henault, he established a ''mission command-centric'' philosophy, where the focus would be on managing risk rather than avoiding it. He focused on giving the commander on the ground the authority to make decisions and giving him the support (logistical, diplomatic, etc.) to achieve success. This is very much an outcome-focused approach. The same language was repeated in nearly every interview of commanders who had served in Afghanistan and/or Ottawa since 2005. To Hillier, this approach was nothing more than common sense based on his earlier experiences.[36]

Germany: The Poster Child of Caveats[37]

Perhaps unfairly, Germany has received far more attention for its restrictions than any other country. Belgium, Spain, Turkey, and most notably Italy reportedly have significant restrictions placed upon their contingents, but Germany has been the major target of critics because it has one of the largest ISAF contingents and had the reputation as being one of the most capable militaries in NATO. It is clear, however, that German troops face tighter restrictions than those from Canada and some of the other major troop contributors.

The most obvious caveat is that the German contingent is largely restricted from operating outside of Regional Command-North (RC-N), the sector for which it has lead responsibility and one that has been largely but not entirely peaceful. To be clear, the Bundestag mandate gives the minister of defense the authority to permit troops to move temporarily outside of the German sector if necessary for the success of ISAF. For instance, a group of German electronic warfare specialists lived and worked at Kandahar Airfield in mid-2009. Yet this is the exception that proves the rule: the Kandahar base is large and well defended, and German units there are unlikely to be harmed or harm others. In general, unless the minister of defense permits, this geographic restriction prevents the German contingent from sending troops to reinforce allies who might need assistance,[38] or mentoring ANA units outside of RC-N.

Consider how caveats affect the mentoring mission. One of ISAF's critical efforts is to train the ANA so that they can do more of the fighting, as counter-insurgency doctrine asserts that indigenous militaries are crucial to defeating an insurgency. Teams of NATO troops embed in the Afghan equivalent of battalions—Kandaks. Comprised of 30–40 troops, these Observer, Mentor, Liaison Teams (OMLTs—a.k.a. omelets) help to train and coordinate the ANA units, facilitate artillery and air support, help with planning, and the like. Yet when the Kandaks mentored by the Germans move outside of the North to help in the South, East, or West, the German OMLT does not go with them. This is a serious impediment to the current military performance of these ANA Kandaks. It also inhibits their development, which impedes the larger ISAF effort. The same holds true with German efforts to train the Afghan National Police.[39]

The second notable restriction is that until recently, German units were prohibited from engaging in offensive operations. German troops could not fire on adversaries once the enemy began to move, whether to retreat or to reposition. Germany added ''Special Remarks'' to the NATO documents that specified NATO rules of engagement (ROE): ''The use of lethal force is prohibited unless an attack is taking place or is imminent.''[40] Essentially, Germany was opting out of a vital part of the NATO ROE. Instead, German forces were to be used only for self-defense, given that the ''Special Remarks'' would seem to exclude efforts to go out and find Taliban leaders, bomb factories, and other key targets. Very recently, this caveat has been modified, as we discuss below.

Together, these restrictions, and other factors, impair the effectiveness of the German forces in Afghanistan.[41] Given their large numbers and their previous reputation as being among the best in NATO, German caveats are a significant challenge to any ISAF commander.

Sources of German Restrictions

Institutions shape much of German behavior in Afghanistan. Personalities play a lesser role. Caveats

[36] Interview with Gen. Rick Hillier, March 11, 2008, Ottawa, Canada.

[37] This section is largely based on interviews with military officers and civilians working in Berlin, June 2009.

[38] German officials said that NATO commanders never asked German troops to come to the aid of allies—and that the Minister of Defense could say yes in such a circumstance. Allies disagreed in interviews in Berlin, June 2009. German troops have gone into RC-West to support a Norwegian contingent that is based in an area on the seams between regional commands.

[39] Interview with senior official in Germany's Ministry of Interior, June 2009.

[40] Spiegel Staff. (2009) Changing the Rules: German Troops Beef Up Fight Against Taliban. *Spiegel Online International*, July 9. Available at http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,635192,00.html. (Accessed July 23, 2009).

[41] The combination of few German armored helicopters, an unwillingness to use other helos, and standard operating procedures indicate that capabilities and procedures can be just as limiting as formal caveats.

are to a large extent due to the important role played by Germany's parliament, the Bundestag. The German Bundestag has four to six main political parties, depending on the year. The chancellor is chosen by a majority vote in the Bundestag and serves a maximum of 4 years before new elections must occur. Chancellors can and sometimes do call for confidence votes before their terms expire, and if the vote fails, then parliament is dissolved and elections are called (Schroeder did this in July 2005). The only way opposition parties can dissolve parliament is if a majority favors a specific alternative successor cabinet, which has only happened twice since 1949. All this is to say that it is very hard for parliamentary opposition to get their voices heard.

What is clear is that the parliament matters even if the opposition does not. The reason is that the German proportional representation system makes it difficult for any one party to acquire an outright majority in the Bundestag. Coalition governments have largely been the rule. The Social Democrats (SPD) shared power with the Greens after the 2002 elections. The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU) formed a grand coalition with the SPD following the 2005 elections. In 2009, elections produced a center-right coalition between the CDU, CSU, and the Free Democratic Party (FDP).

With a coalition comes power sharing and collective decision making. In 2002, Chancellor Schroder (SPD) had Joschka Fischer of the Greens as foreign minister. In 2005, Angela Merkel had Frank-Walter Steinmeier of the SPD as foreign minister, and the allocation of cabinet posts was evenly split between the CDU/CSU and the SPD. In short, the German electoral system encourages collective decision making and, by extension, caveats on military deployments.

The Bundestag is important in another way. The 1949 German constitution was designed to constrain the German armed forces from extra-territorial operations. A series of Constitutional Court decisions during the 1990s, in response to NATO actions in the Balkans, prohibited German troops from operating outside NATO territory without legislative approval. As important, the German historical legacy has altered the body politic so that pacifism runs deep, shaping not just the Greens and the extreme left but all of the parties and the entirety of the public.[42]

The result is that the Bundestag must approve each deployment, including adding units to existing missions, with an up or down vote. The government, led by the Ministry of Defense (MoD), tries to anticipate what the Bundestag will accept and draft a mission statement that will get the broadest possible legislative support.[43] To anticipate whether the Bundestag will accept the proposed mandate, officials in the MOD, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other parts of the government consult with key members of the relevant legislative committees, giving these parliamentary bodies significant influence.[44]

These mandates have a few key properties. They must be revisited every year. They often specify the size of the force and, on occasion, special mandates for the use of specific weapons systems (for example, Tornado reconnaissance aircraft, AWACs planes). They also have largely prohibited involvement with OEF, restricted the German troops to RC-North, and set a ceiling on the number of troops in theater.

Though these mandates do not provide more detailed instructions about nighttime operations, offensive operations, or what kinds of helicopters can be deployed to Afghanistan, the necessity of maintaining parliamentary support seems to explain why casualty aversion is THE top priority for German officers in Afghanistan, guiding decisions on helicopters, operations, and the like. Certainly, defense ministers, until recently, tried to avoid using war-related terms, often referring to casualties using the German words for ''killed by accident,'' rather than the word for a soldier fallen in battle (*gefallen*).[45] And Chancellor Merkel did not discuss Afghanistan in a major media or public event until after the 2009 election.

In our interviews, German officials variously mentioned that the minister of defense, on behalf of the cabinet, created specific instructions for deployed troops in anticipation of parliamentary reactions, because of the fragility of his own political position, or due to instructions from the chancellor to keep Afghanistan off of the front page. Each was mentioned. What seems clear is that German caveats are consistent with the governing coalition trying to anticipate the reactions of a collective decision-body worried about the behavior of its troops overseas.

An example bears out this conclusion. In April 2009, the US troop surge in Southern Afghanistan began to push insurgents North, into areas patrolled by the Germans, increasing dramatically the violence around Kunduz in the North and attacks on German forces. Minister of Defense Jung removed restrictions against some offensive operations and the strict limitation on heavy weapons at the behest of Major General Erhad Bühler, Director of the Joint Commitments Staff.[46] The important point, however, is that this was apparently kept secret from members of the parliamentary Defense Committee, who were surprised when they learned of this change in July 2009.[47]

[42] For an argument that Germany's pacifism is over-rated as well as the relevant literature, see Rathbun (2006).

[43] The usual claim is that they want broad support so that the troops know that the people and their representatives are behind them. It is also the case that having the major parties all support a mandate limits the ability of any one party to criticize the policy and the other parties.

[44] Interviews with members of parliament and officials in MoD and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2009.

[45] This was repeated in nearly all interviews in Berlin.

[46] Dempsey, Judy. (2009) *New York Times*, August 20. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/21/world/europe/21iht-germany.html. (Accessed August 26, 2009) It is likely the case that any loosening was reversed in practice, if not by law, after the controversial airstrike of September 4, 2009.

[47] ''New Rules of Engagement for German Troops in Afghanistan, July 26, 2009.'' Available at http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4519627,00.html and http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4509046,00.html.

What is abundantly clear is that this institutional design gives ultimate responsibility to the collective Bundestag. To maintain the mission and pass mandates with broad support, compromises must be made, and those compromises involve conditions placed on the behavior of the German contingent rather than on reaching some sort of goal or outcome. Clearly, the priority here for both members of the Bundestag and the MoD is ''do no harm.''

France: Presidents Rule[48]

France serves as an interesting comparison to the previous cases as it has made some significant changes in how and where it operates in Afghanistan over the past few years, exactly as its parliament was accruing more influence upon overseas operations. Again, we first briefly consider the patterns of restrictions facing French contingents in Afghanistan and then consider the institutions and dynamics of civil–military relations in Paris. To preview, the key decisions are made in the *Elysée*, the residence of the president.

From Kabul to Kapisa and Beyond

The deployments of French forces in Afghanistan have not followed patterns consistent with the rest of NATO. When NATO rolled out of Kabul and spread across Afghanistan in 2005–2006, the French conventional contingent remained in Kabul, where it shared command of Regional Command-Capital (RC-C) with German and Turkish troops. These French troops were restricted to this part of Afghanistan and were unavailable for reinforcing NATO troops elsewhere. The restriction to Kabul essentially prevented the French battalion from engaging in combat since there has been comparatively very little violence in Kabul. At the same time, there was a small contingent of French special forces attached to OEF from 2003 to 2007, engaged in significant combat in and near Spin Boldak, a town in Southern Afghanistan on the border with Pakistan. While other countries set up Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) to combine security, governance, and development efforts around the country, France refrained. In short, the French had a significant deployment of troops kept deliberately out of harm's way, an aversion to PRTs and the long-term commitment they entail, and small, almost invisible but highly ''kinetic'' units sent for an apparently fixed term.

In 2007, France changed this force posture quite significantly. It deployed OMLTs outside Kabul, including one to Uruzgan in Southern Afghanistan to support the Dutch units there. Unlike German units, France's OMLTs can move with their Kandaks out of the French areas of operation (Kapisa, Kabul, Uruzgan), although a phone call is required to gain permission from Paris.[49] In 2008, France put a battalion under the United States in RC-East, in Kapisa, an area close to Kabul but with significantly greater risks and ultimately combat. France subsequently moved the rest of its Kabul combat forces to Eastern Afghanistan.[50]

Explaining French Caveats: Presidential Primacy and Predilections

The rules governing civil–military relations in France empower the president to make all significant deployment decisions. Every French officer we talked with asserted that French caveats were political decisions made at the very highest level.

The French have a premier-presidential government system with both a president and a prime minister. The president serves a fixed term of office and holds virtually all of the foreign policy powers of the national government. The premier is chosen by a parliamentary majority and has some influence over domestic legislation. This was by design. The Fifth Republic's constitution was written to correct the shortcomings of the previous regime, when governments would regularly fall over foreign policy issues, particularly related to Algeria. Presidents in the Fifth Republic were given broad discretion over security policy and were insulated from public backlash via a fixed term of office.

The French chain of command runs from the field to the Joint Staff (État-Major des Armées) to the president. Neither the prime minister nor the minister of defense has a role in operations, although they may be consulted. Within the Elysée, the president has a small military staff including a senior military officer, the Chef D'État-Major Particulier (who frequently moves on to become the head of the French military), which coordinates with the Joint Staff. Consequently, we should not be surprised that the significant shifts in French deployments and restrictions in Afghanistan coincided with the change from Jacques Chirac to Nicolas Sarkozy as president.

Jacques Chirac chose an inconsistent mix of policies toward the conflict in Afghanistan. He deployed special forces that were quite active and sent fighter aircraft that provided air support, but limited the main conventional effort to the tamest part of the country and refused to set up a PRT. In so doing, he minimized the French commitment and maximized French freedom of action. Indeed, in several interviews it was clear that the special operations contingent was sent for a specific time frame—4 years—and that PRTs were avoided since they imply a longer commitment. In addition, Chirac

[48] This section is largely based on interviews in Paris in June, 2009 with civilian officials in the Ministry of Defense and in parliament as well as senior military officers.

[49] Apparently, in the aftermath of the big prison break in the summer of 2008, the French OMLT and its Kandak arrived about 24 hours late due to the need for permission from France, according to multiple Canadian officers, and this did have a significant impact on an important operation.

[50] Interview with senior French officers, February and June 2009.

kept French deployments out of the public eye, because public exposure would raise an implied commitment and increase political costs at home. Interview subjects agreed that the Afghanistan missions, under Chirac, were cloaked in secrecy. The most visible units—the forces in Kabul—were doing very little, and the least visible units were doing a great deal. The French government put out very little information, and the French media did not provide much coverage.

The key factors shaping Chirac's outlook seem to have been his desire for a greater French role in European defense policy and his increasingly poor relationship with the Bush administration, particularly after the start of the Iraq war. The initial French decisions in the aftermath of 9/11 were much more assertive and supportive than the ones that took place during and after the invasion of Iraq. Chirac kept France in Afghanistan after his split with Bush, but minimized the French commitment and its public exposure. His refusal to deploy a Provincial Reconstruction Team was part of a larger view toward restricting the US-led NATO to military efforts and protecting the European Union's role, over which France has more influence, as a civilian agency to support development, reconstruction, and governance.[51]

French policy changed when Sarkozy became president in May 2007. Rather than opposing or limiting the transatlantic alliance, Sarkozy wanted France to be more involved in NATO, and specifically to become re-integrated in the NATO command structure. According to our interviews, Sarkozy realized that French influence within NATO depended on making a greater commitment to the ISAF effort in Afghanistan. Rather than merely being present in a low-risk environment, French forces therefore moved a battalion to a more dangerous area: Kapisa, near Kabul, a move that allowed the redeployment of some American units from RC-East to RC-South where they were needed most. The French also were willing to assist in Southern Afghanistan when needed, as witnessed by the stationing of a French OMLT in Uruzgan and the temporary deployment of OMLTs to Kandahar after a phone call home. These actions are consistent with a coalition partner making every effort to contribute to the ISAF cause. Geographic caveats have been lifted, and France, never shy about using force in its other deployments, now operates very much like the more active allies.[52]

[51] Interview with senior French officers and civilians in June 2009.

[52] Sarkozy recently supported a constitutional amendment, altering Article 35 to allow Parliament to vote to authorize military missions lasting more than 4 months. It is not clear whether this would be a one-time or annual vote for a particular mission. Thus far, the authorization process seems to have created a force cap, leading French military officials to be careful about troop numbers in-theater, including recoding gendarmerie (French paramilitary police) as police and not military units. Yet the constitutional amendment has not changed who shapes the discretion of the commanders in Afghanistan or who imposes caveats. Those powers still reside with the French President, making that individual's inclinations the key to understanding the variations in France's efforts in Afghanistan. Multiple interviews with French officials and experts, Paris, June 2009.

Threats, Public Opinion, and Strategic Culture

In this section, we consider three alternative explanations of caveats: balance-of-threat neorealism, public opinion, and strategic culture. Each approach is intuitively plausible and based on theories with a long tradition in security studies. However, each fails to capture significant variation among the cases and over time.

Balancing Against Threats

Countries might vary in how much they are threatened in a conflict, leading to different levels of commitment to that conflict. Realists have been making such arguments for decades (Waltz 1979; Walt 1987). Countries facing a greater threat are more likely to balance against that threat by forging alliances, arming themselves, or both. In terms of conflict behavior, a natural extension of balance-of-threat theory is that countries facing threats will allow their military to do what is necessary for success. Other countries that face less of a threat may still choose to participate in a conflict to please an ally or to respect treaty obligations, but will be more likely to restrict their forces from doing anything that endangers those troops or risks drawing the state deeper into the conflict.

Of course, this approach begs the key question as to why some countries are more threatened than others by the conflict in Afghanistan. If we focus on vulnerability to terrorism, as represented by past terrorist attacks, then at first glance the pattern seems right: the Americans and British have been struck by significant terrorist attacks and their contingents are known for being among the least restricted. Yet as Table 2 shows, a cross-national comparison fails to demonstrate a pattern between terrorist violence at home and the level of restrictions placed on deployed troops. For instance, the Spanish contingent in Afghanistan faces very tight restrictions despite Al-Qaeda-related groups having struck Spain. Moreover, there are other countries that have few caveats but have not been as challenged by Afghanistan/Pakistan-based terrorism, such as Poland. Indeed, the lack of a cross-national pattern coincides with the lack of cross-temporal correlation. While 9/11 did, of course, provoke US intervention in Afghanistan, British behavior in Afghanistan did not change in the aftermath of 7/7. Similarly, it is hard to tie terrorist activities to the reductions in French and Canadian caveats. In short, the data are inconclusive.

Another measure of perceived terrorist threat could be the relative size of each country's Muslim population, something that has gotten attention in European media. One might expect countries facing a greater threat of Al-Qaeda-inspired homegrown terrorism to be more sincerely interested in success in Afghanistan. Yet omitting the outliers of the United States (due to 9/11) and Turkey (98% Muslim) produces no pattern between countries with a

TABLE 2: Commitments, Terrorism, and Caveats

Country	*Troops*	*Fatalities caused by AfPak-based terrorists, 2001–2009*[*]	*Muslim % of pop.*[†] *(%)*	*Caveats*
Australia	1550	0[‡]	2	Medium
Belgium	545	0	3	Tight
Canada	2830	0	2	Medium, then Loose
Denmark	740	0	2	Loose
France	3750	0[§]	6	Medium, then Loose
Germany	4280	0	5	Tight
Italy	3150	0[¶]	<1	Tight
Netherlands	1950	0	6	Medium
Norway	500	0	1	Medium
Poland	1955	0	<1	Loose
Romania	900	0	<1	Tight
Spain	1065	3/11/04: 191	1	Tight
Sweden	500	0	2	Medium
Turkey	1755	11/15/03: 25 11/20/03:28	98	Tight
United Kingdom	9500	7/7/05: 56	3	Loose
United States	45780	9/11/01: 3000	1	Loose

(*Notes.* *Center for American Progress, http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/09/alqaeda_map.html, accessed January 21, 2010. Double-checked with the Global Terrorism Database, http://www.start.umd.edu/, January 21, 2010.

[†]Percentage of country's population that is Muslim. Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, ''Mapping the Global Muslim Population: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population,'' October 2009, http://pewforum.org/newassets/images/reports/Muslimpopulation/Muslimpopulation.pdf, accessed January 21, 2010.

[‡]Australia has not been hit directly, but the Bali bombing of October 12, 2002, did kill nearly ninety Australians tourists. In addition, a September 2004 car bomb exploded near the Australian embassy in Jakarta.

[§]This does not include terrorist acts committed by Basque or Corsican separatists.

[¶]A Moroccan blew himself up in Italy on March 28, 2004, but it is not clear what his ties were, Global Terrorism Database.)

substantial Muslim population and caveats, as Table 2 illustrates. France, Germany, and the Netherlands have the highest Muslim populations but vary considerably in terms of how much flexibility their forces in Afghanistan have. The same is true at the opposite end of the spectrum, as Italy, Poland, and Sweden have few Muslims but differ in how restricted are their ISAF contingents. In general, then, ISAF caveats have varied in ways that do not correlate with threats of terrorist attacks.

Public Opinion

The second possibility is that countries are more likely to impose restrictions upon a mission if it is unpopular at home. Politicians seeking to maintain their positions may be less willing to pay the domestic costs of a distant and unpopular mission (Holsti 2004; Aldrich, Gelpi, Feaver, Reifler, and Sharp 2006; Chan and Safran 2006). Instead, politicians may impose restrictions on their troops to keep deployments off the domestic radar. Limits on where troops can operate, restrictions on offensive operations, and other caveats can mitigate the political risks of an unpopular military effort, because these caveats reduce the probability of casualties.

The problem is that public support does not covary with caveats.[53] Consider Germany. Over the course of the past several years, less than 40% of the German public, on average, have supported the mission in Afghanistan. The lack of enthusiasm is hardly unique to Germany, as Table 3 illustrates.

Countries with relatively high public support tend to have fewer caveats, but countries with less public support vary quite widely. Moreover, we do not see the expected correlation over time. France removed its geographic restrictions, moving out from Kabul in 2007, even though the mission was certainly not gaining in popularity. Indeed, declines in support may have followed perceptions of whether the mission is successful (Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2009), but caveats have not followed these declines. Thus, public opinion may matter, but it does not do so systematically. Some, but not all, unpopular missions are highly restricted, and caveats do not necessarily increase (or decrease) as the missions lost popularity.

National Culture

The third alternative is that countries and their militaries are bound by shared understandings of the appropriate ways to behave, developing military doctrines and capabilities that constrain choices (Legro 1995; Katzenstein 1996; Kier 1997; Farrell 1998, 2005; Glenn 2009).[54] It is impossible to discuss German behavior in Afghanistan, for instance, without considering the weight of the past upon the present day: the pacificism produced by the World War II experience, reluctance to kill or suffer casualties, and

[53] Kreps (2010) finds that public opinion does not correlate with ISAF troop levels deployed to Afghanistan either.

[54] Again, the literature is extensive, but space constraints limit a fuller discussion.

Table 3. Public Opinion, Casualties and Caveats

Country	*Public Opinion* (%)*	*Caveats*	*Country*	*Public Opinion (%)*	*Caveats*
Turkey	18	Tight	Sweden	43	Medium
Poland	21	Loose	Australia	47	Medium
Spain	32	Tight	Netherlands	48	Medium
UK	35	Loose	Denmark	48†	Loose
France	37	Reduced	Norway	49	Medium
Italy	37‡	Tight	US	57	Loose
Germany	38	Tight	Belgium	NA	Tight
Canada	41	Reduced	Romania	NA	Tight

(*Notes.* *Mean Public Support over August 2006 to December 2008, from Kreps 2009, unless otherwise noted.
†Angus Reid, ''Danish Split on Ending Afghanistan Mission'', February 27, 2009, http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/view/danish_split_on_ending_afghanistan_mission/, accessed January 18, 2010.
‡The Italian number is based on a poll asking whether one supports a withdrawal (gradual or immediate) or opposes a withdrawal—the number here is the percentage opposing a withdrawal, which we take to mean support of the mission (Angus Reid, ''Italians Want Troops Out of Afghanistan,'' August 3, 2009, http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/36752/italians_want_troops_out_of_afghanistan/, accessed October 25, 2011).

that the German military may have rules and procedures that are directly derived from these experiences. For instance, German police and army units are restricted from operating together because of their post–World War II desire for strict separation of the military and police in Germany. As a result, German training of Afghan police must take place on military bases, which significantly hampers the effort.[55]

Despite its insights, there are two problems with applying national culture to the question of caveats. First, cultural approaches imply or explicitly assert that change is quite difficult, as norms and mutual understandings take much time to alter, unless some sort of factor outside of the culture provides a significant shock (Farrell 2005). Yet, as we see in Afghanistan, countries have sometimes quickly changed how they operate. The Canadian story of moving from CANTBATs to one of the most forward-leaning forces in Afghanistan, for example, is in many ways one of cultural revolution within the military, something that cannot be addressed by an approach that focuses more on long-term change and short-term stability. Second, some cultural approaches suggest convergence upon a particular way of doing things (Farrell 2001), yet we see significant variation in ISAF, even among democracies with much interaction and shared histories. To be clear, we see much value in the strategic culture approach and focusing on organizational norms, but the patterns of variation we find in Afghanistan point elsewhere—to politics at the highest levels within each troop-contributing country.

Comparisons and Conclusions

This paper addresses a large gap in the literature on alliances and military coalitions. Most of the work on alliances focuses on the role of alliances in causing wars (Christensen and Snyder 1990; Snyder 1997) or whether alliances endure (Thies 2009). The work on burden-sharing has not yet caught up to the realities of multilateral military operations (Palmer 1990). Very little scholarship has actually examined how alliances function or dysfunction during wartime.[56] Coalition efforts in Afghanistan clearly demonstrate that even in the most multilateral of efforts, what military officers can do is greatly shaped by their home country. Nationally established levels of military discretion remain, even when troops come under fire. Understanding why some militaries have more leeway than others is not just as an academic exercise but very important for managing current and future wars. Given the relatively small number of NATO forces on the ground in Afghanistan, it is very significant that some contingents are doing far more than others. The decisions in late 2009 and early 2010 for a European surge to accompany the American surge must therefore be questioned, as some of the biggest additions come from countries with the most significant restrictions (Germany and Italy). Those restrictions may ultimately determine whether NATO succeeds or fails. Indeed, General David Petraeus had his work cut out for him in Afghanistan, getting NATO contingents with varying levels of discretion, capabilities, and agendas all working on the same page.[57]

Caveats are not without political consequences. Countries that are too restricted lose credibility. During the Cold War, the German military was seen as an elite, capable force. The same is not true today, as Germany is viewed as passive and unreliable as a troop contributor—a ''rations consumer.'' In the view of one influential German publication, ''Germany has acquired the reputation of a discredited nation, a nation incapable of waging war, a cowardly nation.''[58] As the German example makes clear, countries have to be careful about how restrictive are their rules of engagement, as those rules can

[55] Interview with senior Minister of Interior official, June 2009.

[56] Again, Bensahel (2006) and Weitsman (2004) are notable exceptions, but they do not address caveats.

[57] For a similar comparison, see Ricks (2010).

[58] Der Spiegel Online. (2010) Fear of Rising Death Toll: Berlin Reluctant to Follow American Lead on Afghanistan. January 25. Available at http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,druck-673790,00.html. (Accessed January 27, 2010).

affect their future credibility. On the other hand, countries that are willing to do more, or are less restricted, appear to have more influence with their fellow alliance members on the ground.[59] Influence in a NATO operation has traditionally varied according to how many troops a country contributes. In the Balkans, most policies were usually hammered out first among the QUINT countries—the five largest troop contributing countries—the United States, Britain, France, Germany, and Italy. Then these decisions would be passed onto the rest of the NATO allies and then on to other contributors outside of NATO.[60] In Afghanistan, the number of troops is one factor, but it seems to be multiplied by the contingent's flexibility. Thus, Canada seems to have had more influence in Afghanistan than Germany because Canadian troops were in harm's way and were willing to do what ISAF asks of them.

This article shows that we need to consider both institutions and individuals to understand caveats. Some institutional forms, such as coalition cabinets, tend to impose caveats on their deployed troops and then resist dramatic alterations to those caveats. In the German case, caveats have not changed much, even as the ruling coalition changed. The shared responsibility for the Afghanistan portfolio across the governing coalition encouraged all to focus on minimizing risks, limiting the German contingent to the relatively quiet (albeit increasingly dangerous) Northern sector.

In other cases, such as presidential and majoritarian parliamentary governments, domestic institutions empower individuals as the key actors, necessitating that we understand their historical experiences and their inclinations. These countries are capable of rapid and dramatic changes in policy. Changes in the Canadian Chief of the Defense Staff and of French presidents both significantly altered the level of discretion delegated to military officers in the field. In both cases, key decision makers were distinguished by whether they prioritized achieving a certain outcome or avoiding certain types of behavior.

Our analysis has implications beyond these cases. Given what we know about the sources of caveats, we should pay careful attention to partner-nation institutions of governance, and the experiences and interests of key decision makers therein, before asking them to contribute to alliance or coalition efforts abroad. In concrete terms, the United States should be cognizant of what is possible before publicly asking a country like Germany (and some other NATO allies) to do more in Afghanistan. Such countries are unlikely to give their troops more battlefield discretion. On the other hand, approaching a leader from a majoritarian parliamentary system, or a strong presidential system, with a request to take a more active role in combat has a greater chance of paying dividends, depending on who is making decisions in those systems. Getting new mandates through a body like the Bundestag is simply harder than changing an individual's mind or hoping that an individual policymaker will be replaced (Tsebelis 2002). Including non-NATO members that have greater flexibility into NATO operations might be one way to compensate for the members that are relatively restricted. Leaders of ongoing and future interventions by the NATO alliance or less formal coalitions would be well served by understanding the constraints and opportunities uncovered by our approach.

[59] Confirmed in several interviews.

[60] One of the authors (Saideman) observed the QUINT process when he served as a desk officer on the Bosnia desk of US Joint Staff's Directorate of Strategic Planning and Policy (J-5) from 2001 to 2002.

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