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More than Half of Afghans See NATO as Occupiers

Survey in a War Zone

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Fully 60 percent of Afghans fear that the country will descend into civil war once NATO forces leave, but over half see the Western alliance as occupiers. A new survey carried out by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation has found that the mood in Afghanistan is worsening.

The troops are there, according to the mission statement, to "provide a secure environment for sustainable stability." But 10 years after NATO entered Afghanistan to drive out al-Qaida and beat back the Taliban, a majority of the local population has come to see the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) as little more than occupiers.

According to a survey published on Tuesday by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 56 percent of Afghans now see the foreign troop contingent as an occupying force. Furthermore, only 39 percent of those surveyed said they saw ISAF as a guarantee for security, well down from the 45 percent result found in the same survey in 2010. Fully 60 percent think that the country will descend into civil war once NATO forces withdraw.

Babak Khalatbari, head of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation's Afghanistan office, said on Tuesday that the results were "a matter of concern."

The survey has been completed each year since 2008 and is carried out in conjunction with the National Centre for Policy Research at the University of Kabul. Some 5,000 Afghans were

interviewed in five provinces in late September. Though the Konrad Adenauer Foundation warns that the poll is not strictly representative, the results are broadly consistent with the impression most in the West have about Afghanistan: The situation appears to be worsening.

Far from Subdued

"The survey results show that in Afghanistan, there appears to be an increasing amount of anxiety and fear rather than hope," Khalatbari said.

With a decade having elapsed since the US and NATO marched into Afghanistan in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, many in the West have [begun to see the mission as a failure](#). Security in the country is perceived as fragile and the Taliban are far from subdued.

Indeed, violence in the country has increased in recent years, though NATO released a report on Saturday indicating that the number of Taliban attacks has dropped sharply in recent months compared to the same late summer period in 2010. The alliance is planning to withdraw combat troops by 2014 and turn over responsibility for security entirely to Afghan forces. The survey found that a mere 22 percent of Afghans are satisfied with the security situation in the country, though there were significant geographical variations. Whereas 33 percent of those living in the western province of Herat were satisfied, just 7 percent found security up to snuff in Nangarhar, in the far east of the country.

But even as Afghans have an increasingly negative view of NATO troops, their view of the Taliban is plummeting as well. In 2010, 74 percent of those surveyed were in favor of [talks with the Islamists](#); this year, that number has dropped to 63 percent. Only 51 percent would be in favor of granting the Taliban a share of power in the country, down 10 percentage points from last year.

The survey likewise did not reflect well on Afghanistan's political leadership under President Hamid Karzai. Just 31 percent of those surveyed are pleased with the work of their government, down four percentage points from last year. In the capital Kabul, just 17 percent thought the government was doing a good job. Trust in state institutions is also abysmal. Only 28 percent of those surveyed had faith in the country's ministries and agencies.