

Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Humanitarian– Military Relations in Afghanistan

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ACBAR	Agency Co-ordinating Body for Afghan Relief
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSO	Afghan NGO Security Office
BAAG	British Agencies Afghanistan Group
DfID	Department for International Development, UK Government
DPKO	UN Department of Peace-Keeping Operations
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK Government
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IHRL	International Human Rights Law
IOM	International Organisation on Migration
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ITGA	Islamic Transitional Government of Afghanistan
MoE	measures of effectiveness
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NGHA	non-governmental humanitarian agency
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
SSR	security sector reform
UK-MoD	United Kingdom Ministry of Defence
UN	United Nations
US	United States (of America)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Executive summary

This paper presents the results of research conducted by Save the Children UK on the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan. It seeks to analyse more fully the implications of the PRTs on humanitarian agencies and humanitarian assistance in the country. The research was motivated by Save the Children UK's concerns that PRTs: (i) represent a second-best option for enhancing security; and (ii) blur the distinction between humanitarian and military actors.

PRTs are joint teams of international civilian and military personnel, operating at the provincial level throughout Afghanistan, that undertake activities in the areas of security, reconstruction, support to central governance and limited relief operations.

PRTs operate in the context of a wider military engagement in Afghanistan

PRTs constitute one of three distinct formulations of military engagement by the international community in Afghanistan, the others being: Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) – the US-led Coalition currently numbering 11,000 combat troops; and the NATO-led, UN-mandated, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) with approximately 6,500 troops.

The PRTs emerged as a US initiative in early 2003, and with the support of other Coalition nations, evolved to a network of 13 teams by the end of June 2004. The UK opened a PRT in Mazar-I-Sharif in July 2003, and one in Maymaneh in May 2004. The PRTs feature prominently in NATO's concept of operations for ISAF expansion. However, the mixture of Coalition- and ISAF-led PRTs presents a dichotomy in mandates of the PRTs: whereas the ISAF-led teams come under the umbrella of the UN-mandated force, the Coalition PRTs are operating at the invitation of the Afghan government, without a UN mandate. This dual regime factors into the debate on interactions between humanitarian agencies and PRTs.

Humanitarian–military relations generally

Military and humanitarian actors have differing perspectives of what constitutes 'humanitarian assistance'. This divergence of views relates not so much to the type of activity considered to be humanitarian assistance, but more to the process of delivery and the motivations behind it. In engaging in assistance activities, whatever the motive, military actors do not necessarily adhere to the standards applied by humanitarian organisations. For any assistance to be considered 'humanitarian', it must be delivered according to the core principles of: the primacy of the humanitarian imperative; the independence of humanitarian aid; and the impartial provisioning of aid.

In addition, militaries commonly undertake activities that may readily be confused with humanitarian assistance; these activities include 'hearts and minds' operations, or 'quick-impact projects', intended to gain support from local communities to enhance military operations. Such aid provided by military actors is referred to as 'relief operations' throughout this paper.

There is a trend amongst UK, US, NATO and other military forces of undertaking relief operations as part of the new military mission of peace-support operations. Militaries view such relief operations as key to enhancing the military's peace-support missions, contributing to force protection, and thus to stabilisation.

Several sets of guidelines for humanitarian–military interaction have been developed in recent years, by UN bodies and NGO coalitions as well as by individual agencies, all of which are limited by three important shortcomings:

1. The guidelines are based on the faulty premise that fundamental humanitarian principles will be respected by all military and non-state actors.
2. They are not sufficiently explicit concerning situations where civil-military teams may engage in a complex or ambiguous range of missions that may include relief operations.
3. The guidelines do not sufficiently address what some have termed the new paradigm of ‘complex development’ where the needs of the population are less critical than in humanitarian crises, yet where the security situation still warrants a military intervention.

Security in Afghanistan is deteriorating

The focus of this paper is on the contribution the PRTs are making to enhance security, and how these teams impact on humanitarian security (as a precursor to humanitarian access), in particular. The security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated significantly since early 2003, with serious repercussions for non-governmental humanitarian agencies (NGHAs) as well as Afghans. There are four main sources of insecurity: (i) military and terrorist activities of various paramilitary groups opposed to the current government and political process; (ii) inter-militia fighting; (iii) increased general lawlessness and banditry; and (iv) violence related to the narcotics trade.

The number of armed attacks against aid workers has increased. The lethality of these attacks has also risen, with 18 aid workers killed in the first six months of 2004, compared to 13 for all of 2003.

PRT activities

There has been a lack of clarity on the exact roles and missions of PRTs since their earliest deployments. In addition to their three core areas of operation – security, reconstruction and support to central governance – the initial working principles for the PRTs issued by the US stated that the PRTs would engage in relief operations in certain circumstances.

Examples are provided in Chapter 4 of the various operational approaches of PRTs in different provinces. An incident in Ghazni province highlights the confusion created between combat activities under OEF and ‘hearts and minds’ activities undertaken by the US-led PRT there. Experience in Kandahar and Herat Provinces has demonstrated the gulf between rhetoric and practice relating to the US-led PRTs’ priorities: instead of meeting needs identified in areas that are inaccessible to NGHAs, the PRTs in both provinces have concentrated activities in those areas where NGHAs are also operational. The UK-led PRT in Mazar-I-Sharif has demonstrated some success in mediating in disputes between local commanders once incidents have occurred, although not in preventing such incidents from occurring in the first place.

PRTs offer both challenges and opportunities

Several challenges and opportunities have been identified concerning the PRTs’ main areas of operation. Many of the opportunities identified relate to the role PRTs *could* play in enhancing security throughout Afghanistan. Challenges facing the PRTs as they are currently constituted include: lack of sufficient military strength to address insecurity; lack of pre-deployment consultation with NGHAs; insufficient involvement of local

stakeholders in PRT activities; lack of a clearly-defined role in certain areas; lack of institutional learning; and potential for compromising the role of humanitarian agencies.

Relief operations conducted by PRTs affect humanitarian security

A causal analysis of the linkages between PRT activities and humanitarian security (Figure 7) highlights: (i) that most of the positive effects on humanitarian security result from PRT activities in their core mission areas; and (ii) that the negative consequences of PRT activities arise from PRTs engaging in relief operations.

Several constraints and concerns are identified regarding the way the PRTs are currently implemented: (i) PRTs have an ambiguous political identity, which blurs the lines between combat and stabilisation forces; (ii) the PRT structure does not streamline institutional reporting; and (iii) PRTs inappropriately apply humanitarian dialogue and deeds.

Supporters of the PRTs consider them a huge success, while critics assert that they have done more harm than good. In addition to a clear mandate, objective criteria are required to assess whether the PRTs are indeed effective in their main areas of operation. Measures of effectiveness are suggested to facilitate evaluation of PRT activities in their core mission areas.

The experience of PRTs in Afghanistan, and the analysis of the interface between PRTs and humanitarian actors, highlights several issues of principle and practice. Issues of principle arise in the following areas: how PRTs blur the distinction between military and humanitarian objectives; how PRTs may contribute to the ‘militarisation’ of aid; increased risk of insecurity for humanitarian agencies; and a lack of accountability regarding relief operations undertaken by PRTs. The PRTs also raise issues of practice related to ensuring assistance is appropriate and does not endanger those it is intended to help.

PRTs complicate the humanitarian–military interface

The PRTs have complicated the interface between humanitarian and military actors in Afghanistan, as manifest by the following factors: (i) the non-adherence of certain (primarily US-led) PRTs to their ‘working guidelines’ concerning relief operations; (ii) the variation in roles and missions of the different PRTs, depending on lead country; (iii) the lack of pre-deployment consultation by some PRTs with local communities and NGHAs operating in the same areas; and (iv) the relatively high turnover of personnel within the PRTs, which makes institutional learning more difficult.

Modes of engagement between PRTs and humanitarian agencies

Since PRTs may be deployed in one form or another in Afghanistan for some time to come, humanitarian agencies face a choice as to how they should engage with the PRTs. Four policy options for humanitarian agencies to consider in guiding their engagements with PRTs are: (i) ‘principled non-engagement’; (ii) ‘arm’s-length’ interaction’; (iii) ‘proactive, pragmatic, principled engagement’; and (iv) ‘active, direct engagement and co-operation’. Section 5.8 explores the advantages and disadvantages of these approaches.

Critical need for critical debate

There are a number of important questions that need to be acknowledged and resolved, not only to ensure improvement in the operational integrity of the PRTs in Afghanistan, but also to feed into thinking about any deployments that mix civilian and military functions – so-called civil-military teams – in the future. Questions about their effectiveness, accountability, clarity of purpose and added value compared to a ‘simple’ military deployment are highlighted for further debate.

Implications of the PRT model for future civil-military deployments

Several factors should be considered by military forces in advance of any future civil-military deployments:

- Civil-military teams should exploit their comparative advantages in the areas of security.
- The teams should have the necessary capability to address security threats in their area of operation.
- Civil-military teams should adhere to a clearly-defined mission.
- Civil-military entities should consist of personnel that are appropriately trained for their missions and operating environment.
- Civil-military entities working in the areas of governance support and reconstruction should prioritise the role of emerging local (legitimate) political leaders and institutions.
- The deployment of civil-military teams to undertake activities in the areas of security, reconstruction and governance support should be undertaken with a clear exit or transition strategy.

Preserving the boundaries between humanitarians and militaries

At the nexus of concerns about the blurring of identities and the overlapping roles between military and humanitarian actors, lie two fundamental points of contention. First, is an in-principle opposition on the part of many NGHAs to a structural association between humanitarian and military entities. Second is practical opposition to the use, by military forces, of those relief activities (including 'hearts and minds' operations) that are similar to the work undertaken by humanitarian agencies.

The fundamental distinction between relief operations conducted by military forces and humanitarian activities is the motive behind them, and the way in which this motivation governs the process of delivery. NGHAs seek to deliver aid because people need it, and aim to do so in a manner that meets immediate needs while also maximising longer-term prospects. Militaries undertake such action as a means of winning 'hearts and minds', i.e. on the basis of whether the beneficiaries will be of political assistance.

For the last two years at least, NGHAs have been voicing concerns about the threat 'hearts and minds' activities pose to humanitarian agencies – in terms of perceptions of their independence and concomitant security. These concerns have gone largely unheeded. Only after the murder of five Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) workers in June 2004, and the subsequent withdrawal of that organisation from Afghanistan, has the issue received the attention it requires.

Preserving the boundaries between humanitarian and military spheres of activity will require mutual clarification of roles and activities in areas where the two domains intersect. The experience of the PRTs has demonstrated that one of the greatest threats to erosion of the boundaries emanates from relief activities undertaken by civil-military entities, including 'hearts and minds' activities. It is imperative that military forces evaluate the impact of their relief operations undertaken as part of peace-support operations. Either the risks posed by 'hearts and minds' operations are markedly outweighed by the security benefits, or else such activities should cease to be included in the portfolio of military tactics.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Background and rationale for this study

This paper presents the results of research, conducted by Save the Children UK between January and June 2004, on the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan. PRTs are joint teams of international civilian and military personnel (numbering 50-150 per team) operating at the provincial level throughout Afghanistan (see map in Figure 6). They undertake activities in the areas of security, reconstruction, support to central governance and limited relief operations.

Save the Children UK undertook this research in order to analyse the implications of the PRTs on humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. Along with many other humanitarian agencies, Save the Children UK had voiced concern over the role and *modus operandi* of PRTs since before their inception. Concern was based on two key assertions:

1. the PRTs represent a second-best option for enhancing security throughout Afghanistan
2. the co-location of civilian and military components in the PRTs and, more importantly, the engagement of these teams in relief activities (and their relative competence to do so), blurs the distinction between humanitarian and military actors. This blurring increases the risk of impartial humanitarian actors being perceived as working directly with, or for, the military, and therefore being seen as legitimate targets in the ongoing conflict.

This paper seeks to explore the interface between PRTs and humanitarian assistance activities and organisations in Afghanistan – and to determine the extent to which the concerns outlined above have been realised – in an effort to contribute openly and constructively to a debate that is preoccupying humanitarian, military and political actors.

The analysis presented in this paper draws on Save the Children's operating experience in Afghanistan, spanning almost three decades. This has focused in recent years on provision of assistance in the areas of child protection, health, nutrition, food security and education.

1.2. Scope and limitations of the study

The primary focus of this study is on the role and activities of PRTs and how these entities impinge on the identity and humanitarian operations of international and national non-governmental humanitarian agencies (NGHAs) in Afghanistan.¹ PRT activities include funding reconstruction projects; 'hearts and minds' operations run by military contingents; 'quick-impact projects'; and relief activities.

It is recognised that there is no generic PRT. The operational approach and activities of each one is different, depending largely on how the local military commanders have interpreted doctrine and operational guidelines, and also on the local political/security context. Where possible, reference is made in this paper to a specific PRT, although much

¹ The term 'non-governmental humanitarian agencies' (NGHAs) is used throughout this document to include national and international humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs); the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); and the humanitarian agencies within the UN system.

of the discussion relates to the general tripartite architecture of the teams: the military (constituting 90-95 per cent of PRT personnel); political (eg, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, FCO, political advisers in the UK PRT); and development components (eg, USAID agricultural advisers in some US-led PRTs).

The underlying research does not provide a comprehensive analysis of the root causes of the conflict and ongoing insecurity. The central concern is how manifest insecurity (threats and incidents) is dealt with through the PRTs.

Finally, this report raises questions regarding the role of the PRTs, highlights issues for further debate, and proffers options by identifying opportunities for enhancing the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan.

1.3. Methodology

The methodology underlying this policy-directed research consisted of four main elements:

- a comprehensive literature review
- field-level analysis and reporting
- structured interviews
- policy analysis.

The literature review covered a wide range of sources, including: international NGHAs; non-governmental organisation (NGO) co-ordinating bodies such as the Agency Co-ordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) and the British Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG); UK Government sources; United States Department of Defence; North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO); policy ‘think tanks’, etc (see Annex 1 for a bibliography). Based on this literature review, several key individuals were contacted to provide further perspectives and information, either through semi-structured interviews, or by written responses to a questionnaire (see Annex 2 for a list of organisations consulted). The initial series of interviews and communications took place in January and February 2004, with a follow-up consultations in May and June 2004. Additional details about PRT activities were sought from operational NGHAs in Afghanistan during both rounds of interviews.

1.4. Structure of this paper

As a prelude to analysing the implications of PRTs on humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan, Chapter 2 explores the nature of the interface between humanitarian assistance and military action generally (not specific to Afghanistan). Chapter 3 describes the security context in the country, beginning with an overview of the main security challenges in Afghanistan since early 2003, and outlining the international and national response to these challenges.

Chapter 4 focuses on the roles and missions of the PRTs, and the evolution of the PRT network since late 2002. Chapter 5 builds on the discussion of humanitarian–military relations, seen in the second chapter, to assess the specific case of the interface between PRTs and humanitarian assistance and actors in Afghanistan. This chapter suggests, for humanitarian agencies, several possible ‘modes of engagement’ with military actors, and presents some issues for further debate.

Chapter 6 explores the implications of the PRT model on humanitarian–military relations in general. It concludes by identifying key issues for consideration by humanitarian, military and political actors concerning relations between humanitarian and military entities.

Chapter 2

Humanitarian–military relations

2.1. Overview

A significant body of research and analysis on the subject of civil–military interactions has evolved in recent years. The term civil–military, as used by military forces, encapsulates a broad range of interactions between military forces and civil institutions such as NGOs in a domestic setting (ie, in the military forces’ home country) and host-country civil institutions and NGOs in a foreign country where forces are deployed.

The term ‘civil–military relations’ has frequently been used by humanitarian organisations to denote the interactions of these organisations with the military. The more precise and narrowly-defined term ‘humanitarian–military relations’ relates to interactions between military forces (at home or on deployment) and NGHAs.

This chapter begins by outlining the different perceptions of what constitutes ‘humanitarian’ from the point of view of humanitarian agencies and military actors. It then explores the underlying principles and existing operational guidelines relevant to humanitarian–military relations.

2.2. Differing views of ‘humanitarian’

The conceptual and operational foundations of humanitarian assistance rest on the fundamental principles of humanity, independence and impartiality. These principles are codified in International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and are defined as follows in the Code of Conduct of the International Red Cross Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations in Disaster Relief (1994):

The primacy of the humanitarian imperative

“The right to receive humanitarian assistance, and to offer it, is a fundamental humanitarian principle, which should be enjoyed by all citizens of all countries.”

The independence of humanitarian aid

“Humanitarian aid it is not a partisan or political act and should not be viewed as such. Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint... Humanitarian NGOs (NGHAs) shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy. NGHAs are agencies, which act independently from governments.”

Providing aid impartially

“Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone.”

A number of different actors are now involved in the delivery of humanitarian-like assistance, among them military forces and private contractors. They do not necessarily adhere to humanitarian principles, but take their own approaches, and have developed their own meanings for the term ‘humanitarian’. For example, definitions used by the defence forces of the UK, the USA, and by NATO and donor governments, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Operative definitions of ‘humanitarian’ and ‘humanitarian assistance’ as used by select military and political actors

Organisation	Definition of humanitarian/humanitarian assistance
NATO	[emergency humanitarian relief is that which] concerns the sustainment of the means to safeguard life. ²
UK-MoD	Humanitarian-like activities form a core part of the security agenda of the UK Ministry of Defence. However, these activities are not labelled as ‘humanitarian’. Instead they are presented as tools for ‘influencing’ or ‘hearts and minds’ activities, aimed at reducing opposition to military forces and encouraging local acceptance of a force presence. ³ According to the UK’s MoD doctrine on peace-support operations: ‘ Humanitarian Assistance is “support provided to humanitarian and development agencies, in an insecure environment, by a deployed force whose primary mission is not the provision of humanitarian aid. Should the deployed force undertake such humanitarian tasks, responsibility should be handed-over/returned to the appropriate civilian agency at the earliest opportunity” (JWP 0-01.1). This can be contrasted with the deployment of military forces on Humanitarian Disaster Relief Operations (JWP 3-52). In these circumstances the primary military mission is to act to alleviate suffering and need.’ ⁴
UK-DFID	‘ Humanitarian Assistance comprises food aid and other disaster relief. It generally involves the provision of material aid (including food, medical care and personnel) and finance and advice to save and preserve lives during emergency situations and in the immediate post-emergency rehabilitation phase; and to cope with short and longer term population displacements arising out of emergencies.’ ⁵
US-DOD	Humanitarian Assistance: ‘ Assistance to the local populace provided by predominantly US forces in conjunction with military operations and exercises. This assistance is specifically authorised by title 10, United States Code, section 401, and funded under separate authorities. Assistance provided under these provisions is limited to (1) medical, dental, and veterinary care provided in rural areas of a country; (2) construction of rudimentary surface transportation systems; (3) well drilling and construction of basic sanitation facilities; and (4) rudimentary construction and repair of public facilities. Assistance must fulfil unit-training requirements that incidentally create humanitarian benefit to the local populace.’ ⁶
Donor states	‘ Humanitarian action includes the protection of civilians and those no longer taking part in hostilities, and the provision of food, water and sanitation, shelter, health services and other items of assistance, undertaken for the benefit of affected people and to facilitate the return to normal lives and livelihoods.’ ⁷

² See: NATO (2001) *Peace Support Operations* (AJP 3.4.1) Brussels, July, Chapter 6. In addition, NATO’s Partnership for Peace includes agreement on partner countries assisting in the so-called Petersburg Tasks, which include humanitarian assistance. See: Western European Union, 1992, ‘Petersburg Declaration’, Issued at the Meeting of Western European Union Council of Ministers, Bonn, 19 June, available at: www.weu.int

³ See: Interim Joint Warfare Publication 3-90 CIMIC November 2003.

⁴ UK Ministry of Defence (2004) *The Military Contribution To Peace Support Operations*, Joint Warfare Publication 3-50, 2nd Edition (2nd Study draft) Chapter 4.

⁵ DFID Annual Report 2004, available at: www.dfid.gov.uk

⁶ United States Department of Defense (US-DOD) (2001) *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Publication 1-02, Arlington, VA: Department of Defense, 12 April [as amended 15 October 2001]

⁷ From a document outlining principles and ‘best practice’ for funding of humanitarian assistance activities endorsed by state participants in the International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship. See: *Meeting Conclusions of the International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship*, Stockholm, 16-17 June 2003.

The main difference in perspectives held by military actors and humanitarian agencies relates not so much to the substance of humanitarian assistance (in terms of the type of assistance delivered), but more to the *process* of delivery. Humanitarian agencies maintain that for any assistance to be considered humanitarian, it must be delivered according to the core principles of humanitarianism: humanity, impartiality and independence.

The implication of these differing perspectives on humanitarian assistance is that humanitarian and military actors come to the discussion table with different conceptions of humanitarian. For the purposes of clarity, assistance activities that are conducted by non-humanitarian actors – and not guided by, and undertaken in accordance with, the principles of humanity, impartiality and independence – will be referred to here as ‘relief operations’.

In the last 15 years, to different degrees, the term humanitarian has been identified as a contributing factor to military interventions in Kosovo, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, East Timor, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Iraq and Afghanistan. Each of these operations was carried out for a distinct set of reasons and motives.⁸ This becomes more alarming in situations such as Afghanistan and Iraq where military coalitions are simultaneously engaged in waging a war and conducting humanitarian-like operations. The current phraseology of, for example, ‘military-humanitarian operations’, ‘military strikes for humanitarian purposes’, and ‘humanitarian safety zones’, has left true humanitarian action and identity in a state of crisis.

2.3. Legal frameworks and voluntary codes

The legal frameworks underpinning the work of humanitarian agencies are outlined principally in International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and in IHL.⁹ An in-depth analysis of the principled basis for humanitarian action as codified in IHL and IHRL is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is important to note that these instruments contain provisions relating to the way in which humanitarian organisations undertake activities, what constitutes humanitarian action, and the entitlement of those in need to receive assistance.

In addition to these legal instruments, there are also several voluntary codes that humanitarian agencies have adopted to guide their activities.

⁸ For example, whereas military intervention in DRC was targeted principally at ending the bloodshed, military intervention in Iraq was justified first on the grounds that weapons of mass destruction were being illegally manufactured. It was only as the war progressed that the humanitarian rationale crept in; not simply as a side benefit to the intervention, but as a prime justification for it. Meanwhile the Afghan intervention came to be associated increasingly with humanitarian concerns and with human rights. However, in reality, human rights motives were similarly secondary: the Taliban’s rights record had been abysmal for years without prompting international military intervention.

⁹ IHL is the law of war as enshrined in the Geneva Conventions (1949) and their Additional Protocols (1977). It imposes duties on the parties to an armed conflict, both to regulate the conduct of hostilities in order to minimise suffering, and to protect those who do not take part in hostilities. IHRL encapsulates the Declarations, Covenants and Conventions that codify the entitlements of individuals, and the obligations of states, across the multiple dimensions of human activity, including, social, economic, political and cultural rights. IHRL establishes rights and freedoms inherent to all human beings, which apply in times of peace and war.

Two of the most widely adopted codes guiding the activities of humanitarian agencies are:

- the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief (1994)
- the Humanitarian Charter drafted as part of the Sphere Project (2004).¹⁰

All have been put in place to protect the lives, wellbeing and dignity of individuals. This body of legal instruments and guiding principles is the essence of what constitutes humanitarian action – that is, the motivation behind that action as opposed to a description of what it is. This distinction is central in much of the debate about the humanitarian–military interface.

In delineating the scope and intent of activity of humanitarian organisations, the legal instruments and voluntary codes essentially define the boundaries and purposes for engagement by humanitarian agencies with military forces. As such, they constitute a critical point of reference for both humanitarian and military actors, as they consider the interface between the humanitarian and military domains.

2.4. Guidelines on civil–military relations

Since 11 September 2001, military engagement in humanitarian activities has formed an integral component of military deployments in at least four cases – DRC, Iraq, Afghanistan and Liberia. All of these deployments, to a greater or lesser degree, have been justified on humanitarian grounds. This increased engagement in so-called ‘humanitarian military intervention’ has been accompanied by a growing body of literature on the subject of civil–military relations (often referred to as civil-military co-operation).

Several sets of generic guidelines on civil–military relations have been developed, including those by the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).¹¹ These guidelines have generally outlined, for humanitarian entities, the appropriate terms for their engagement with military forces, so that humanitarian actors can remain true to the fundamental principles of humanity, independence and impartiality. During and following the war in Iraq many humanitarian organisations drafted their own position papers on how they, and other humanitarian actors, should interact with the military.¹²

¹⁰ See: The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief (1994); and the Humanitarian Charter, in: The Sphere Project (2004) *The Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards for Disaster Response*.

¹¹ (i) Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) (2002 revised 2004) *SCHR Position Paper on Humanitarian-Military Relations in the Provision of Humanitarian Assistance*, SCHR. (ii) UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (2003) *Guidelines on The Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies*, New York: UN-OCHA, March (iii) Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) (2004) *Civil-Military Relations in Complex Emergencies, An IASC Reference Paper*, Geneva: IASC, 28 June.

¹² See, for example: (i) UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (2003) *General Guidance for Interaction Between United Nations Personnel and Military Actors in the Context of the Crisis in Iraq*, New York: UN-OCHA, 21 March. (ii) Oxfam International (2003) *Iraq: Humanitarian-Military Relations*, Oxfam Briefing Paper 41, Washington, DC: Oxfam International, March.

The four main positions agreed by SCHR agencies in a Position Paper issued by the group in 2002, and updated in 2004, are summarised in Table 2.¹³ The updated paper builds on the positions laid down in 2002, taking account of some of the more recent operational experiences of humanitarian agencies. Two key factors are highlighted for SCHR agencies to consider before determining how to interact with an armed force:

1. whether or not the armed force is party to an armed conflict
2. the mandate of the armed force.

Table 2: Summary of positions from SCHR’s position paper on humanitarian–military relations

	Context	Position
1	Direct military implementation of humanitarian assistance in ‘general circumstances’	It is never appropriate for the military to directly implement humanitarian activities in general circumstances.
2	Direct military implementation of humanitarian assistance in ‘exceptional circumstances’	Only in exceptional circumstances, and very rarely, is it appropriate for the military to directly implement humanitarian activities, for which there must be specific criteria.
3	Use of armed military escorts/protection for humanitarian staff and goods	Humanitarian agencies will only use military armed protection as a last resort in extreme circumstances, according to the criteria listed in the SCHR paper.
4	Information sharing	Certain types of information can and should be shared between humanitarian agencies and the military.

There are three important shortcomings of existing guidelines (SCHR, OCHA, etc) as they relate to the situation in Afghanistan and the case of PRTs:

- The guidelines are based on the faulty premise that the fundamental principles of humanity, independence and impartiality will be acknowledged and respected by all military actors. This has been shown not to be the case in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- The guidelines are not sufficiently explicit concerning situations where civil–military teams engage in a complex or ambiguous range of missions that may include humanitarian-like assistance in some situations (as in the case of the PRTs).
- The guidelines do not sufficiently address what some have termed the new paradigm of ‘complex development’ where the needs are less humanitarian than in full crises, yet a situation is bad enough to warrant a military intervention.

¹³SCHR (2002, revised 2004) *SCHR Position Paper on Humanitarian-Military Relations in the Provision of Humanitarian Assistance*.

Chapter 3

Setting the scene: security in Afghanistan

3.1. Overview

For humanitarian and military actors alike, the current operating environment in Afghanistan is a complex web of shifting political forces, dynamic security threats and acute humanitarian and development needs across key sectors. The role and implications of the PRTs cannot be considered in isolation from this operational context. Although the situation in Afghanistan is changing rapidly, this chapter provides a brief ‘snapshot’ of the security environment in Afghanistan, the international responses to security challenges, and the impact of insecurity on humanitarian assistance activities.

3.2. The evolving security environment in Afghanistan

Research conducted as part of this study confirms other analyses that there are four main sources of insecurity in Afghanistan:

1. insecurity due to military and terrorist activities of various paramilitary groups (including resurgent Taliban, al Qaeda and Hizb-i Islami) that are opposed to the current government and political process. Their apparent aims are to sabotage the political transition envisioned under the Bonn Agreement; to block or delay the expansion of centralised government authority throughout the provinces; and/or to frustrate the US-led Coalition’s war on terrorism
2. insecurity resulting from fighting between local military commanders, mostly related to posturing for regional political control and control of resources/transit routes
3. increased general lawlessness and banditry in certain areas of Afghanistan (primarily outside the main urban centres) which includes the actions of common criminals acting with actual or perceived impunity
4. opium traders and their sponsoring warlords frequently reverting to violence to protect their lucrative industry – revenues from which are estimated at around US\$2.3 billion in 2003¹⁴.

All these elements of the prevailing insecurity are occurring against a backdrop of poor infrastructure, a near-absence of any national security capability, across a vast terrain, in a country that is divided by strong ethnic allegiances. The Government of Afghanistan has set a goal of having 50,000 uniformed police and an additional 12,000 border police by December 2005, although as of early 2004 only 1,500 police cadets had undergone training in the newly reconstructed police academy in Kabul.¹⁵

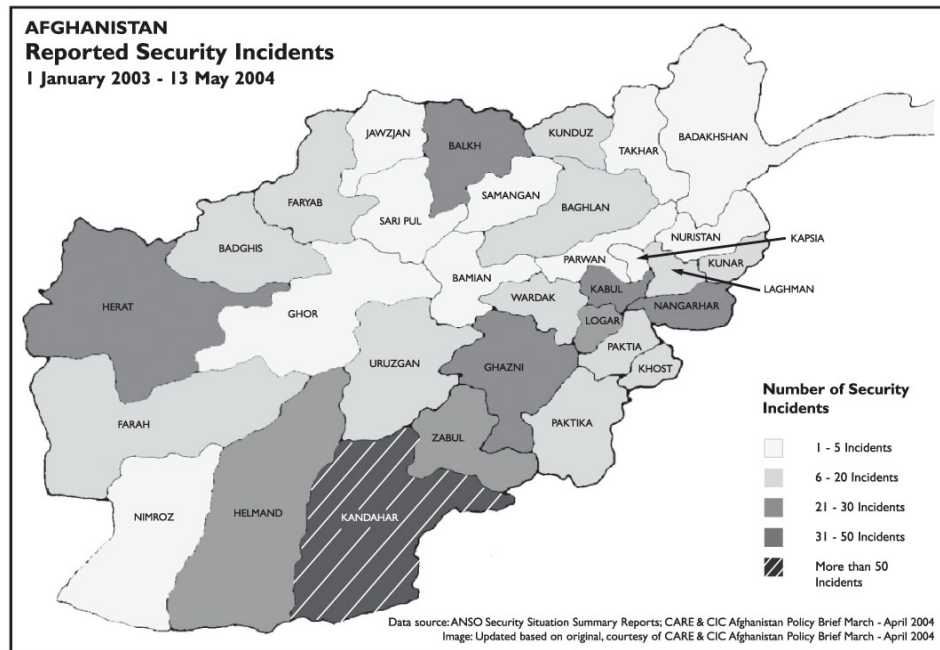
Although there is important geographical variation in the level and nature of insecurity in Afghanistan, there appears to be a widely held view among Afghan citizens, NGHAs, and

¹⁴ Gannon, K (2004) ‘Road Rage’, *New Yorker*, 22 March

¹⁵ Data on police requirements are drawn from a joint Afghan Government and International Agency (Asian Development Bank, UNAMA, UNDP, World Bank) report: Government of Afghanistan (2004) *Securing Afghanistan’s Future: Accomplishments and the Strategic Path Forward*, Kabul: Government of Afghanistan, 17 March, pp 83-85. Information on training levels is from: German Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2004) *German Engagement in the Reconstruction of the Afghan Police Force*, press release/fact sheet, January.

key political figures that there has been a marked deterioration in the general level of security, especially in areas outside urban centres, since early 2003.¹⁶ Attacks against US troops have increased: in the period from January to July 2004, 23 US troops were killed by insurgents, compared with 12 combat deaths during 2003.¹⁷

Figure 1: Geographic variation of security incidents in Afghanistan, January 2003 to 13 May 2004



(Source: ANSO, Security Incident Record Database. Image updated courtesy of CARE/CIC)

The prevailing insecurity is of paramount importance to Afghans, and it constitutes the lynchpin of any prospects for this war-ravaged country. Save the Children UK's own history in Afghanistan, spanning nearly three decades, has demonstrated time and again that security is a fundamental pre-requisite to both humanitarian action and improved development prospects for children and their families. In a survey of local perceptions conducted during 2003, 43 per cent of those interviewed focused on security, and the protection of security rights, as their priority.¹⁸ Specifically, disarmament was seen as key to improving security, to permitting free and fair elections and to progressing reconstruction.

The lack of security is negatively impacting on the ability of the Government of Afghanistan to establish its authority in some areas outside Kabul, especially in the south and south-east of the country. With preparations underway, as of June 2004, for nationwide elections to be held before the end of the year, the lack of security is hindering voter

¹⁶ This assertion is based on: (i) statements from UN officials; (ii) a survey of Afghan citizens conducted in 2003 by the Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium; (iii) analyses by international NGOs working in Afghanistan. For statements by UN officials, see for example comments by the Special Representative of the UN's Secretary General in his briefing to the Security Council, 27 May 2004. Also, a group of British Members of Parliament, from the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, recently returned from Afghanistan appalled by what they had witnessed; a stark failure by NATO and the west to bring stability to Afghanistan (Brown and Sengupta (2004) *The Independent*, 25 May).

¹⁷ Schmitt, E and Rohde, D (2004) 'Taliban Fighters Increase Attacks', *The New York Times*, 1 August.

¹⁸ Stallard D et al (2003) *Speaking Out: Afghan Opinions on Rights and Responsibilities*, The Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium, November.

registration and, if not addressed, will likely present a significant obstacle to the conduct of free and representative elections.

Afghanistan's powerful warlords are a critical element in the ITGA's efforts to assert control throughout the territory. Many of the country's warlords have now accepted official political or military positions of power. There are ongoing power plays within the inner circles of government to ensure a balance between the pragmatic need for support from key warlords, and the need to ensure that individual warlords do not overshadow the emerging government authority in areas under their control. However, the lack of cohesion within the Interim Government has encouraged these figureheads to hold on to their power-base through private military might, rather than through an open engagement in a political process.

Contradictory strategies by donor governments have driven the wedge between warlords and the Government of Afghanistan even deeper. For example, conflicting US Government policies have had a destructive impact on the legitimacy and viability of President Karzai's Government. While the US State Department was actively supporting the central government, US military and the intelligence service actively supported the warlords in areas where they supplanted central government influence. Although this dysfunction has now been addressed through 'harmonised' US policy that focuses support on central government, the damage has already been done: a consolidated power-base for warlords in the regions, which will be extremely hard to pull back.

The establishment of central government authority in the provinces will require reliable security and civilian police forces, to ensure that this authority can retain a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Reconstruction efforts are also being hindered by the lack of security, as is investment by the business community (with the notable exception of the opium trade). Another facet of the evolving security environment in Afghanistan is the increased targeting of humanitarian workers since 2003. This has impacted on the ability of NGHAs to effectively deliver assistance to vulnerable groups in the Afghan population.

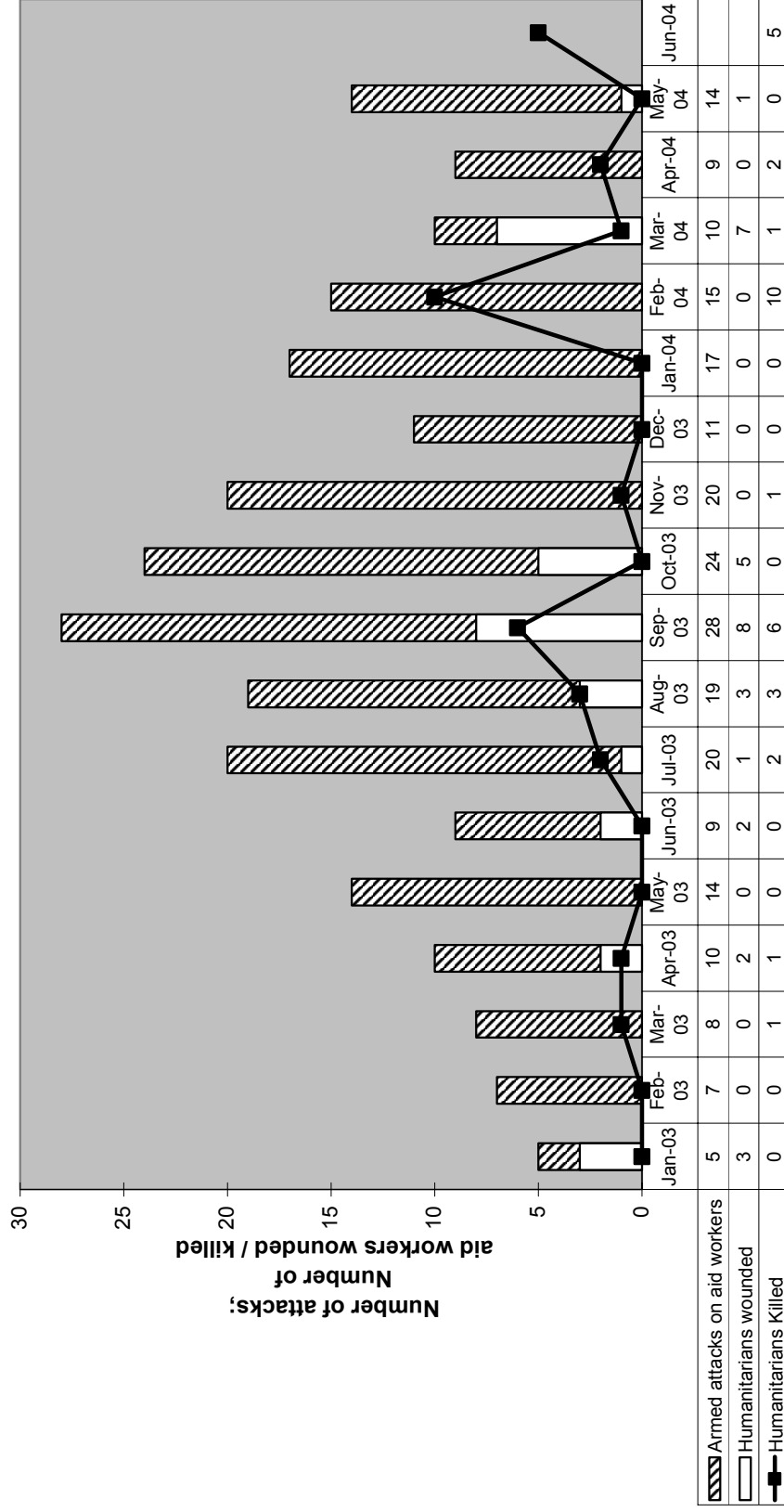
3.3. Security for humanitarian assistance

Since January 2003, there has been a deterioration in humanitarian security – a term used here to encapsulate the various aspects of physical and psychological safety of both assistance providers and recipients associated with, and necessary for, humanitarian operations.

The overall number of security incidents has increased since early 2003. Data compiled by the Afghanistan NGO Security Office (ANSO) points to a stark increase in armed attacks against aid workers between January and September 2003 (see Figure 2). Although the number of attacks on aid workers subsequently fell from the September 2003 peak of 28 armed attacks, the number of attacks in the first five months of 2004 (averaging 13 per month) represents a marked increase over the average for the first five months of 2003 (8.8 attacks per month).¹⁹

¹⁹ Figures derived from ANSO Security Incident Database data.

Figure 2: Armed attacks against aid workers, and humanitarian workers wounded or killed, January 2003 to June 2004



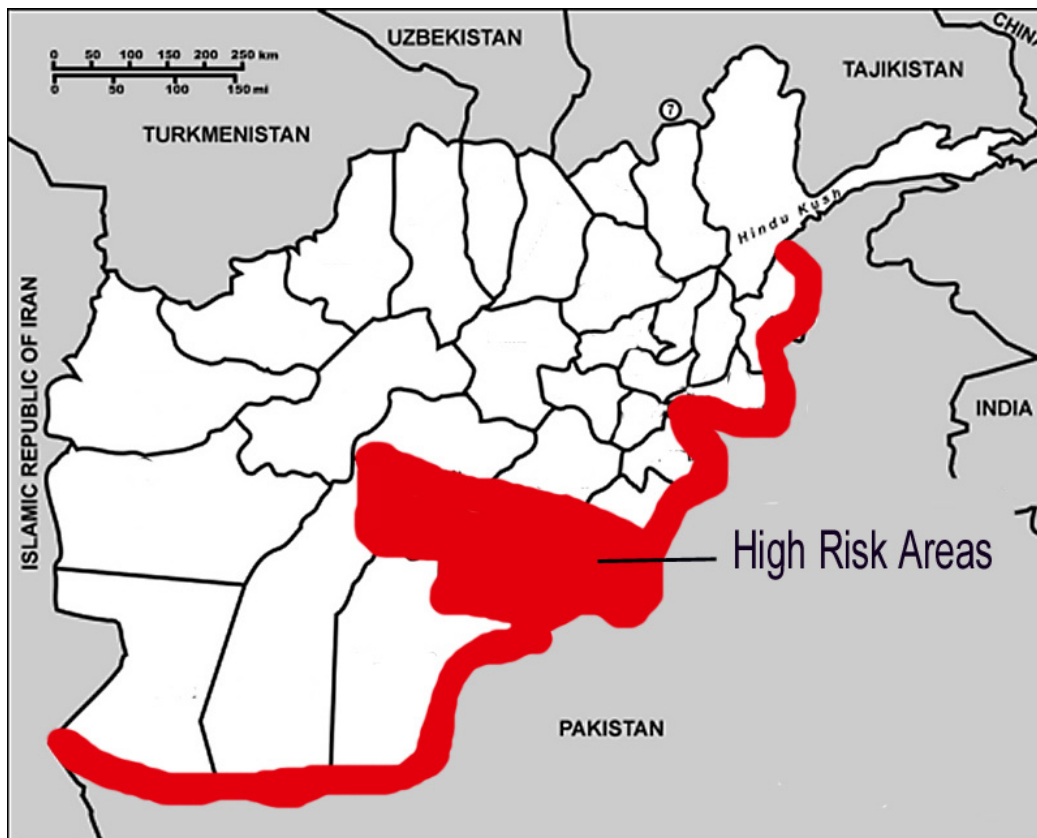
(Source: All data provided by ANSO, except number of aid workers killed in June 2004: from BAAG Monthly Update, June 2004. Attacks against aid workers are defined as incidents involving armed confrontation targeting UN, Red Cross, NGOs and aid contractors. They do not include burglaries, threatening night letters, corruption, or other non-violent incidents. Reproduced courtesy of CARE, from "The Cost of Doing Too Little in Afghanistan," CARE/CIC Policy Brief, March 2004).

Furthermore, on 2 June 2004, five aid workers from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) were killed in an apparently targeted attack in Badghis province, bringing the number of aid workers killed since the beginning of 2004 to 21 (compared to 13 humanitarian workers killed throughout 2003).²⁰ The trend is a higher percentage of attacks resulting in injury or death.

In addition, a new phenomenon emerged during the second quarter of 2004 – intended to destabilise the election process – of targeting civilians who are in the process of registering or who hold election cards, as well as those working in registration centres. Key political figures have asserted that the increasingly volatile and unpredictable security situation is likely to worsen further in the run-up to the elections.²¹

The increased targeting of aid workers has focused additional attention on the terms of engagement between humanitarian actors and military forces. A snapshot of the level of risk associated with operations by humanitarian agencies in Afghanistan, as assessed by the United Nations in May 2004, is provided in Figure 3. A comparison with Figure 6 demonstrates considerable overlap between the areas identified as ‘high risk’ and those where PRTs have been operating.

Figure 3: High risk areas for NGHAs working in Afghanistan, as assessed by the United Nations, May 2004



(Compiled by Save the Children UK based on original map of provinces from www.globalsecurity.org)

²⁰ Collett-White, M and Salahuddin, S (2004) ‘Foreign and Local Aid Workers Killed in Afghanistan’, *Reuters*, Kabul, 2 June.

²¹ Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the UN’s Secretary General for Afghanistan. Press conference, 21 June 2004, Kabul.

3.4. The international response to security challenges

Afghanistan's insecurity poses serious challenges to the Islamic Transitional Government of Afghanistan (ITGA), and to the international community, in meeting the basic needs of the population and establishing a representative system of governance in Afghanistan. Since the fall of the Taliban regime three distinct formulations of military engagement have been pursued by the international community in Afghanistan: Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF); the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF); and the PRTs. The PRTs are described separately in Chapter 4.

3.4.1. Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)

Twenty-five days after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 against the USA, Coalition troops were deployed to Afghanistan under OEF – the US-led war on terrorism. These Coalition forces, numbering approximately 11,000 as of June 2004, continue their combat operations, especially in southern and south-eastern Afghanistan, under US command. The UK's contribution is limited to approximately ten military personnel posted to the OEF headquarters in Kabul.²²

3.4.2. International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

At the end of 2001, parties to the Bonn Agreement anticipated the need for a United Nations-mandated international force to assist in providing security throughout Afghanistan. The ISAF was subsequently authorised by UN Security Council resolution 1386 (20 December 2001) to '*assist the Afghan Interim Authority in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas*'. ISAF has a peace-enforcement mandate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Initially controlled by various coalition members, NATO took over command of ISAF in August 2003.

NATO's command of ISAF represents the alliance's first mission beyond the Euro-Atlantic area – a result of it having invoked its collective defence provision for the first time in its history, to deal with the security threats in the world post 11 September 2001.²³ As of mid-June 2004, ISAF troops numbered approximately 6,500, from 26 NATO allies, nine partner states, and two other states.

ISAF's mandate was expanded by the UN Security Council in October 2003, to support the ITGA in the maintenance of security in areas outside Kabul.²⁴ On the basis of this same Resolution, NATO, in December 2003, expanded the role of ISAF to cover the whole country. Several NGOs had previously advocated strongly for the expansion of ISAF's mandate to include security provisioning outside Kabul.²⁵

²² Figures for early June 2004. Source: Personal communication from MoD staff member.

²³ NATO, 2003, 'Working to Bring Peace and Stability to Afghanistan', NATO Briefing, October

²⁴ The expansion of ISAF's mandate was authorised in UN Security Council resolution 1510, 13 October 2003.

²⁵ For example, a letter was sent to the UK Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw on 8 August 2003, by five UK-based international NGOs (Christian Aid, AfghanAid, Care International UK, Save the Children UK and TearFund).

Chapter 4

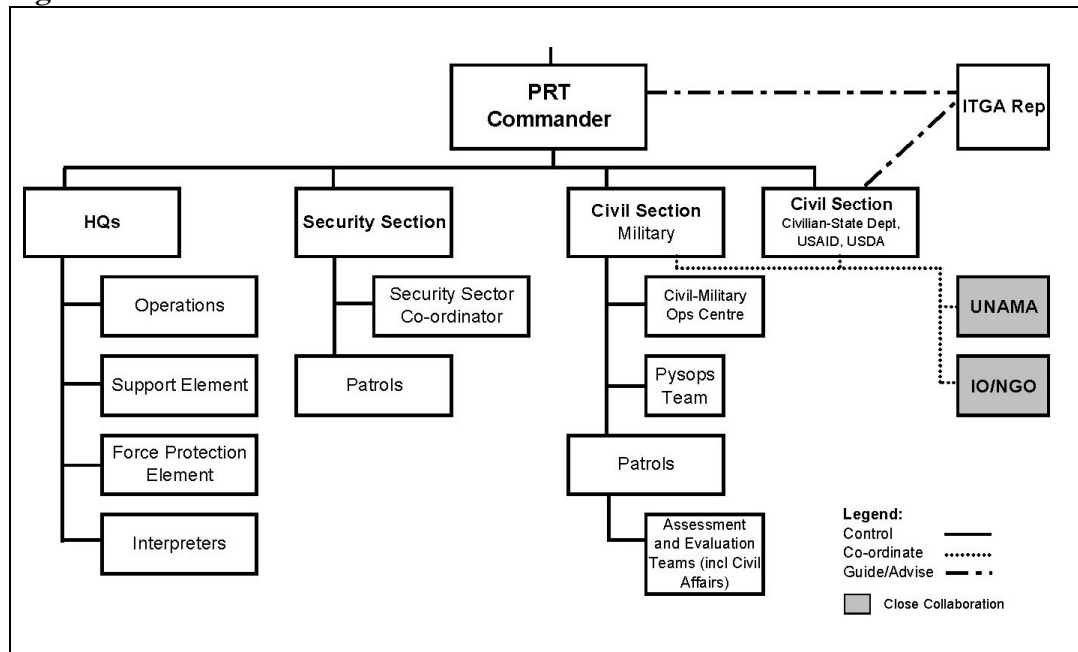
Provincial Reconstruction Teams

4.1. Overview

In addition to the US-led OEF and the UN-mandated ISAF, a third military initiative was launched unilaterally by the USA in November 2002. Originally, the plan conceived of 'Joint Regional Teams' intended to consolidate the previously active US Civil Affairs Teams, Civil-Military Operations Centres, and Coalition armed forces.²⁶ The name of these entities was subsequently changed to Provincial Reconstruction Teams. The level of advance co-ordination and planning between the USA and the Afghanistan Transitional Authority is unclear.

This chapter describes the roles and missions of the PRTs and the evolution of the PRT network, and explores how the stated roles and mission compare to the operational reality.

Figure 4: Structure of US PRT



(Source: US State Department presentation)

4.2. Structure, roles and mission of PRTs

The PRTs comprise international civilian and military personnel (totalling 50-150 in each team), located in select provinces throughout Afghanistan (see Figure 6). The proportion of non-military staff in PRTs is generally low – around five to ten per cent. The organisational structure of the PRTs run by the US military is shown in Figure 4.

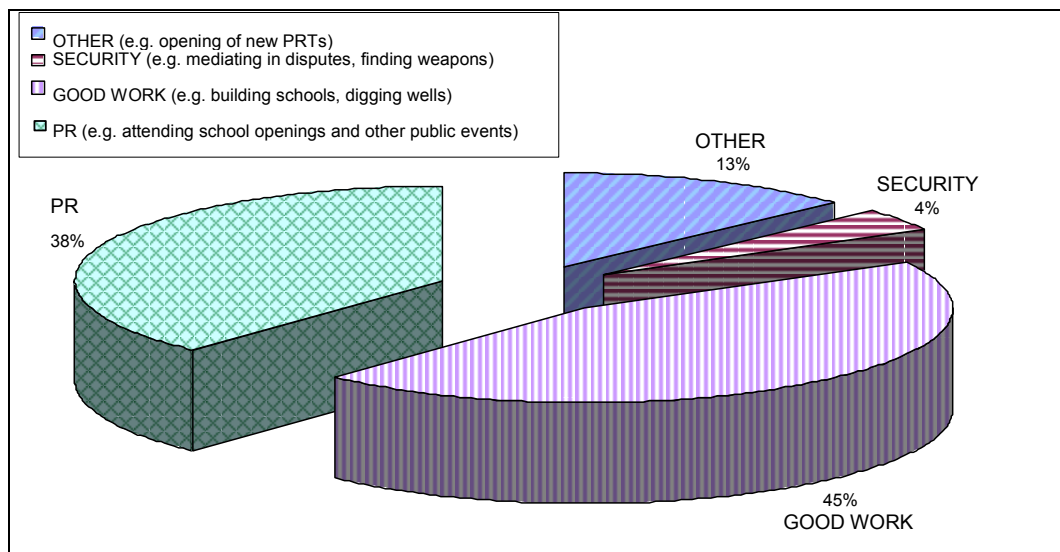
²⁶ For an overview of the development of Joint Regional Teams, see: Stapleton, B J (2003a) *A British Agencies Afghanistan Group Briefing Paper on the Development of Joint Regional Teams in Afghanistan*, London: British Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG), January.

There is a lack of clarity regarding the role of PRTs. This stems from: an absence of a clearly defined set of operating principles for the PRTs; non-adherence on the part of PRTs to the existing, ambiguous operating guidelines; actual roles that differ from stated roles; and the differing ways in which the PRTs have been implemented. Originally, the role of the Joint Regional Teams included co-ordination of the reconstruction process; conducting village assessments; and liaising with regional commanders. This proved extremely controversial with NGHAs. Eventually, a set of PRT Working Guidelines was issued by the Office of the US Ambassador to Afghanistan in February 2003. The Guidelines identified three areas of activity for the PRTs: reconstruction, central government support, and stability.²⁷ While there is general agreement on these three broad foci, there has been a divergence of views on their relative importance.

Of course, the way in which a particular PRT prioritises the constituent elements of its role will depend on the operating conditions it experiences. However, there does not appear to be agreement within and between the military forces implementing the PRTs on how these roles are to be operationalised, the degree to which PRTs should engage in other activities such as intelligence gathering, or the degree to which PRTs should actively engage in relief activities.

US military public communications regarding the PRTs appear to focus more on ‘hearts and minds’ activities than on security. An examination of news releases issued by the US Central Command, shows that, of the 30 mentions of PRTs in the 37 releases between 1 January 2004 and 31 May 2004, just under half concerned the ‘hearts and minds’ work undertaken by US PRTs (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: References to PRTs in US Central Command news releases (1 January to 31 May 2004)



(Source: Compiled by SC UK based on information from www.centcom.mil)

²⁷ Office of US Ambassador to Afghanistan (2003) *Principles Guiding PRT Working Relations with UNAMA, NGOs and Local Governments*, Kabul, February. [Hereinafter referred to as *PRT Working Principles*.]

Different militaries have respectively focused on the PRTs as a vehicle to promote increased interaction with the Afghan populace and government, and as a mechanism to protect aid workers and assist in reconstruction efforts.²⁸

The PRTs have been viewed by many within the US defence institutions as a means of enhancing stability and security in Afghanistan at relatively low cost and low risk, representing as they do an alternative to more substantial troop deployments. This appears to be motivated as much by the strain on US troop levels imposed by Operation Iraqi Freedom as by a conscious desire to maintain a small 'footprint' in Afghanistan.²⁹

Also relevant to the security dimension of the role of PRTs is the 'reach back' effect, whereby PRTs can call in close air support or can act as forward air controllers for Coalition forces located at remote bases. This capability has not gone unnoticed by local commanders and in some cases a show of force (eg, a fly-over) has been sufficient to de-escalate disputes between rival commanders. Nevertheless, this capability has only proved useful for small-scale engagements by rival military commanders. For example, fighting erupted in Herat during March 2004 following the assassination of the Minister for Civil Aviation. The local PRT had insufficient troops to intervene to stop the fighting between groups of militants loyal to the Governor of Herat and the militia under the control of the local military commander. The troops in the Herat PRT were only able to provide limited self-defence, and to provide security for diplomats and select officials in Herat.

The British-led PRT in Mazar stands out in having a more precise 'concept of operations', which includes: security sector reform (SSR); support to institution building; and promoting economic development³⁰. Moreover, these three areas are roughly aligned with the constituent UK Government departments/agencies:

- security and SSR – MoD
- support to institution building – FCO
- promoting economic development – Department for International Development (DfID).

However, the official roles of the PRTs are not always in coherence with the activities they carry out. Many observers have commented that some PRTs engage in intelligence gathering activities, and, in the case of the US-led PRTs, focus a significant amount of effort on quick impact projects in an attempt to win the 'hearts and minds' of the population in their catchment areas.

The initial working principles for the PRTs, issued by the US Embassy in February 2003, stated that the PRTs would engage in humanitarian assistance activities in certain instances:

²⁸ 'Increased interaction' role taken from: interview in January 2004 with General Darrel Branham, Director, Coalition Civil-Military Coordination Centre. Cited in UN OCHA Integrated Regional Information Network, 2004, 'Interview with US-led Coalition Civil Military Coordination Centre', Kabul: IRIN, 8 January. 'Protect aid workers' role taken from: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2004, 'NATO expands its role in Afghanistan', NATO Press Release, 6 January.

²⁹ Comments by US Deputy Defense Secretary Paul D. Wolfowitz during his visit to Afghanistan in January 2003: "[US forces will be] Big enough to do the job, but no bigger than necessary, and we have more than adequate forces to do what's necessary." US Department of State, 2003, Byliner: *U.S. Focus Turns to Afghanistan's Reconstruction*, Kabul: American Forces Press Service, 16 January.

³⁰ Strategic Engagement Workshop, PRT/UN Agencies/UNAMA/INGOs, 27 July 2003, at WFP offices

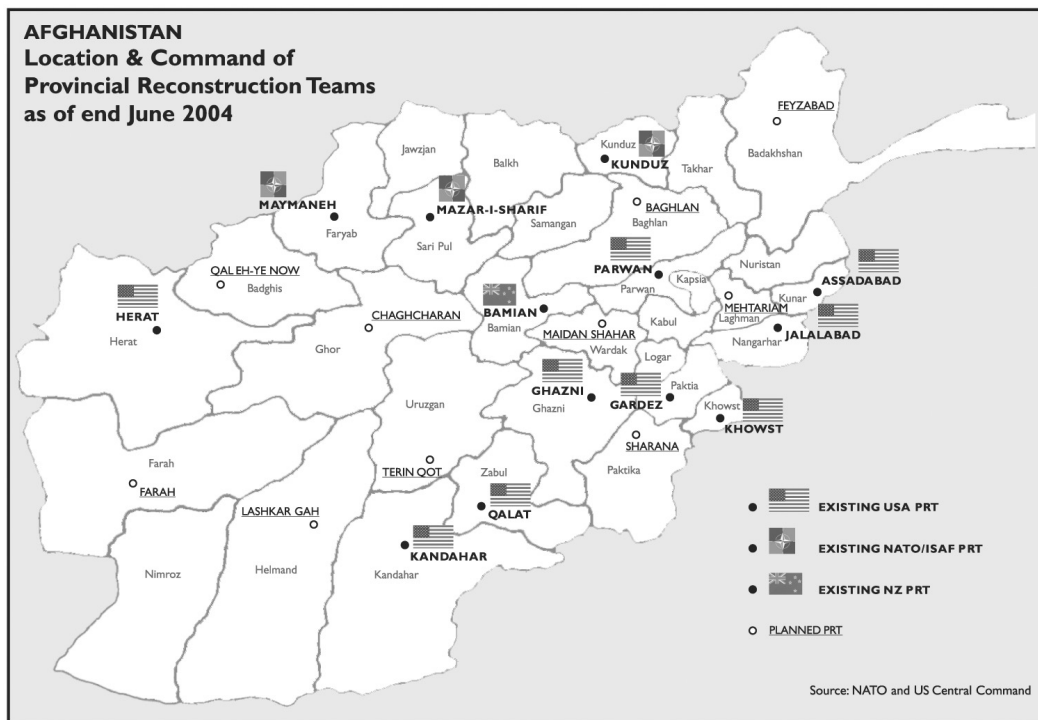
‘In geographical areas or in programmatic sectors where NGOs have little or no presence, the scope of military (i.e., civil affairs team) reconstruction activities will be wider and may include such activities as provision of food, water supplies, schools and clinics; in places and sectors where NGOs are working, military (civil affairs team) reconstruction activities will focus on a narrower range of projects.’³¹

There has been a limited number of instances where the British PRT in Mazar has engaged directly in relief activities (see Section 4.5). These incidents reflect difficulties associated with a lack of institutional memory within the PRT, and poor communication and appreciation of the potential difficulties arising from operating in close proximity to NGHAs.

4.3. Evolution of the PRT network

The first three pilot PRTs were established in Gardez, Bamian and Kunduz in early 2003. Three more were then established in Mazar-i-Sharif (British-led), Parwan and Herat. The USA established a PRT headquarters in Kabul in December 2003. At the time of writing, 13 PRTs have been established, with plans for up to 23 by Autumn 2004 (see Figure 6 and Table 3).

Figure 6: Location and command of PRTs in Afghanistan, as of end-June 2004



(Source: NATO and US Central Command)

³¹ Office of US Ambassador to Afghanistan, *PRT Working Principles*.

Table 3: Existing and planned PRTs (as of June 2004)

Existing PRTs (13)	Possible future PRTs (10)
Mazar-i-Sharif (UK/ISAF)	Terin Qot
Kunduz (NATO-ISAF)	Lashkar Gah
Bamian (New Zealand)	Farah
Gardez (US/Coalition)	Sharana
Parwan (US/Coalition)	Qal'eh-ye Now
Herat (US/Coalition)	Chaghcharan
Kandahar (US/Coalition)	Feyzabad
Jalalabad (US/Coalition)	Baghlan
Qalat (US/Coalition)	Maidan Shahar
Ghazni (US/Coalition)	Mehtariam
Assadabad (US/Coalition)	
Khowst (US/Coalition)	
Maymaneh (UK/ISAF)	

US and British commanders have asserted in statements and interviews that the PRTs are active in Afghanistan at the invitation of the government, and that they fall outside the activities of the Coalition's Operation Enduring Freedom. From the point of view of the Government of Afghanistan, PRTs and ISAF are necessary to maintain security and support the central government during the transition period.³² However, most PRTs currently fall outside ISAF's UN mandate.

The expansion of NATO-ISAF through the PRT network, initiated in January 2004, has generated a new dichotomy in the PRT architecture. On the one hand, US/Coalition-led PRTs are operating in the country with the support of (but without an explicit mandate from) the international community and at the request of the government. On the other hand, the NATO-ISAF PRTs (Kunduz, Mazar and Maymaneh and two additional PRTs planned as of June 2004) are covered under ISAF's mandate from the UN Security Council.³³ This is an important distinction as it reflects two separate legal 'regimes' for the different types of PRT (Coalition-led, and ISAF-led).

The strategy for expansion of NATO-ISAF rests entirely on an expansion of the PRT network (Figure 6).³⁴ The planned expansion was beginning to be operationalised as of mid-July 2004. Resource constraints, and the fact that NATO-ISAF expansion is NATO's 'last concern' at present, have seriously hampered progress.³⁵ This is despite early

³² See, for example, comments by Dr. Ashraf Ghani, Minister of Finance, in: *A Report on the Accomplishments of the Government of Afghanistan, September 2002-2003*, Kabul: Ministry of Finance, 21 September 2003.

³³ Support for Operation Enduring Freedom-force presence in Afghanistan was reaffirmed in the Berlin Declaration, issued at the International Afghanistan Conference in Berlin, 31 March to 1 April 2004. The Declaration stated: '[the participants agree] that while the responsibility for providing security and enforcing law and order throughout the country resides with the Afghans themselves, the engagement of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), mandated by the UN-Security Council and now under the command of NATO, and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) – at the request and welcomed by the Afghan Government – will be continued until such time as the new Afghan security and armed forces are sufficiently constituted and operational.'

³⁴ From comments by German Lt. Gen. Gotz F.E. Gliemeroth, ISAF Commander, on the occasion of the handover of the PRT in Kunduz on 6 January 2004, quoted in: 'NATO Expands Its Role in Afghanistan', *NATO Update*, 6 January 2004. Available at: www.nato.int

³⁵ General Hillier speaking at a PRT Commanders conference, 8 May 2004.

assurances from NATO's new Secretary General that his first priority "*is to get Afghanistan right*".³⁶

According to US Lt. Gen David W. Barno, Commander of Coalition Forces in Afghanistan, NATO has "*encountered a significant number of challenges*" in generating the force required to support such an expansion. Political decisions by NATO member states have not been matched by military commitments and the necessary, but expensive, support systems. There are also fears that NATO-ISAF faces a potential 'nose-dive' once the significant deployment of Canadian troops is withdrawn in June/July 2004.³⁷

Yet, NATO member states do have the capacity to step up troop deployment levels – only two per cent of Europe's military capability (men and women under arms) is currently deployed.³⁸

4.4. Operational realities associated with the work of PRTs

In some instances the activities of the PRTs have deviated from the roles and missions outlined in Section 4.2, or have not been conducted in accordance with the Working Principles outlined by the USA in early 2003. The following illustrative examples from Ghazni, Kandahar and Herat provinces, highlight some of the operational difficulties associated with the work of the PRTs.

Ghazni Province

The confusion created between combat activities and 'hearts and minds' activities undertaken by the PRTs in Afghanistan was highlighted in an incident in Ghazni Province.³⁹ The US-led PRT has been undertaking pacification and rebuilding work, including road and dam reconstruction, and the rehabilitation of civil administration buildings in the Province. Meanwhile, combat activities under OEF are ongoing.

According to civil affairs officers in the PRT, villagers are able to distinguish between the different roles of combat soldiers and PRT members, despite the fact that both groups wear khaki camouflage and bear arms. The difference was said to be that PRT military wear baseball caps rather than helmets, and they try to be approachable and friendly when entering villages.

However, war and reconstruction efforts in the province have not made comfortable bedfellows, as highlighted by an incident in the village of Peetai earlier this year. Targeting a terrorist or murderer (it was unclear) in the village, US rockets fired at Peetai, mistakenly killing nine children and a young man. The 'murderer' was not in Peetai at the time of the attacks. Some weeks later, PRT personnel arrived in Peetai to offer condolences for the deaths and to suggest that the PRT might dig a much-needed well for the community. When interviewed, villagers displayed confusion and anger at the situation. They had nothing – no food, money or water – and so could not understand why they were being

³⁶ Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, NATO Secretary General, speaking at a National Defense University security symposium, in Washington DC, 29 January 2004, cited in: 'Top NATO Priorities Include Afghanistan, Preparedness, Cooperation', International Information Programmes (usinfo.state.gov).

³⁷ General Hillier speaking at a PRT Commanders conference, 8 May 2004.

³⁸ Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean, Minister of State, FCO, speaking at a Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies conference in May 2004.

³⁹ This example is cited in Gannon K (2004) *Road Rage*, The New Yorker, 22 March

attacked. One of the village elders interviewed was angry: *"We want them to leave – we don't want their help... let them keep their well"*.

Kandahar Province

The strategy for the Kandahar PRT, articulated in the Provincial Stabilisation Strategy, had been to render insecure areas accessible to NGHAs. However, this has not happened. Security incidents are increasing and NGO access is curtailed. In response to this failure, the international assistance community uses traditional alternatives eg, *shuras* (traditional community meetings), which also serve to reinforce the distinction between NGHAs and the Coalition.⁴⁰

The Kandahar PRT was presented with a list of outstanding projects which UNAMA (UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) and the government identified as priority, but which could not be implemented because of insecurity. Nevertheless, the PRT continues to concentrate activities in those same areas where NGHAs are also operational – ie, close to the city protection.⁴¹

Since August 2003, the Kandahar PRT has funded the drilling of 100 boreholes in six districts and the city, implemented by various local, and one international, NGOs. In addition, the PRT has funded the construction of three schools and one clinic by contractors and local NGOs.⁴² It is not clear how these projects have been perceived by the 'beneficiaries'.

Afghan NGHA staff, including those employed by Save the Children UK, have faced difficulties accessing information about the PRTs. NGHA staff generally feel they may put themselves at risk by being seen to 'engage' with PRTs, because of the public confusion with the Coalition and the perception that PRTs are engaged in intelligence-gathering activities.

Herat Province

An illustrative example of the lack of clarity about the purpose of PRTs, and of the inconsistencies between rhetoric and action, comes from Herat and the work of the US-led PRT there.⁴³

The PRT is staffed by US soldiers and reservists (including a school teacher, a truck driver, a builder, an opera singer and a chef); USAID staff and consultants (agricultural, medical and engineering); plus a political adviser from the US State Department.

The work of the PRT was described as: complementing that of NGHAs; taking place in areas where humanitarian agencies cannot operate and where needs are greatest; and carried out in co-ordination with UNAMA.

Directing his comments to the assembled NGHA representatives, Colonel James Haan, in charge of the Western Region PRT, asserted: *"You don't need to love us, you just need to work with us"*.

⁴⁰ 'Military Projects', Note for the File, UNAMA Civil Military Office, 25 May 2004

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² Personal communication, NGHA, 7 July 2004.

⁴³ This example is drawn from a meeting between the US PRT and national and international NGOs, held at UNAMA offices, Herat, in March 2004.

Following a briefing on the PRT's specific activities and priorities, one NGO participant expressed frustration:

“There are many inconsistencies in what you have presented today. You say you don't want to step on (I)NGOs toes and you don't want to get in our way – yet this is the first opportunity we have had to discuss and co-ordinate with you and you already know what you want to fund. You say you have no money and yet you are focusing on a huge range of sectors in four provinces. Reconstruction is not your primary aim although 9/10 of your projects are in the field of reconstruction. You have less than 100 soldiers and yet you want to do security as well as the above. You only have another eight months here and yet you want to tackle long-term development issues such as unemployment, agriculture and poppy production. You want to work on women's empowerment but you only have four women; and you will only work where other NGOs cannot and yet you are working in Gulran, Adraskan, Kushka Kubna where we are all working. What do you actually see as your added advantage here – in relation to what the (I)NGO community is already providing?”

The PRT staff said they shared these concerns and that they were trying to do the best job possible; no specific responses were given.

4.5. The UK PRT in Mazar-i-Sharif

The UK established a PRT in Mazar-i-Sharif in July 2003, and a second one in Maymaneh during May 2004. This section discusses the activities of the Mazar PRT, which covers the five provinces of Samangan, Balkh, Faryab, Sarepul and Jawjzan in northern Afghanistan. The mission of the Mazar PRT, having evolved from that stated in July 2003 (see section 4.2), is to extend the authority of the Islamic Transitional Government of Afghanistan (ITGA); to help reform the security sector; to assist in reconstruction efforts; and to facilitate the development of a more stable and secure environment.⁴⁴

Structure

Made up predominantly of military staff (approximately 90) from a number of Coalition countries, the PRT is led by a British military commander. Civilian advisors from DfID, the FCO, the US State Department and USAID; a US Military liaison officer; and a representative from the transitional government constitute the remaining PRT staff. UK Government representatives stressed that although the PRT comes under military command, non-military personnel do not report to the PRT commander but instead report to their superiors within their own institutional structures (for example, DfID's representative reports to the Head of DfID in Kabul; FCO's to the British Ambassador in Kabul). These DfID and USAID advisors are the principal point of contact between the PRT and NGOs.

On 1 July 2004, ISAF took command of the PRT in Mazar-i-Sharif, and of the PRT in Maymaneh. Prior to the handover, it was envisioned also that the PRTs in Mazar and Maymaneh would eventually be merged with the NATO-led PRT in Kunduz, to form one ISAF North team. DfID advisers, meanwhile, are members of three other PRT teams spread across the country: the US-led PRTs in Gardez and Kandahar, and the New Zealand-led PRT in Bamiyan.

Supporting security in Mazar

The UK-led PRT has taken an indirect approach to security, approaching it through 'hearts and minds' activities (see below), and through engagement with commanders and leaders to

⁴⁴ As articulated by representatives of the MoD, the FCO, and DfID in London, for this study.

establish an environment that is more conducive to law enforcement. According to PRT staff in Mazar, this ongoing dialogue with local commanders appears to be paying dividends. For instance, in October 2003, the PRT and UNAMA successfully brokered a ceasefire following factional fighting between the Jamiat and Jumish. The PRT established two cantonment sites, under the guard of the Afghan National Army (ANA), which were used to hold artillery of the two groups. With 90 or so soldiers deployed in five locations across the north, the UK-led PRT is clear that it does not have the combat capacity to overcome extremists. It is able to mount regular patrols in high-risk areas, and to respond quickly to incidents when they occur.

While the UK-led PRT prides itself on the successful relations and dialogue it enjoys with the main commanders and warlords in the area, this may also constitute an important weakness. It is widely acknowledged, for instance, that without the consent of the warlords the PRTs would not be able to function.⁴⁵ In the early stages of their establishment, government structures had been set up by warlords, and the PRT was only able to establish its presence in Mazar through these *de facto* institutions. At present, local governing structures incorporate several hundred army and police personnel, government officials deployed from Kabul, as well as warlord factions, all of whom the PRT engages. Support to both groups has also led to tensions and fighting which the PRT (alongside UNAMA) has attempted to mediate with partial success.⁴⁶

Projects funded through PRT-Mazar

Of the £300 million total that DfID is providing for Afghanistan over the course of three years,⁴⁷ £1m a year is to be channelled through each PRT in which the UK has a presence. Accurate information on expenditure has been difficult to obtain. According to field sources, less than half of the £1m available through the Mazar PRT had been disbursed for the first financial year (end March 2004), although reportedly all the funds had been committed. The USAID Development Advisor's budget through the PRT, meanwhile, totals approximately US\$3m, all of which is being disbursed through the International Organisation on Migration (IOM), which in turn works through local partners on various infrastructure projects.

In practical terms, project selection is based largely on accessibility and readiness of local partners to do the work.⁴⁸ In a bid to simplify the process, no formal proposals are required to implement projects, and a simple final supervision process agrees completion. Feasibility and monitoring of USAID PRT projects meanwhile, is undertaken by the IOM and by USAID officials, with consultation from local government departments and *shuras*.

DfID has stipulated that funding has not been used on projects deemed to be better serviced through the capabilities of NGOs, (such as water provisioning, education and health services), and has stressed that they hope to maintain a clear separation between PRT and NGO activities. Projects selected tend to be located in cities; are small, 'quick impact' projects; and focus on infrastructural work relating to security-sector reform. Activities have covered: renovation of police stations; training and literacy courses for police personnel; purchasing of communication equipment and uniforms for law

⁴⁵ There are also concerns that ISAF's operation in Kabul places much greater emphasis on intelligence from local warlords over other sources, raising questions about ISAF's integrity and independence.

⁴⁶ For example, Mazar City has numerous checkpoints, mostly run by police, but several by the warlords. When police try to cross these, tensions run high and fighting occasionally breaks out.

⁴⁷ From July 2003.

⁴⁸ According to interviews with a PRT implementing partner, IOM.

enforcement systems; renovation of office buildings and equipment of judiciary systems; and provision of office equipment and training for various government ministries. Other projects, geared towards helping to generate a security-enabling context, involve interventions such as the distribution of agricultural equipment to local families; the construction of roads, culverts and small bridges; and support to nurseries growing vegetables, nuts and fruit.

USAID-funded projects, meanwhile, focus on infrastructure – schools, clinics, bridges, culverts and roads. The degree of co-ordination between these UK and US PRTs is unclear, though there has been evidence of lack of co-ordination and knowledge of each other's work in the past.⁴⁹ In addition, within the UK, co-ordination between military and FCO functions has been poor.

'Hearts and minds' activities

The UK-led PRT has, on occasion, engaged in activities in sectors and geographical locations where NGOs were already working. This has served to undermine existing co-ordination mechanisms that had been put in place by the UN and NGOs with the local authorities and local population. While local PRT officials have stressed that co-ordination, project sustainability and consultations with local populations were not within the PRT's remit, they urged humanitarian agencies to inform the PRT of the nature of their operations if they wanted co-ordination to improve.

In one of a few examples, in December 2003 the PRT set up a three-day 'health camp' in the city centre of Saripul.⁵⁰ The camp was set up within the premises of the provincial hospital, in front of an existing health centre. This had been operating since early 2002, with support from Save the Children UK, in partnership with the Ministry of Health. The PRT 'health camp' was undertaken without consulting the local authorities or operational agencies. The PRT used local militia to publicise the event, despite the fact that these groups are feared by the local population. Although the event was later proclaimed as an example of successful 'hearts and minds' work, patients, when consulted, expressed disappointment with the level of care that had been provided. Some infants were given children's doses of drugs; patient consultations were minimal; and the behaviour of military health personnel was described as being culturally inappropriate, particularly amongst women.

When Save the Children protested against this activity, staff were told that it had been demanded by local people and instructed by central government. Both assertions subsequently turned out to be incorrect. Following further collective protest on the part of NGHAs and the European Commission Humanitarian Office, the PRT issued a firm apology that they had acted inappropriately, and promised not to repeat such actions. Similar apologies were made by DfID and FCO at the London level.

Perspectives on the role and activities of the PRT

Local civilians resident in the area of operation of the PRT cannot generally distinguish between Coalition Forces, PRTs, local militia, and NGHAs – to many Afghan citizens, all of these groups look similar, use similar vehicles and sometimes do the same type of work.

⁴⁹ For instance, in December 2003 a USAID-funded health campaign in Saripul took place without the knowledge of DfID.

⁵⁰ Others include PRT drug distributions near a health clinic run by Action Contre le Faim in Solgara District in October 2003; and entering NGO-run drug clinics in Balkh District in October 2003, bearing arms, to gather information in the name of needs-identification.

Furthermore, local residents do not want the military to undertake work in their villages; they fear them. City residents, meanwhile, are more supportive of the PRT, hoping that by its very presence, security will be improved. However, one international NGO operating in the area pointed out that since these patrols are undertaken in unmarked white vehicles, also used widely by the various international agencies, they do not necessarily result in increased visibility for the PRT.⁵¹

UNAMA security staff, personnel of the ANA, and members of the local police force have expressed positive views of the UK-led PRT. Key factors are the PRT's perceived openness to share information and its willingness to provide them with support. Local police, for instance, have used the PRT as a back-up in arrests, while UNAMA has relied on it to help them negotiate between rival warlord factions. It should also be pointed out that on a practical, economic level, local government authorities and warlords are clearly benefiting from working with the PRT, because of the employment and contractual opportunities that it provides, such as security contracts.

The view among many aid agencies is that the UK-led PRT has been successful in mediating and diffusing tension between local commanders once incidents have occurred, but that it has been less successful in preventing such incidents from occurring in the first place. Further, there is a perception that the PRT has been largely unable to ensure that warlords abide by the rule of law – seen as an important limitation given the near-absence of national law-enforcement systems. In real terms, local security incidents are still occurring and general tension persists; but the precise impact of the PRT is difficult to assess. The same can be said in rural villages where local commanders continue to terrorise civilians, and often engage in factional fighting.

⁵¹ Personal communication, NGHA, 5 August 2004.

Chapter 5

PRTs and humanitarian–military relations in Afghanistan

5.1. Overview

The interface between PRTs and humanitarian agencies and operations in Afghanistan represents a unique embodiment of humanitarian–military relations. Based on the summary review of principles and operational guidelines underlying humanitarian–military relations provided in Chapter 2, and the exploration of the roles, mission and activities of the PRTs in Chapter 4, this chapter explores the specific case of the interface between the PRTs and humanitarian agencies and activities in Afghanistan.

This chapter begins with an analysis of the challenges and opportunities associated with the PRTs, and goes on to provide a conceptual framework to assist in analysing the impact of PRTs on humanitarian access in Afghanistan. Four possible ‘modes of interaction’ for humanitarian agencies with the PRTs are then presented, and the chapter concludes by identifying issues for further debate concerning the role and *modus operandi* of the PRTs.

5.2. PRTs: Opportunities and challenges

The research underpinning this study included interviews with key stakeholders in the humanitarian, military and political domains. These interviews, together with the field evidence presented in Section 4.4, provide some insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with the PRTs.

Opportunities

There is a range of opportunities that can be built on to maximise the PRTs’ positive influence on security, such as mediating in disputes between rival militias and commanders. Moreover, the visible presence of military support can reduce the propensity for local conflict (although this currently has limited scope given the size of the military component of PRTs). The PRTs can also provide support to emerging national institutions, and support large-scale infrastructure projects. The PRT structure is essential to provide logistical support to facilitate work of non-military personnel associated with ISAF or Coalition Forces in areas outside Kabul.

By virtue of their military structure and ability to ‘reach back’ to Coalition/ISAF forces to reinforce their military capacity, PRTs are viewed by local commanders as more credible negotiating partners in support of demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration processes.

Many interviewees within humanitarian organisations asserted that a larger, better-focused PRT military contingent could improve security over a wider PRT catchment area. Moreover, other opportunities exist for PRTs to provide increased support to emerging government ministries. Whatever the focus, it is critical that PRTs engage in more consultation on their role with NGHAs and Afghan civil society, to try to arrive at a common understanding of their role/added value, areas of focus, limits of operation and criteria for success.

While it is still a contentious issue with humanitarian agencies, from a security and logistics point of view, PRTs can provide humanitarian assistance in areas where NGHAs may be precluded from operating or when needs overwhelm NGHAs capacity – the ‘exceptional circumstances’ principle outlined in Section 2.4.

Challenges

Many interviewees expressed the view that the military strength of PRTs is insufficient to meet existing security needs (see Section 3.2). Another purported challenge relates to the assertion that PRTs do not get closely enough involved with the local population and government officials. With the exception of the British PRT in Mazar-i-Sharif, there was inadequate and ineffective local consultation by most PRTs prior to their establishment. Many stakeholders, and humanitarian agencies in particular, pointed to the lack of a clearly defined role for the PRTs. Moreover, some PRTs, by virtue of personnel rotation schedules, have exhibited a lack of institutional memory, and this has constrained their ability to engage effectively with the local population and civil society actors. The wide range of operational styles between PRTs further contributes to the lack of clarity regarding their central role. This then begs the question whether there is anything that constitutes a ‘core mission’ for PRTs that would be included in all pre-deployment briefings and inductions across all militaries.

PRTs have not held warlords accountable for local abuses of authority.

PRTs could compromise the independence and security of NGHAs by running poorly-planned and poorly-executed humanitarian operations.

5.3. Linking PRT activities with security outcomes

The key focus of the debate on PRTs and humanitarian–military relations is the impact the PRTs may have on the identity and operational activities of NGHAs. Critical to effective delivery of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan is a conducive security environment in which both assistance providers and recipients do not face security threats.

Proponents of PRTs have, since their inception, trumpeted their role in improving the general level of security. Many within the defence institutions of the sponsoring nations and international alliances (US-led Coalition, NATO) refer to the PRTs as a force multiplier, and while they may provide asymmetric benefits, the PRTs are also a relatively low-risk (militarily), low-cost and politically conservative alternative to a more robust military presence. Some interviewees asserted that by using PRTs, international actors may be failing to provide the government with the necessary support it requires to fulfil its responsibilities to protect its civilians.

Within NATO, there is private acceptance amongst some that the PRTs represent a pragmatic response to the reality that many member states are reluctant to deliver on their pledges of troops and funding to support NATO-ISAF expansion. Yet, even the planned, limited expansion has been impeded by a reluctance of NATO members to provide the necessary troops and resources.

So how have the PRTs impacted the security situation in Afghanistan, and the status of humanitarian security in particular?

This question is crucial to assessing their effectiveness since security is one of the three main, stated roles of the PRTs. Furthermore, there does not appear to have been any

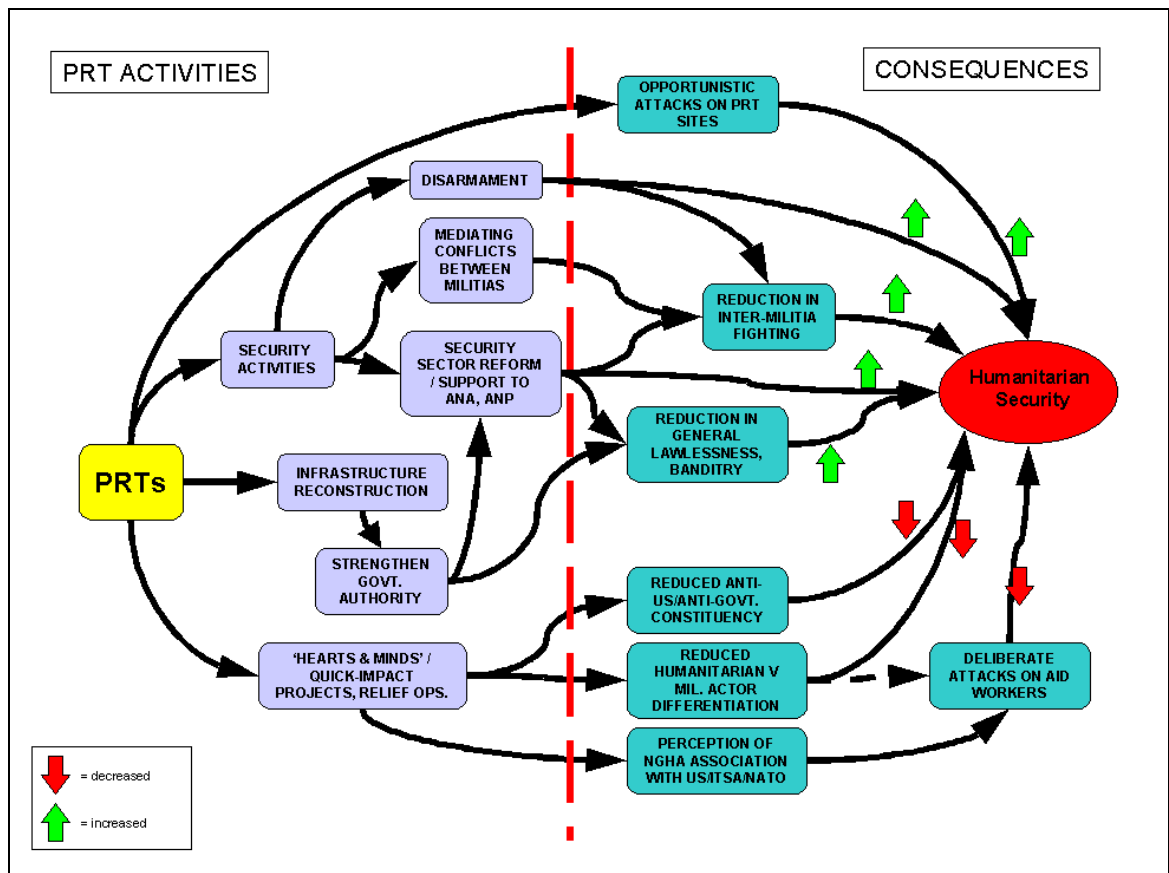
attempt to date – by military or humanitarian actors – to undertake a rigorous analysis of how these entities are influencing the security situation in the country.

Four main sources of insecurity in Afghanistan have been identified previously in this paper (Section 3.2):

1. anti-US/anti-ITGA attacks
2. hostility and fighting between warlords
3. increased general lawlessness and banditry
4. violence associated with narcotics production and trade.

Although Afghanistan has suffered violence in some form or another for over three decades, the reduced security over the last three years has restricted sustained humanitarian access. The relationship between PRTs, security and humanitarian security can be explored using a causal analysis approach, which assists in identifying the linkages between PRT activities and possible changes in humanitarian security (as a precursor to humanitarian access). Using this approach, the linkages between PRT activities and the consequences of those activities for humanitarian security can be made explicit.

Figure 7: Causal model highlighting linkages between PRT activities, humanitarian security and humanitarian access



Although it is recognised that the specific activities and consequences will vary across PRTs, depending on the way in which the PRT is implemented and on the security environment in its area of operation, the causal model provides a framework to guide analysis of the impact PRT activities could have on humanitarian security.⁵² The consequences of PRT activities for humanitarian security are assessed for the four areas of PRT activity: security; reconstruction; strengthening government authority; and relief operations.

5.3.1. Security

In the security sector, PRT activities span three sub-sectors: support to the disarmament process; mediating conflicts between militias; and select elements of SSR.⁵³

While the military component of a PRT represents a credible interlocutor for supporting the disarmament of militias, the PRTs have not played a proactive role in this area. Because of the small size of the PRTs, military commanders must make pragmatic decisions regarding the extent to which they can ‘push’ local warlords to disarm, when the co-operation (or at least non-interference) of the same warlords is central to the overall political and military objectives of the NATO and US-led Coalition alliances.

This ‘credible interlocutor’ role permits PRTs to mediate in disputes or conflicts between various warlords (as exemplified by the PRT in Mazar-i-Sharif in October 2003). However, given the size of the troop contingent at a PRT, this mediating role is limited to low-intensity engagements. The upsurge in fighting in Herat towards the end of March 2004 demonstrated the inability of the PRT there to intervene and stop the fighting.

These activities in support of disarmament, and in mediating between opposing militia forces, have helped in reducing insecurity that results from inter-militia fighting. Thus, the PRTs have had a positive impact on this source of insecurity in certain geographical areas, albeit that the degree of impact depends on the wider security environment in each area.

PRT activities in support of SSR will assist in expanding the reach of the central government (through support to ANA and Afghan National Police (ANP) recruitment, training and deployment), with the expectation of reducing the currently high levels of general lawlessness and banditry. Although counter-narcotics is one of the five pillars of Coalition SSR activities, the PRTs generally have not engaged in counter-narcotic activities, whether to reduce poppy cultivation and/or to sever the linkages between local militias and the narcotics trade.

In addition to the operational activities of PRTs, the very presence of the PRT can invite opportunistic attacks by anti-US/anti-ITGA groups, or groups attempting to frustrate the transition to democracy. Since the number of troops at any one PRT dictates that it must maintain a predominantly defensive (rather than offensive) posture, it is unlikely that a PRT will be able to prosecute attacks against these elements. This potential reduction in local

⁵² This necessary variability in the relative importance of security and reconstruction roles for the PRTs, depending on their location, was captured by Lt. Gen. David W. Barno, Commander of Coalition Forces in Afghanistan, at a CSIS briefing in Washington, DC, on 14 May 2004: “[PRTs are] able to meld security and reconstruction ... [PRTs] don’t have to be identically the same, nor should they be, in different parts of the country.”

⁵³ Security sector reform undertaken by Coalition partners consist of five main components: (i) counter-narcotics (UK lead); (ii) judicial reform (Italy lead); (iii) DDR (Japan lead); (iv) support to Afghan National Army (ANA) (US lead); and (v) training of police force (Germany and US).

security may, however, be countered by the fact that the presence of the PRT will make it more difficult for insurgent forces to co-ordinate and carry out offensive operations.

5.3.2. Reconstruction

The reconstruction activities of the PRTs aim to support the central government's expansion of authority and 'reach'. Those reconstruction activities designed to provide much-needed infrastructure to facilitate SSR, such as rebuilding police stations, will provide tangible benefits to the nascent national police force and the judicial system. It is likely that reconstruction in these areas, as well as benefits of road construction on expanding central authority, will assist in addressing insecurity by reducing the high levels of lawlessness.

5.3.3. Strengthening government authority

One of the core missions of the PRTs is to support expansion of central government authority throughout Afghanistan, yet representatives of the national government have only been included in PRTs since the end of 2003. Strengthening government authority will require robust security forces (ANA and ANP), improved infrastructure (roads, buildings, communications networks), and support to emerging institutions. The PRTs have undertaken activities in support of central government expansion in an *ad hoc* manner, and often with no planning of the inter-relationships between this role and the security and reconstruction functions. This is further exacerbated by the apparent absence of government strategic planning for the development of the Provinces.

Some have argued that the dependence on a visible PRT presence has undermined government authority to ensure security, since, in several cases, the PRTs are seen to be tolerating warlords.

5.3.4. Relief operations

In the context of implications for humanitarian security, PRT engagement in relief operations (including so-called 'hearts and minds' and 'quick-impact project' activities) can result in:

- increased perceptions among Afghan citizens of NGHAs association with the US-led Coalition or individual states managing the PRTs
- reduced differentiation between humanitarian and military actors
- reducing the anti-US/anti-government 'constituency'
- the undermining of longer-term development prospects.

Increased perception of NGHAs association with US-led Coalition

The experiences of humanitarian NGOs in Afghanistan highlight the significant level of confusion among the general population on the roles of various actors (UN, NGO, military, commercial), especially in more remote areas. When PRT personnel engage in relief projects, it contributes to this confusion among the general population. The very presence of a PRT in a particular area may lead to the perception that humanitarian actors are working closely with, or for, the PRT. This is further complicated by the fact that some humanitarian NGOs have chosen to engage more actively with the PRTs than others.

Reduced differentiation between humanitarian and military actors

When military personnel engage in relief activities it reduces the differentiation between humanitarian and military personnel, especially when and if the military personnel are armed but not uniformed, and travel in unmarked vehicles. If the local population sees military personnel as providers of assistance, who also engage in military activities (rather than having a purely military role), it colours their views on the role of humanitarian NGOs.

Reducing the anti-US/anti-government 'constituency'

One of the objectives of 'hearts and minds' operations by the military is to win over support of local communities by addressing their pressing needs. It has never been demonstrated that 'hearts and minds' activities undertaken by the PRTs in Afghanistan have contributed to reducing the constituency that opposes the US-led Coalition and the ITGA.

Undermining longer-term development

All militaries deployed to Afghanistan acknowledge that their presence and role is a temporary one. Yet, the activities they undertake can undermine longer-term processes. Undertaking relief activities and small-scale reconstruction work is not just a matter of technical competence, but requires skills and knowledge that can build on local understandings and systems of what is, or is not, appropriate.

5.3.5. Overall impact of PRTs on humanitarian security and humanitarian access

The PRTs were established to (in the words of Lt. Gen. Barno) *"meld security and reconstruction, and extend the reach of central government"*. Yet the small size of the PRT military contingent means that these entities can only provide limited security in their immediate areas of operation, and can mediate between militia groups, but generally only in low intensity engagements. While the presence of the PRTs may 'fly the flag', they have failed to address the growing threat to security posed by narco-criminality.

The causal analysis undertaken to identify the linkages between PRT activities and changes in humanitarian security (and hence humanitarian access) has identified both positive and negative effects. However, the model clearly highlights that while most of the positive effects of PRT activities on humanitarian security come from activities in the areas of security, reconstruction and expanding central authority, most of the negative consequences of PRT activities for humanitarian security follow from PRT relief activities (including 'hearts and minds' activities and 'quick-impact projects').

When PRTs engage in activities other than in the security sector, and especially when NGHAs interact or work closely with the PRTs, the very presence of a PRT can instil or reinforce a perception that aid workers are 'agents' of the military. However, it is difficult to assess the extent to which this perception (of humanitarian workers associated with the work of foreign military contingents) would prevail even in the absence of PRTs. For example, on 2 June 2004 five humanitarian aid workers were killed in Badghis province. Initial media reports following the incident quoted a self-declared representative of the Taliban who claimed responsibility for the attack, stating:

*We killed them because they worked for the Americans against us using the cover of aid work. We will kill more foreign aid workers”.*⁵⁴

Although it transpires that the Taliban were not responsible for the incident,⁵⁵ this quote highlights the readiness of insurgents and disaffected groups within the population to associate humanitarian aid workers with the military.

The cursory analysis provided here is not sufficient to draw general conclusions regarding the impact of PRTs on humanitarian security. This will require a more extensive analysis of other causal factors (eg, changes in tactics of armed groups). However, the analysis undertaken here demonstrates that it is plausible that the activities of the PRTs in the areas of relief operations represent the most significant potential threat to humanitarian security posed by the PRTs.

5.4. Constraints of the current PRT model

While the concept of combined civil–military teams is not new, the PRTs have become a focal point for debate because:

1. by nature of their very presence in a country in which aid workers are being actively targeted, and the fact that their structure and activities place military and non-military actors at a common interface, they relate closely to the recent changes in operating environment for humanitarian actors
2. the activities of the PRTs in the area of relief operations place them at the vanguard of emerging military doctrine, which features an increased ‘uptake’ of humanitarian-like assistance activities by military forces.

Aspects of the current structure and operational approach of the PRTs reflects a move towards a more integrated approach to security and reconstruction in transition societies, and recognises also the interdependence of development and security. This more inclusive approach to security management mirrors some of the core elements of human security, a people-focused concept of security across multiple dimensions. This represents a positive aspect of the PRT model, although it is one dimension that requires further research. Notwithstanding these positive aspects of the PRT model, it also exhibits several structural, conceptual and operational constraints. Some of these constraints are described below.

PRTs have an ambiguous political identity, which blurs the lines between combat and stabilisation forces

The demarcation of role and identity between Coalition combat operations, ISAF peace-enforcement operations and PRT reconstruction efforts is tenuous at best, and is unlikely to improve under the new era of NATO leadership. The same mix of core countries is sponsoring all three forms of military deployments. This further reduces clarity of missions and operations, and inhibits effective co-ordination and engagement with a range of non-military actors.

⁵⁴ Collett-White, M and Salahuddin, S (2004) ‘Foreign and Local Aid Workers Killed in Afghanistan’, *Reuters*, Kabul, 2 June.

⁵⁵ An MSF press release in July 2004 (‘After 24 years of independent aid to the Afghan people, MSF withdraws from Afghanistan following killing, threats and insecurity’) suggests that local commanders were responsible for the assassinations.

Whether under US or NATO command, the PRTs are, and will continue to be, associated in some minds with the US-led Coalition's war, Operation Enduring Freedom.

Furthermore, it is not clear how any boundaries will evolve in future. Will the new NATO-led PRTs continue to receive air-support from the coalition? Will the current US-led PRTs come under NATO control (or will the USA continue to have direct responsibility for all their troops in Afghanistan, however they are deployed)?

PRT structure does not streamline institutional reporting

Experience from the case of the PRT in Mazar-i-Sharif (Section 4.5) points to a model more akin to a co-ordination nub rather than a discreet structure. Although PRTs are housed in a common location, their constituent members report to at least three different bodies: the soldiers report to the military commander; the political advisers report to their respective ambassadors; and the development advisers to their respective aid organisation in-country and at head quarters level (eg, USAID in the case of American advisers).

PRTs inappropriately apply humanitarian dialogue and deeds

By undertaking similar work as humanitarian agencies, there is widespread concern in the humanitarian community, and beyond, that the partisan, politically-driven identity of the military as aid-providers will be transferred to humanitarian actors. This 'infection' by association compromises the independence of humanitarian actors as perceived by local actors.⁵⁶ The fear, and increasing the reality, is that NGHAs are viewed as legitimate targets by belligerent warring parties – alongside the international military and political entities. Any threats to the perception of the legitimacy of humanitarian action have two specific risks: *'that of being rejected and that of being instrumentalised'*.⁵⁷ Rejection means the loss of a buffer of community acceptance and protection, and thence increased risk to personnel and property. Instrumentalisation refers to state actors using humanitarian action as one in a *'range of tools available to them in the conduct of their campaign against terrorist activities'*.⁵⁸ Others have argued that the principle of civilian leadership for civilian relief should be preserved: *'In any conception of work for humanity, as well as in humanitarian law, the principle of treating people according to need... is an ideal that demands respect.'*⁵⁹

Relief operations not within militaries' core areas of expertise

The core competencies of military forces lie in the areas of war-fighting, peace-enforcement and the maintenance of security. Undertaking relief operations is not a natural 'fit' for military forces, despite the fact that these types of operations are becoming more prominent within military doctrine on peace-support operations. Military forces lack the expertise to effectively assess needs of populations, and lack experience in designing and implementing sustainable projects that can provide long-term benefit to the population.

Military contingents make up all but five to ten per cent of PRT personnel. Given that the PRTs are undertaking activities across a range of sectors, it is unrealistic to expect that they can also pre-assess, initiate, and sustain relief operations in a way that will ensure that such operations effectively address the humanitarian needs of the population.

⁵⁶ Watkins C (2003) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs): An analysis of their contribution to security in Afghanistan*, Submitted in partial fulfilment of the MSc degree in Development Practice, Oxford Brookes University, 30 September 2003

⁵⁷ ICRC Presentation to High-Level Humanitarian Forum, Geneva, 31 March 2004, by Pierre Krahenbuhl.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Pugh, M (2001) 'The Challenge of Civil-Military Relations in International Peace-Support Operations.' *Disasters* 25(4) pp345-357.

5.5. Exploring measures of effectiveness for PRT activities

The causal analysis of linkages between PRT activities and changes in humanitarian security presented above was undertaken to provide a framework for assessing the effectiveness of the PRTs. The key question is: have these entities been effective in achieving their stated missions? Supporters of the PRTs consider them a huge success, while critics assert that they have done more harm than good.

To break this impasse, objective criteria are required to assess whether the PRTs are indeed effective in their four main areas of operation. This section suggests measures of effectiveness (MoEs) for use by those in command of a PRT (Coalition member or NATO). Measures of effectiveness are used extensively by military forces in designing weapons systems, assessing war-fighting capabilities and in structuring military forces. In presenting current US Army doctrine on 'Support Operations', Army Field Manual 3-0 states that commanders should establish quantitative measures to evaluate mission effectiveness:

*'10-43. With supported agencies and governments, commanders establish **measures of effectiveness to gauge mission accomplishment**. Measures of effectiveness focus on the condition and activity of those being supported. Those that are discrete, measurable, and link cause and effect help commanders understand and measure progress and success. In famine relief, for example, it may be tempting to measure effectiveness by the gross amount of food delivered. In some cases, this may be an acceptable gauge. However, a better one may be the total nourishment delivered, as measured by the total number of calories delivered per person per day, or the rate of decline of deaths directly attributable to starvation. Measures of effectiveness depend on the situation and require readjustment as the situation and guidance change.'*⁶⁰

There does not appear to have been any attempt by US/Coalition forces to define and implement such MoEs to 'gauge mission accomplishment' across the main areas of activity of the PRTs.

In addition to the criteria for developing such indicators specified by the US Army, indicators should be developed in the context of the needs, objectives and activities defined in the recent strategy document produced by the Government of Afghanistan in conjunction with international partners (Asian Development Bank, UNAMA, UNDP, and the World Bank).⁶¹ Suggested MoEs and associated data sources (where applicable) are presented in Table 4.

These MoEs are suggested to help begin the process of developing appropriate qualitative and quantitative indicators in conjunction with national government and civil society. They are intended to capture changes in the context resulting from the activities of the PRTs.

⁶⁰ Department of the Army (2001) 'Support Operations', Chapter 10 in Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*, Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, June.

⁶¹ Government of Afghanistan (2004) *Securing Afghanistan's Future: Accomplishments and the Strategic Path Forward*. Kabul: Government of Afghanistan, 17 March.

Table 4: Suggested measures of effectiveness for evaluation of PRTs

Activity	Suggested measures of effectiveness (MoEs)	Suggested indicators/data sources
Security	Changes in humanitarian security	Attacks on humanitarian workers (Source: ANSO) Humanitarian access
	Changes in overall security environment	Swisspeace FAST Reports
	Inter-militia intervention rate	Percentage of known inter-militia disputes in which PRT intervened
	Inter-militia mediation success rate	Percentage of inter-militia disputes (in which PRT intervened) that were successfully mediated/resolved
	Reduction in levels of lawlessness/banditry	Reported incidents of banditry
	Changes in land area under poppy cultivation in a specific region	Land area under cultivation [hectares]
	People's ambient security expectations (including in returnee areas)	Surveys of public opinion on perceptions of security (should not be undertaken by military)
	Number of ANP personnel/trainees that can be supported by PRT	Number of ANP personnel
Security ('hearts and minds' activities)	Increased acceptance of military's mission	Views expressed by local community members of military's mission and role (interviews should not be undertaken by military)
	Improved co-operation between military and local population	Number of engagements by local community representatives with military in liaison capacity
	Force protection	Security intelligence on PRTs provided directly by members of the local community
Reconstruction	Support to road network construction	Km road/year (with reference to any government targets) Use of roads
	Local employment in PRT-funded reconstruction projects	Number of workers (full/part-time) Employee salaries compared to local salaries
	Component of reconstruction needs (per province) addressed by PRT activities	Comparison of needs (from 'Securing Afghanistan's Future') and PRT activities
	Construction of facilities directly or under contract from PRT to support deployment of ANP (eg, police stations)	New/refurbished facilities (possibly measured by square metre) constructed by PRT in province

(Table 4 continued)

Activity	Suggested measures of effectiveness (MoEs)	Suggested indicators/data sources
Support to central government	Relative authority of central government in PRT catchment area	Qualitative data: who collects 'taxes'/customs duties? Who provides security?
	Physical infrastructure available to support	Offices are staffed and functioning
	Support by PRT to local government councils	Number of functioning local government bodies supported by PRT
Relief Operations	Note: focuses only on delivery of relief supplies in areas where NGHAs are unable to operate, or 'exceptional circumstances'	
	Relief delivered in specific sectors, according to verified need (eg, health; food and nutrition; water and sanitation; and education sectors)	Sphere standards and indicators

5.6. Humanitarian–PRT interaction: Issues of principle and practice

The experience of PRTs in Afghanistan, and the analysis of the interface between PRT and humanitarian actors, highlights issues of principle and practise for these civil-military entities.

5.6.1. Issues of principle

Distinction between military and humanitarian objectives

By definition, the objectives of humanitarian assistance are distinct from politico-military objectives, and this distinction must be kept clearly in view. If assistance is not delivered according to the core principles of humanity, impartiality and independence, then it cannot be considered to be 'humanitarian' assistance, but rather may be thought of as a relief operation.

In most cases, military involvement in humanitarian activities is partial, as it is inevitably used towards a military, political or security-oriented aim. The exception may be military actors engaging by consent of all parties in a UN-mandated peacekeeping mission. Military interventions that incorporate humanitarian-like activities (food delivery, provision of shelter, reconstruction of schools, well-digging) are launched for a number of reasons; among them the need to win over 'hearts and minds' to increase local acceptance, to improve staff safety (so-called force-protection), or as part of a wider programme to build democracy.

In some extreme instances, the provision of aid is positioned as an openly partial and conditional exercise. For instance, the delivery of aid by the US-led Coalition in

Afghanistan's Zabul Province was accompanied by leaflets distributed to civilians that called upon them to provide intelligence information or to face losing aid altogether.⁶² In response to protests from NGHAs, the leaflets were withdrawn and an apology made.

Militarisation of aid

Bringing relief operations within the realm of military actors confuses beneficiaries and local citizens, and in some cases can cause fear amongst an already traumatised people. For instance, in Kandahar, PRTs are seen to be going around with guns to monitor progress of their relief work. It is near impossible for civilians in these circumstances to distinguish between the soldiers who are bombing their cities on the one hand, and delivering aid on the other.

Increased risk of insecurity for humanitarian agencies

Having similar types of activities being run by humanitarian and military personnel, contributes to the blurring of the distinction between military forces and humanitarian agencies on the ground. The concern is that this risks putting humanitarian staff in danger.

Lack of accountability

There are concerns that the humanitarian-like activities run by militaries fall outside usual accountability mechanisms – such as sectoral co-ordination structures; monitoring formats and open reporting; and respect for international standards. Short-term gains enjoyed by the military may have longer-term costs, borne by local people and local authorities. For example, digging a bore-hole offers a quick-win for military, but who will oversee the maintenance of this resource and manage any potential conflict that might arise due to unclear ownership?

In addition, specific concerns are emerging regarding the practice of using private contractors in a military mission. Although not a new practice, in the case of the USA, core military activities are increasingly being contracted out to private agencies – be it private contracting companies, private intelligence agencies, or private security companies.⁶³ It is unclear to whom these private contractors are accountable, and how this accountability is measured – by speed of delivery; value for money; saving lives; or other criteria.

5.6.2. Issues of practice

Skewing aid investments

Some governments have stated clearly in their military doctrine that they will carry out humanitarian activities only in exceptional circumstances (where NGOs cannot access the area or where needs overwhelm NGHA capacity). Indeed, there have been cases where there were significant shortfalls in the humanitarian system's response – for instance, in the logistical capacity of the humanitarian effort following extensive floods in Mozambique in 2000 – and the military's support, notably through the provision of helicopters, was an appropriate solution. However, such clarity in filling gaps is not the norm.

⁶² One of the leaflets, showing an Afghan carrying a bag of provisions, read: 'In order to continue the humanitarian aid, pass over any information related to Taliban, al-Qaida or Gulbuddin organisations to the coalition forces'. Ewen MacAskill, *The Guardian*, Thursday May 6, 2004

⁶³ According to Human Rights Watch, May 2004.

In Kandahar, for example, the US-led PRT has reconstructed schools – in areas that are both secure and being serviced by NGHAs. Meanwhile, the PRT is not providing security to agencies to work in insecure areas, and people living there are receiving no assistance.⁶⁴

Inappropriate aid

While military forces are trained and equipped to provide medical care and facilities to a predominantly male, adult, healthy population, most beneficiaries in any crisis will tend to be women and children.⁶⁵ In the case of US airdrops in Afghanistan, for instance, aid packages consisted of just one meal (complete with vinaigrette and peanut butter) when what people needed were basic supplies such as rice and oil for their long-term nutritional needs, plus energy-dense commodities suitable for young children.

Dangerous aid

Humanitarian agencies have built up a wealth of experience of how best to deliver aid so that it does not put civilians in more harm, and it serves to protect them in what can be a complex and dangerous environment. In Afghanistan, the manner in which militaries have provided aid has put citizens at greater risk. For instance, the airdrops cited above, caused people to run into fields to get their food rations – putting them at risk of injury from land-mines. Further, the food parcels were yellow, the same colour as cluster bombs, which children are already prone to picking up and playing with.

5.7. Outlook for humanitarian–military relations in Afghanistan

This study has sought to determine whether concerns expressed by humanitarian actors vis-à-vis the concept and operations of the PRTs (as they relate to provision of security and interfacing with humanitarian actors) have actually materialised.

The PRTs have complicated relations with humanitarian actors in Afghanistan, for several reasons:

1. the non-adherence of certain (primarily US-led) PRTs to their ‘working guidelines’ concerning the performance of relief operations
2. the variation in roles and missions of the different PRTs, depending on lead country
3. the lack of consultation by some PRTs with local communities and NGHAs operating in the surrounding areas in advance of the arrival and deployment of the PRT
4. the relatively high turnover of personnel within the PRTs, which makes institutional learning more difficult and creates the potential for repeated mistakes.

Many of the challenges associated with humanitarian–military relations in Afghanistan, can however, be overcome if both humanitarian and military actors are willing to work together to identify shared interests (and to acknowledge different organisational cultures).

Since the establishment of the first PRT at the end of 2002, military leaders have grappled with what exactly the PRTs should or can do. However, with the planned expansion of ISAF through PRTs, the operational context of the PRTs will change significantly.

⁶⁴ Interview with Country Director of Mercy Corps, May 2004.

⁶⁵ Barry, J (2002) *A Bridge Too Far: Aid Agencies and the Military in Humanitarian Response*, Network Paper 37 of the Humanitarian Practice Network. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI), January

Whereas they were previously managed under the control of an international Coalition operating in Afghanistan with the support of the international community, (as underlined in statements such as the Berlin Declaration), and with the permission of the ITGA, in future they will become elements of an internationally-mandated NATO-ISAF force operating under Chapter VII of the UN Charter (as is already the case for the Kunduz, Mazar and Maymaneh PRTs).

Initially the NATO-ISAF PRTs will be under the control of the individual lead NATO member states; however, the near-term objective of NATO is to bring the ‘national PRTs’ all under the direct control of NATO. In the longer term, there may be a shift in focus towards more interaction with national military forces, among them the ANA and local warlords, rather than the PRTs.

The implications of this potentially could lead to an increase in: friction between humanitarian agencies and PRTs on the ground; further confusion amongst locals; further confusion vis-à-vis co-ordination; and further politicisation of the PRT mission. Humanitarian actors have struggled, and will continue to struggle, with trying to define and rationalise their own role and engagement with the PRTs. Likely to continue to cause the most friction is the direct engagement of PRTs in relief operations, as played out in Mazar, Ghazni, Herat and Kandahar.

While UN-OCHA traditionally takes on the role of co-ordinating the humanitarian response in any given crisis, the nature of the UNAMA mission in-country complicates its co-ordinating and mediating role. This is because the PRT model, although not an example, is a logical extension of the new integrated missions approach of the UN. The aim of integrated missions is to establish greater coherence amongst different UN departments and agencies in order to tackle restoring peace, security and good governance under one umbrella.⁶⁶ In Afghanistan there are very real concerns that integration of this kind can alter the mission’s politically independent stance and thus that any humanitarian considerations associated with PRT–humanitarian interactions will be usurped by political considerations.

5.8. Options for modes of NGHA engagement with PRTs

PRTs, in one form or another, will be part of the operational context in Afghanistan for some time to come. Operational agencies are therefore having to decide whether and how to engage with the PRTs. This section suggests four broad policy options for humanitarian agencies to consider in guiding their engagements with PRTs:

- Option 1: principled non-engagement
- Option 2: ‘arm’s-length’ interaction
- Option 3: proactive, pragmatic, principled engagement
- Option 4: active, direct engagement and co-operation.

The advantages and disadvantages of each policy option are presented here.

⁶⁶ The aim, as laid out in the UN Guidelines for Peace Support Operations undertaken by Lakhdar Brahimi in 2000 was to take a more coherent approach to crisis management in failed or failing states by harnessing the skills of different parts of the UN system under the command of the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) in the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), a structure that raised controversy amongst humanitarian agencies.

Option 1: principled non-engagement

Position

NGHAs will not engage with PRTs, directly or indirectly, as the military component of these entities are parties to an internationalised internal conflict, and any association may impair their actual or perceived independence.

Advantages and disadvantages

Principled non-engagement with PRTs offers the advantage that it constitutes a clear-cut position for humanitarian agencies. The central principle that is being protected and preserved is the humanitarian agency's independence. However, this type of interaction may constrain an agency's operational activities in other ways. For example, non-engagement with the PRTs may preclude a humanitarian agency from accessing valuable operational security information. Yet, the provision of ANSO as a neutral compiler of statistics and information acts as a buffer between NGHAs and militaries. The more fundamental risk might be that those agencies who do not engage will cease to have a voice, and their potential to influence the course of military plans and activities would be diminished. It can be argued that the reason behind the UK's relative success in running the Mazar PRT is based not only on the UK's experience of entrenched hostilities in Northern Ireland, but also on the UK's early and sustained contact and dialogue with British-based NGOs operating in Afghanistan.

Option 2: 'arm's-length' interaction

Position

NGHAs will interact with PRTs indirectly via UNAMA and only as operational needs dictate. NGHAs will participate in briefing sessions and meetings with PRT personnel facilitated by UNAMA (or another mutually respected body), but will not initiate such meetings.

Advantages and disadvantages

Operating on the basis of 'arm's length' interaction with the PRTs provides a NGHAs with the flexibility to engage with these entities indirectly through UNAMA, while still maintaining a distance which *may* enhance the perceived independence of the organisation. Under this model, a NGHAs would not accept funding directly from the PRT (but may, for example, accept donor funding provided through other channels).

The main disadvantage with this approach is that it relies primarily on a reactive approach to addressing concerns or operational issues. This puts NGHAs very much on the 'back-foot', and therefore their contributions run the risk of becoming subservient to the militaries' agendas. Another possible problem, that may emerge in the future, is that this positioning assumes there is a mutually respected 'middle-person' with whom both the military and NGHAs are comfortable. However, in the case of UNAMA, concerns are already beginning to emerge from NGOs, which are questioning the integrity and objectivity of UNAMA. If such a mediating entity loses the respect of either the military or NGHAs, then the mode of interaction breaks down.

Option 3: proactive, pragmatic, principled engagement

Position

NGHAs will engage with PRTs using a proactive, pragmatic yet principled approach. At the field level, agencies will build on the existing liaison relationship with UNAMA to facilitate these interactions. However, NGHAs will seek to proactively shape the nature

and substance of those interactions, such that they support the overall posture of the agency. The proactive approach will therefore also feature an enhanced advocacy dimension. This policy orientation will also take a pragmatic approach to the circumstances under which PRTs could engage in humanitarian activities (ie, under exceptional circumstances, along the lines of existing guidelines on humanitarian–military relations).

Advantages and disadvantages

The main advantage of the approach based on proactive but principled engagement with the PRTs is that it affords an opportunity to contribute substantively to the debate on PRTs and to convert concerns on their role to substantive recommendations on how civil-military entities should operate in Afghanistan.

At the operational level, this approach could include initiatives such as: improving the co-ordinating of policy initiatives across NGHAs, possibly by enhancing the role of NGHAs co-ordinating entities such as ACBAR and BAAG; working with UNAMA, ACBAR and others to develop a set of ‘Operating Guidelines’ for the PRTs, developed from the perspective of humanitarian actors.

One possible disadvantage of this approach is that it could be perceived as ‘collaborating’ with military actors, which would then run the risk of perpetuating the current malaise of association and concern about increased risk. However, this perception could be overcome by indirect engagement (through UNAMA, or through coalition groups such as ACBAR or BAAG) at the field level. In addition, this approach may require extra personnel and financial resources for its effective implementation. Under this model, a NGHAs would not accept funding directly from a PRT.

Option 4: active, direct engagement and co-operation

Position

NGHAs will engage directly with PRTs and co-ordinate with these entities in terms of identifying humanitarian and reconstruction projects.

Advantages and disadvantages

Active and direct engagement and co-operation with the PRTs, especially when those PRTs are not under the control of an internationally-mandated military force (NATO), would compromise the independence of the organisation. This runs counter to the NGO Code of Conduct and core principle of independence of humanitarian actors, and could therefore undermine an agency’s mission and strategic objectives (in Afghanistan and beyond). Arguably, Afghan NGOs have more to gain and more to lose under Option 4 – more funding but also possibly reduced trust and allegiance with local communities.

5.9. Dilemmas and outstanding questions

The exploration of the role of PRTs undertaken in this paper has highlighted a number of important questions and issues for further debate:

How effective are the PRTs?

Do Afghans in PRT Provinces feel safer in rural and urban areas? The effectiveness of the PRTs in addressing the sources (and not just the symptoms) of insecurity in Afghanistan is a central question in assessing their overall effectiveness. In addition, the PRTs’ other areas of operation – namely: reconstruction and strengthening central government authority – would also need to be considered.

The US-led Coalition's OEF and NATO-ISAF appear to have made little attempt to develop MoEs to assess PRT performance. Well-designed MoEs could provide a basis for further constructive discussion on strategies and approaches required to meet the needs across a number of sectors. They would also help demonstrate greater transparency and accountability.

The UK Government's review of the Mazar PRT, planned for September 2004, is welcomed. However this is not enough. It is recommended that a thorough and comprehensive, independent, review of the entire PRT network be undertaken as a matter of urgency, exploring the differences in policy frameworks between the various country contingents, and the operational styles and impact of PRTs in the various locations.

What is the added value of PRTs?

PRTs cost, but do the benefits they bring outweigh these costs? Are PRTs merely a smokescreen in terms of keeping to a minimum donor countries' political and military investments? Does an international military presence, however incapable given its size limitations, provide political cover for donor nations against their own public's opinion, regardless of the effectiveness and precise nature of this military presence? Are PRTs a smokescreen for more politically strategic, intelligence-gathering activities?

Some have argued that the PRTs have introduced a more holistic approach to security by the military, which takes account of the interdependence of social, economic, political and security dynamics.⁶⁷ However, the findings of this study highlight the continuing limitation of the PRT-led security efforts in reflecting and addressing the complex nature of insecurity in Afghanistan.

Donor funding of projects through the PRTs amounts to a tiny portion of the total aid funding available. For example, the UK PRT receives only one per cent of the UK's annual aid budget to Afghanistan. What's the rationale for establishing this conduit for aid disbursement? Some might interpret this as a means of paying for military work through another funding source. Interviews also point to a damage-limitation strategy: by providing an aid facility associated with the military, it reduces the chances of the military doing such work themselves.

Is it possible to achieve consistency in PRT mandate and strategy?

This paper has highlighted the conflicting mandates of PRTs: those under NATO are operating under a UN mandate; those led by Coalition members, the USA, fall under the Coalition's combat Operation Enduring Freedom. As NATO-ISAF expands its presence in the Northeast of the country through the PRTs, and eventually across a large swath of the territory, how will NATO-ISAF provide direction to the remaining US-led PRTs?

It is also unclear how much emphasis has been placed on the sustainability of the PRTs, in terms of facilitating a transition/hand-over to local control at some point in the future. Is there an exit strategy for US/Coalition/NATO-ISAF PRT sponsors?

⁶⁷ Watkins C (2003) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs): An analysis of their contribution to security in Afghanistan* Submitted in partial fulfilment of the MSc degree in Development Practice, Oxford Brookes University, 30 September

Why should DfID or USAID want to sit in a structure under military command – do they not feel compromised?

Two possible answers were gleaned in relation to this question. First, the military provide essential security to permit the advisers to access areas they would otherwise not be able to visit. However, if a more robust and comprehensive security force was in country, tasked with providing security alone, would this not be a better, more effective way to ensure access? Have reconstruction and ‘hearts and minds’ efforts by the military been used to justify their presence and mission when security-provisioning has failed due to lack of political will? Second, association with the PRTs gives advisers and their respective institutions greater ‘clout’ with local authorities. Whilst no doubt a pragmatic solution, this further highlights the politico-military motivations of the PRT model.

How can aid agencies contribute to the debate on humanitarian–military relations in Afghanistan?

Aid agencies are engaging with the PRTs in numerous ways, ranging from principled non-engagement to active collaboration on projects (options for mode of engagement by NGHAs with PRTs are discussed in Section 5.8). How can this diversity be harnessed to increase the contributions of NGHAs to the debate on humanitarian–military relations in general, and to the evolution of the PRTs in particular?

The diverse range of views on humanitarian–military relations within the humanitarian community, especially when compared to the more homogeneous military community, has meant that a co-ordinated approach or strategy has been difficult to agree upon and to implement. This is a critical area that could be improved through enhanced co-ordination. Improved co-ordination, or at least communication, between the humanitarian community and PRTs might also help avoid some of the operational problems that have occurred in the past (as highlighted in the Mazar case, for example). To date, UNAMA has taken on this co-ordination role; this experience needs to be critically reviewed in order to ensure that future efforts are as effective as possible.

Why and how can NATO justify ISAF’s expansion solely through the PRTs?

NATO-ISAF’s force expansion through the PRTs will total approximately 1,500 extra troops.⁶⁸ ISAF is mandated under the Bonn Agreement to: *‘assist in the maintenance of security for Kabul and its surrounding areas. Such a force could, as appropriate, be progressively expanded to other urban centres and other areas.’*⁶⁹

UN Security Council resolution 1510 of October 2003 expanded the mandate of ISAF to operate outside Kabul. Expansion of ISAF was slow to materialise, due primarily to a reluctance on the part of NATO troop- and resource-contributing nations to provide the necessary logistics capabilities and troops to enable ISAF to expand. NATO’s decision to expand through a limited number of PRTs appears to be a pragmatic response to a political problem: the reluctance to provide the necessary troops and resources.

⁶⁸ NATO (2004) ‘NATO Expands Presence in Afghanistan’ NATO press release, 29 June

⁶⁹ Annex 1, International Security Force, ‘Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions’
www.uno.de/frieden/afghanistan/talks/agreement.htm

Chapter 6

Implications of PRT model for humanitarian–military relations in general

6.1. Overview

The polarity of views among humanitarian and military actors on the effectiveness and utility of the PRTs; the fact that their very composition raises questions on the roles and missions of civilian and military personnel in peace-building activities; and the extent to which they may blur lines between humanitarian and military actors, are all factors that have focused attention on the possible future deployment of similar civil-military teams in other post-conflict situations.

Military forces, largely viewing the PRTs as a transformative approach to conducting peace-support operations, may consider using similar teams to undertake security and reconstruction activities in other regions.

Humanitarian agencies, especially those outside the UN system, largely view the PRTs with concern, as they are considered by NGHAs to be a second-best alternative to a more robust internationally-mandated peacekeeping force, and they blur the lines between military and humanitarian actors/roles. Indeed, in the case of Afghanistan, this concern was partly echoed by the (then) UN Special Envoy to Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahmi, when he stated in January 2004 that ISAF's expansion through the PRTs is *“second best to a straightforward extension of ISAF, as we have been calling for ever since we arrived in Kabul at the end of 2001”*.⁷⁰

The concerns expressed by humanitarian actors extend to other civil-military teams that may be deployed along the lines of the PRTs in other situations. This chapter considers the implications of the PRT model for general situations of peace-building, reconstruction and political transition beyond Afghanistan, and compares also the PRTs with another form of joint civil-military entity: UN integrated missions.

6.2. PRTs as a model for peace-building and reconstruction

From the point of view of many OEF Coalition governments, the PRTs have become a showcase model of international support to political transition and reconstruction – which may well have implications beyond Afghanistan. Interviews and consultations undertaken during this study have highlighted perspectives from government agencies on both sides of the Atlantic that the PRTs are regarded by many as visionary, appropriate and more holistic in their approach compared to previous, purely military engagements.

Emerging military doctrine in the USA, UK and other NATO member states points to an evolution in war-fighting approaches: wars are no longer considered to focus solely on defeating the enemy, but now include operations to build peace in transition societies. The evolution in military doctrine is accompanied by an acknowledgement that for states to win the peace, as well as the war, a more comprehensive approach is needed. PRTs are seen by

⁷⁰ UNA-USA, 2004, 'Returned U.N. Envoy To Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi Addresses Washington Policymakers, Journalists' National Press Club luncheon on Tuesday, 27 January 2004. Cited in UNA-USA: www.unausa.org/policy/NewsActionAlerts/info/dc013004.asp

many military planners within US defence institutions and NATO as a vital enabling force in fulfilling the objectives of this new peace-building and peace-support doctrine. There is, however, another important dimension to the PRTs: the fact that they are being used to reconcile military objectives with political realities. The PRTs are seen privately by many military personnel (within UK and NATO commands in particular) as a low-risk – in terms of troop security, financial risk and political risk – alternative to more substantial troop deployments.

The challenges encountered by NATO headquarters in ensuring that member states deliver on their pledges to provide troops and equipment to facilitate ISAF expansion highlights the reluctance of NATO members to contribute ‘blood and treasure’ to the ISAF enterprise. PRTs provide a means for states to ‘fly the flag’ in Afghanistan. They can therefore provide political cover for governments that are reluctant to make available the necessary troops and financial resources that would provide more effective support during the political transition in Afghanistan, but yet want to be seen to be doing something. In this regard, the PRTs serve as a political investment multiplier for sponsoring states.

Research conducted during this study has pointed to several areas where military forces that are considering civil-military entities (similar to the PRTs) for other deployments, could learn from the PRT experience and factor this into planning for other military deployments. As a starting point, the following issues should be considered prior to deploying civil-military entities intended to engage in peace-building and reconstruction activities:

1. Civil-military teams should exploit their comparative advantages in the areas of security and, specifically, by ensuring a security environment conducive to reconstruction and humanitarian activities undertaken by other actors.
2. If security is to be the dominant role of civil-military teams, the resulting entities will require a military contingent capable of addressing security threats in the teams’ areas of operation. The presence of an entity that is unwilling or unable to address security threats may embolden insurgents, and may indeed contribute to an attitude of impunity on the part of those engaged in criminal activity or committing human rights abuses.
3. The PRT experience has demonstrated the importance of civil-military teams adhering to a clearly defined mission. Difficulties have arisen between PRTs and humanitarian actors in Afghanistan for several reasons, including PRTs on occasion undertaking relief operations in areas where NGOs already have an operational presence.
4. Civil-military entities should consist of personnel that are appropriately trained for their missions and operating environment. Pre-deployment training should include a sharing of perspectives by military and humanitarian actors on the nature and principles of humanitarian assistance, such that the military contingents of joint teams will be aware of potential pitfalls associated with engaging in certain types of relief activity.
5. Civil-military entities working in the areas of governance support and reconstruction should prioritise the role of emerging local (legitimate) political leaders and institutions.
6. The deployment of civil-military teams to undertake activities in the areas of security, reconstruction and governance support should be undertaken with a clear exit or transition strategy.

However, PRTs should not be viewed as an initiative that can simply be transported to other situations of post-conflict transition. Quite apart from the complexities inherent in the blurring of political-military-humanitarian lines that they incur, they are not a helpful blueprint to follow on a practical level. Each situation – whether in-conflict, post-conflict, or in transition – will have a unique set of requirements across a number of sectors. The operating environment in Afghanistan is markedly different to that in Iraq in the aftermath of the 2003 conflict, a situation of ‘Belligerent Occupation’ under International Humanitarian Law ; or Liberia, where a UN peacekeeping force is operating with the consent of the main parties to the conflict.

6.3. PRTs and UN integrated missions – how do they compare?

Another form of civil-military structure is the integrated missions that have been deployed by the UN in recent years. Articulated in the Brahimi report on the future of peacekeeping,⁷¹ integrated missions have become an important element in the UN’s strategy for peacekeeping and peace-enforcement. They are intended to promote coherence between the political, military, humanitarian and development elements of UN operations. Kosovo, East Timor, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Liberia and the DRC are examples of where UN integrated missions have been deployed.

Unlike PRTs, UN integrated missions are headed not by a military commander but by a political appointee – generally the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) for that country/region. The overall organisational structure of the mission, however, is generally established by, and under the institutional administration/control of, the UN’s Department for Peace-Keeping Operations (DPKO). Nevertheless, fears that political leadership, just as with a military one, may undermine the perceived independence of humanitarian actors prevail.

The success of integrated missions appears to be mixed. While it is acknowledged that there cannot be a definite blue-print that suits all contexts, three specific factors have emerged as being key determinants of a mission’s success:

1. the characteristics of the Special Representative – his/her experience and leadership skills
2. the role of the UN OCHA in the design and implementation phases of the integrated mission, and its relations with DPKO
3. the extent to which non-UN humanitarian actors have been consulted and involved.⁷²

Some have argued that “*coherence* [between the UN’s peacekeeping, political, humanitarian and development resources] *need not mean co-option*”, and humanitarian response need not be subordinated to political priorities.⁷³ However, it is acknowledged that a necessary precondition for success is the consultative process of mission design (determinant 3 above). Yet, this is precisely what has not happened with the UN Mission in Liberia).⁷⁴

⁷¹ United Nations, 2000, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, UN Document Ref. A/55/305-S/2000/809, New York: United Nations, August.

⁷² Porter T, 2004, ‘AlertNet Viewpoint: NGOs need to be in on the peacekeeping discussions’, 21 May.

⁷³ Carolyn McAskie, 2004, Introductory Remarks at the Conference ‘Humanitarian Co-ordination – How Does it Work? How can it be Improved?’ Montreux, Switzerland, April.

⁷⁴ Personal communication, NGHA in Liberia, 9 July 2004.

One key difference between the PRTs and integrated missions is that the UN relies on NGHAs to deliver the services and protection required. Thus, if NGHAs choose to ‘vote with their feet’ and not engage with a mission, then it puts the UN in that country at mortal risk. The PRTs do not rely on such a relationship.

6.4. Preserving the boundaries between humanitarian and military identities and operations

At the crux of concerns about the blurring of respective identities and the overlapping roles between military and humanitarian actors lie two fundamental points of contention. The first is an in-principle opposition on the part of many NGHAs to a structural association between humanitarian and military entities (also true for UN integrated missions). Thus, the co-location, under a common leadership, of political, development and military personnel, is seen by many in the humanitarian community as inappropriate and contrary to the fundamental humanitarian principles of independence and impartiality. The second is a practical opposition to the use of those ‘hearts and minds’ activities that are similar to the work undertaken by humanitarian agents. Humanitarians object on the basis that such work confuses the respective role and remit of the NGHAs and militaries in the minds of beneficiaries and other observers. Militaries, on the other hand, see ‘hearts and minds’ operations as an integral component of their force protection and stabilisation strategy.

The expansion of military operations from traditional war-fighting roles to peace-support operations has resulted in increased operational juxtapositioning between the military and humanitarian spheres. This has highlighted the need for greater definition and guidelines on approaches to addressing humanitarian needs.

While in some instances, this has led to increased understanding and dialogue on both sides,⁷⁵ recent experiences of interaction between humanitarians and militaries paint a picture of continued polarisation of views. At the heart of this polarisation lies a divergence of what constitutes ‘humanitarian’. The fundamental distinction between relief operations conducted by military forces and humanitarian activities is the motive behind them, and the way in which this motivation governs the process of delivery. NGHAs seek to deliver aid because people need it, and aim to do so in a manner that meets immediate needs while also maximising longer-term prospects. In contrast, the military undertake such action as a means of winning ‘hearts and minds’, ie, on the basis of whether the beneficiaries will be of political assistance. This divergence in motivations represents one of the primary obstacles to progress in the debate on humanitarian–military relations.

While policies and guidelines are being developed, they are, in many cases, so ambiguous as to allow for multiple interpretations of all of these terms (see Section 1.4). This definitional issue translates into ambiguity and overlap in the areas of operation for humanitarian and military actors on the ground. In part this ambiguity is intentional. Military forces wish to keep open the option of engaging, at will, in relief operations, as these activities have become a central element of their peace-support operations. Meanwhile ambiguity can also serve NGHAs’ purposes. For instance humanitarian agencies are reluctant to adopt a more precise definition of what constitutes humanitarian action as this may limit their scope of

⁷⁵ As an example, the Joint Doctrine and Concepts Centre incorporated definitions of key humanitarian terms into their CIMIC policy (MoD, 2003). The same Centre participates in a ‘contact’ group, made up of NGOs, the International Federation of Red Cross and Crescent Societies, FCO and DfID to encourage dialogue and enhanced mutual understanding about the very real differences in approach.

operations in areas that may be considered more developmental rather than clear-cut humanitarian assistance.

This research has confirmed the concerns expressed by Save the Children and other NGHAs that the PRTs have contributed to a blurring of the distinction between humanitarian and military personnel and operations. It is in the interest of both humanitarian and military actors to preserve this distinction, although the trend towards peace-support operations that include relief activities by military forces would appear to point to possible further erosion in the future.

For the last two years at least, NGOs have been voicing concerns about the threat 'hearts and minds' activities pose to humanitarian agencies – in terms of perceptions of their independence and concomitant security. These concerns have gone largely unheeded. Only after the murder of five MSF workers in June 2004, and the subsequent withdrawal of that organisation from Afghanistan, has the issue received the attention it requires. The previous 16 killings of aid workers since the beginning of the year did not seem to elicit a sense of injustice and urgency outside humanitarian circles. Surely this high price should never be levied again. It is imperative that militaries, and their political masters, either prove that the risks posed by 'hearts and minds' operations are outweighed by the security benefits, or else they should cease including them in their portfolio of military activities.

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Annex 2: List of organisations consulted

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Agency Co-ordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR)
British Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG)
CARE International
Christian Aid
Christian Children's Fund
European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO)
GOAL (UK)
International Rescue Committee
MercyCorps
North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
Save the Children US
Swisspeace
United Kingdom Department for International Development (DfID)
United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)
United Kingdom Ministry of Defence (MoD)
United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
Watson Institute, Brown University

