

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS IN AFGHANISTAN



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Cover Photo:

United States Army Spc. Mary Miller, 407th Civil Affairs Battalion, and two young Afghan girls in traditional costume plant a tree at the conclusion of the opening ceremony for a provincial reconstruction team headquarters in Herat (03 December 2003).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) were created by the United States military during Operation Enduring Freedom. Their purpose is to encourage security in the provinces of Afghanistan by laying the foundation for development. The interdisciplinary nature of PRTs has enabled them to construct critical infrastructure, broker ceasefires, and provide food and medical care to Afghan citizens.

PRTs have come under criticism from members of the humanitarian assistance community who feel that the teams cross the sacred boundary between military affairs and the neutrality of humanitarian aid. Furthermore, critics assert that PRTs are an inadequate solution to Afghanistan's greater security needs.

This paper documents the evolution of the PRT concept and evaluates their performance against six criteria: (1) expanded development activities into the provinces; (2) extended the authority of the central government; (3) helped secure Afghanistan, (4) improved communication and coordination between actors working towards stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan; (5) demonstrated cost effectiveness; and (6) improved conditions for reconstruction without adverse impact on the safety of humanitarian workers.

Research shows that PRTs are well received by Afghan citizens and an appropriate approach to stability operations. They have, however, failed to improve communication amongst the Afghan central government, the United States military and non-governmental organizations operating on the ground.

The PRT model can be improved if it evolves into an entity with full coordination among all actors on the ground. Specifically, PRTs should: receive operational mandate from the U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and

Stabilization; focus military assets on security sector reform, particularly the training of Afghan National Police and National Army; direct civil affairs personnel to provide technical assistance to build up local governance capacities in areas that aid agencies cannot operate; maintain close ties with UNAMA and the Afghan Central Government; and be staffed by civilian and military personnel who have participated in joint training before deployment to a particular country.

This evolution requires a dramatic change in operational doctrine for both humanitarian and military actors. Nonetheless, these modifications would allow PRTs to be an effective tactical and operational bridge to implement transitional goals in fragile or failed states around the globe.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan and assess whether these teams are a mechanism that can evolve successfully to best serve United States stabilization and reconstruction goals.

According to the U.S. Department of Stateⁱ it is likely that the United States will be required to address two or three concurrent stabilization and reconstruction (S&R) operations on an ongoing basis. Historical data provides a baseline for this assumption. Over the past fifteen years, the United States has been directly involved in seven S&R operations in addition to being a significant resource contributor to more than ten.

Despite these trends and the fact that most S&R operations are commitments spanning five years or longer, the United States government only recently attempted to institutionalize S&R capacity through the establishment of the U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS).

The complexity of S&R operations, particularly in failed states such as Afghanistan, requires a multi-agency response from the U.S. government. However, this is not simply a matter of assembling a large cast of characters to become involved in a country. The challenge is coordinating a constantly changing cast of characters who must each be present, sometimes operating in unison, at different phases of a long-term operation.

The difficulty of interagency coordination in the development and implementation of country-wide reconstruction strategies, including the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), will not be the central focus of this paper. However, exploring the viability of PRTs will provide answers to the many questions that beleaguer policymakers who are attempting to craft multifaceted intervention strategies for failed state scenarios.

OBJECTIVES

This paper describes the context, purpose, and design of PRTs, including how different users (particularly international forces) have made adaptations to the model to meet their own needs. The past performance of PRTs is evaluated against criteria for gauging their overall effectiveness. Options for the advancement of the PRT model are then discussed. Finally, recommendations are presented to the policymaker in establishing an evolutionary path for PRTs.

The research underlying the present evaluation is primarily based on academic journals, military reports, policy statements from non-governmental organizations, and newspaper accounts over a three year time period (2002 – 2005). The findings in this paper have also been informed by correspondence with members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers who currently serve on the provincial reconstruction team in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

BACKGROUND

Fulfilling the Need to Link Security and Development

The United States has been involved in numerous stabilization and reconstruction operations since the end of the Cold War. These operations have highlighted the need for both security and humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to be established concurrently. Both conditions have been historically brought about by separate entities of the U.S. government and the international community. Although the military has been involved in providing logistical support during humanitarian emergencies, they have not played a leading role in development operations.

Traditional military operations required a long and sizeable build up of military forces in theater. After victory was declared, a large number of forces remained in the area to begin S&R operations. In contrast, recent combat operations are characterized by rapid strikes with fewer forces. This means that there is less time to plan for post-conflict scenarios and even fewer on-the-ground resources available for S&R operations immediately at the end of combat operations.ⁱⁱ The result is a gap between combat and S&R operations that can lead to humanitarian crises and later difficulties in establishing security at a local level (Figure 1).

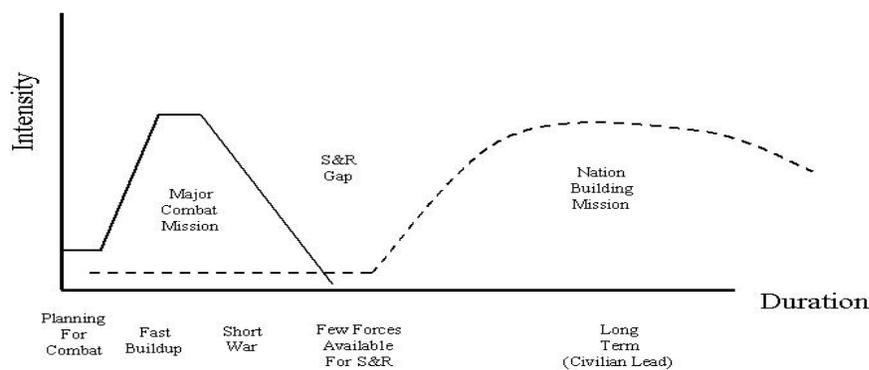


Figure 1 – Illustrated gap between combat and S&R operationsⁱⁱⁱ

Even if development and humanitarian aid actors are in place immediately following the cessation of major combat operations, their activities have in recent instances been concentrated in major cities where impaired or fledgling governments and potentially some international security forces are able to maintain security bubbles. The ensuing uneven development exacerbates both short-term and long-term instability, and can have dramatic effects on the security environment.

Short-term instability is generated when insurgent, criminal, or international terrorist organizations take advantage of the enabling environment when no government-sanctioned security force is capable of hampering their illegal and violent activities (which may or may not be aimed at disabling the state).

Long-term instability is generated when uneven development leads to fragmentation of the local population due to resentment between those who have opportunities and those who do not. It also allows for local power structures to develop that compromise the authority of the central government. These local power structures may appear more equitable in providing subsistence to local groups who have been ignored. Unfortunately, as local power structures strengthen, it becomes easier to exploit vulnerable populations and encourage their participation in insurgency, terrorism, and general criminal activities. It is also possible that an informal economy will develop that drains resources from the state and makes it difficult for the state to provide services.

Why not deploy larger forces that can ensure safety of humanitarian actors across the country so that the foundations of sustainable development can be formed? In the case of Afghanistan, one can argue that a heavier military footprint should have been present over the course of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Nonetheless, there have been fundamental changes in the nature of warfare since the end of the Cold War that makes possible successful combat operations with much smaller forces.

Civil conflict and accompanying low-intensity warfare with non-state actors is emerging as today's primary security threat. Insurgencies survive only with support from local communities. A large occupation force would not be appropriate to address insurgency operations where local population support is essential to success. Quelling these

scenarios requires a softer approach, often characterized as “hearts and minds” operations. Hence the military is seeking ways to use incentives to deter local populations from supporting insurgencies or international groups who employ terrorism locally.

The result is an inextricable link between security and development. Development practitioners have understood the importance of security, but primarily in terms of the establishment of legal order as a foundation of sustainable development. The traditional view is that military forces should be used to suppress opposition and maintain order to permit then delivery of humanitarian assistance, after which they withdraw and development agencies enter. An alternative view is that there should be a significant overlap in operational presence and strategic planning of the military and development and humanitarian actors from the very beginning. Recent trends of combining military operations with the distribution of humanitarian assistance reflect the alternative view, but not without criticism from the humanitarian aid community.^{iv} The concerns of critics will be presented and addressed subsequently.

Within the international security community, there is a growing understanding that the provision of humanitarian services and establishment of long-term development programs counteract the enabling environment for insurgency. Because of this, the military is developing its capabilities to participate in S&R operations with a greater appreciation of the value of development (Figure 2). It should be noted that S&R capabilities have existed in the past in terms of military civil affairs (CA) teams, but justification for their existence was not embedded in security policy itself. A new concept was needed to guide security operations in responding to development and humanitarian needs.

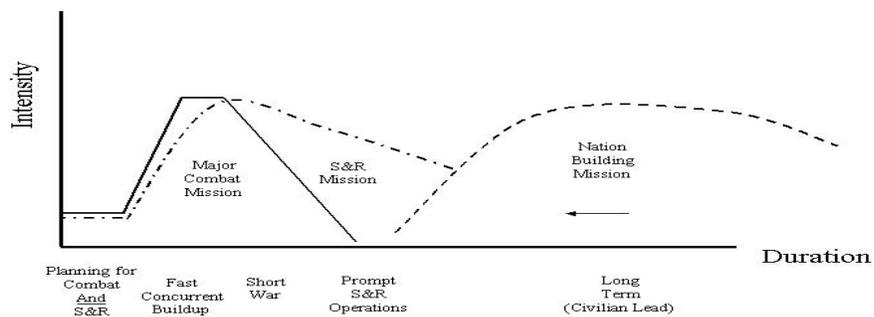


Figure 2 – Transformed S&R Capabilities^v

Provincial Reconstruction Teams Defined

Provincial reconstruction teams were created in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom with the intent of melding security and development. They are designed to operate in fragile or failed states where strong international mediation is required or a transitional government with highly limited capacity is in place. PRTs are designed to work in high risk areas where traditional development and humanitarian agencies are too threatened to operate.^{vi}

PRTs are not peacekeeping entities, but small interdisciplinary teams staffed by multiple U.S. government agencies (Department of Defense, Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of Agriculture, and others). The ratio of regular combat troops to civilians is determined by the unique security situation of a particular province. Those combat troops are part of a PRT to protect the team itself, not to conduct security operations independent of PRT mission.

As defined by the Department of Defense (DOD),^{vii} PRTs: (a) extend the authority of the central government beyond Kabul; (b) monitor, assess and report on developments in the

regions; (c) facilitate information sharing; (d) contribute to the reconstruction process; and (e) closely coordinate with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, non-governmental organizations and international associations (Figure 3).

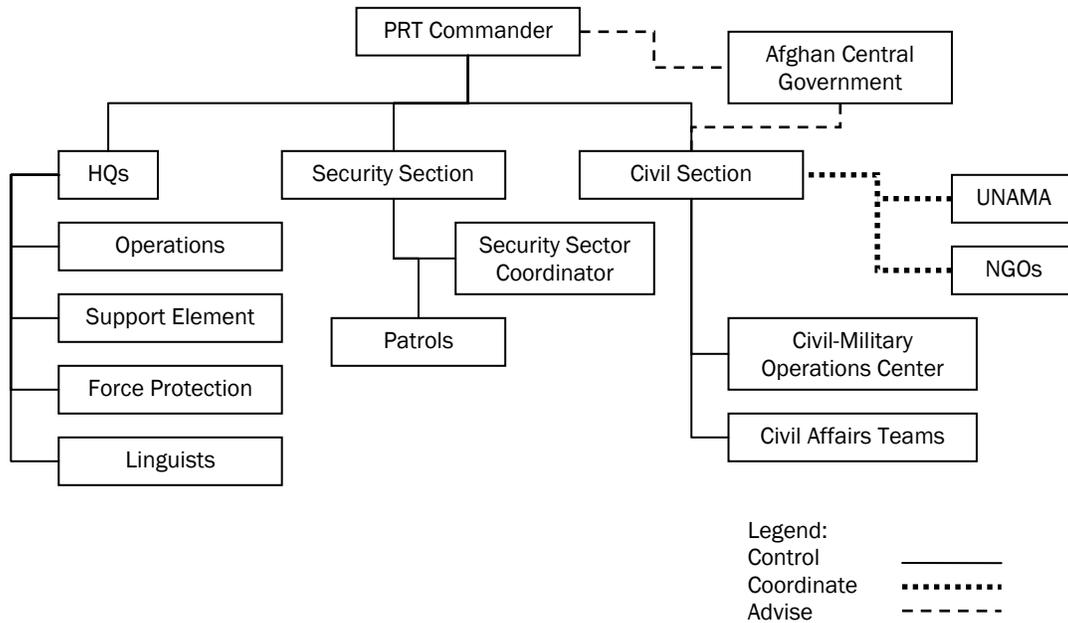


Figure 3 – PRT Command and Control Structure

PRTs have participated in an extremely wide range of security and development activities since their formation. As the model was adopted by International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF), the scope of activities broadened even more. This is due in part to a loosely defined operational mandate for PRTs to ‘provide assistance as needed’ both to the local provincial authorities and the Afghan central government.

The intention was for PRT assistance to facilitate information sharing amongst various groups to help stimulate reconstruction.^{viii} PRTs could also be involved in large scale infrastructure projects. Civil affairs units, which form the core of the military element of a PRT, are designed and trained to facilitate civil-governance functions and public sector

services.^{ix} The objective was to create safe spaces outside of the capitol city of Kabul so that development professionals could fulfill promises made to the Afghan people.

Making the PRT Concept Operational

The beginning of PRT operations started with planning efforts for civil-military operations shortly after September 11, 2001. U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) was fully aware that as military operations began, non-governmental actors would play an essential role in handling a number of humanitarian issues in-country. Representatives from the United Nations as well as NGO spokespersons from Inter-Action were invited to participate in planning meetings at CENTCOM headquarters in Florida.

The Coalition Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force began operating in Kabul in November 2001. It was assigned to be an information conduit to NGOs and to coordinate all civil affairs unit activities during OEF. Any civil-military affairs activities would be funded through the joint DOD/DOS Overseas Humanitarian Disaster and Civil Assistance (OHDACA) fund.

Civil affairs units were combined with small contingents of security forces and sent into the field. These predecessors to PRTs were called Joint Regional Teams (JRTs). Their mission was to coordinate reconstruction efforts, identify projects, conduct village assessments and coordinate everyone engaged in the reconstruction process – a daunting task and one that did not receive support from the NGO community.

According to Major Kimberly Fields, a former strategic planner for the civil-military task force in Afghanistan,^x three conditions led to the belief that JRTs (and, later, PRTs) were “military NGOs.”

First, lack of clarity and guidance from CENTCOM meant that civil affairs personnel often assumed their responsibilities to be both strategic and tactical. They were to support the Afghan Transitional Authority by winning hearts and minds through conducting good works across the country. This meant quickly commencing reconstruction efforts in the time period between the end of major combat operations and the beginning of major development projects. Without much guidance from joint military planners at CENTCOM headquarters or interaction with NGOs, the civil affairs mission in Afghanistan was unbounded and so were their activities.

Second, civil affairs activities were funded through the Overseas Humanitarian Disaster and Civil Assistance fund. Despite creating project selection criteria along with the Afghan Transitional Authority, OHDACA budgeting rules constrained the actual project selection and implementation. JRTs ended up building schools and clinics, drilling wells and making minor road repairs as permitted by the fund --- projects usually completed by NGOs.

Third, to win hearts and minds, all civil affairs activities had to be viewed by the Afghan people as valuable. Therefore, projects occurred based on the needs communicated by the Afghan Transitional Authority. They requested that JRTs make school construction the highest priority. Civil affairs commanders complied despite objections from NGOs.

JRTs evolved into PRTs in January 2003 after the Center for Humanitarian Cooperation organized a discussion with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and CENTCOM.^{xi} The mission of PRTs was clarified as follows: that they would extend the influence of the Afghan Transition Authority outside of Kabul, expand the work of NGOs and international

organizations outside of Kabul, facilitate conditions for reconstruction so as to encourage movement of pledged funds, and facilitate information sharing.

The first official PRT was established in February 2003 in Gardez province. In subsequent months, additional PRTs began in other provinces – Bamiyan in March and Kunduz in April. In total, over twenty PRTs have been established throughout the Afghan provinces (Figure 4).

COALITION PRTS	ISAF PRTS
Asadabad (USA) Bamiyan (New Zealand) Farah (USA) Gardez (USA) Ghazni (USA) Herat (USA) Jalalabad (USA) Kandahar (USA) Khowst (USA) Lashkar Gah (USA) Parwan (South Korea/USA) Qalat (USA) Sharana (USA) Tarin Kowt (USA)	Baglan Feyzabad Kunduz (Germany) Mazar-E-Sharif (United Kingdom) Miamana Puli Khumri

Figure 4 – Active Provincial Reconstruction Teams as of November 2004

International Adaptation of the PRT Model

In 2003, coalition members of ISAF expressed an interest in PRTs as an avenue for extending influence outside of the capitol. The primary motivation for ISAF having interest in PRTs was that it had been criticized internationally for remaining exclusively in Kabul, which created a host of security and development issues.

Aid agencies wanted to stay in the capitol due to ISAF protection, meaning that Afghan citizens had a better chance of receiving assistance if they resided in Kabul rather than away in the provinces. This triggered a massive inflow of internally displaced persons into Kabul, along with refugees who were returning from surrounding countries.

Overcrowding occurred, creating sanitation issues. Prices also climbed, leading to monetary instability. The concentration of NGOs in Kabul meant that vendors could charge higher prices for their foreign customers. In addition, living space was at a premium so rents increased dramatically.^{xii}

PRTs were seen as a potential solution for ISAF. Because PRTs were based on a model first brought into operation by the United States, the program could be implemented by ISAF partners without authorization from a new U.N. Security Council resolution.^{xiii} Otherwise, NATO commanders would have to seek modification to the ISAF mandate, which would have required time-consuming meetings between the North Atlantic Council and the U.N., time that many felt the Afghan Transitional Authority could not afford. Hence, the ISAF adaptation of the PRT concept was as much a result of the need for creative maneuvering within the international political system as a demonstration of the flexibility provided by PRTs to multinational forces involved in S&R operations.

As a whole, ISAF-PRTs focus primarily on coordination of players (facilitating communication between Afghan national, provincial and district leaders and their counterparts within the development community) and security sector reform (either disarmament and demobilization or police training).^{xiv} The evolution of the PRT concept after international adaptation was both dramatic and favorable. As discussed in detail below, the ISAF model is much more palatable to NGOs and certain members of the international community.

All military components of ISAF-PRTs report directly to ISAF Headquarters (Figure 5). Their civilian counterparts, while participating in projects on the ground, are part of planning and decision making through PRT Steering Committees which bring together

representatives from the Afghan central government, UNAMA, U.S. Coalition and ISAF commanders, NATO senior advisors, ambassadors from ISAF member states.

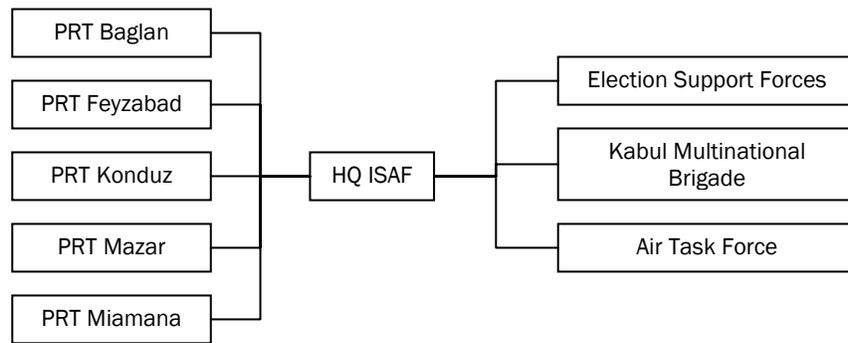


Figure 5 – ISAF PRT Command Structure

Initially, German PRTs followed an approach similar to that of the U.S. by having inter-ministerial personnel, including representatives from the German Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of the Interior, and the Economic Cooperation and Development group. However, each ministry performed their tasks with clear cut divisions of labor. Civilian agencies coordinated reconstruction. Military component worked with Afghan security forces to provide security for local reconstruction projects (being conducted by aid agencies). Control of the PRT is tandem; both the military commander and senior civil servant jointly head the team.^{xv}

The Canadians have yet to take a leadership role, but have been active participants on several multinational PRT teams. They are scheduled to assume command of their own PRT in August 2005. It is suggested that they are likely to follow the 3D approach (defense, development and diplomacy) which was used in the Balkans and elsewhere.^{xvi} However, Canadian officials acknowledge that their assessment of PRTs found that more combat,

combat support and combat service support forces are required to enable a PRT to function optimally.

The British approach to PRTs does not support the teams themselves providing direct humanitarian assistance. Though the U.K. led PRTs are multinational and include representatives from the U.S. Department of State, USAID and the U.K. Department for International Development, they have maintained strict delineation of roles between civilians and military forces. British PRTs deploy Mobile Observation Teams that will conduct security and development assessments for two-week time periods before the entrance of other PRT personnel. These assessments provide timely information to both military and civilian agencies.^{xvii}

With the start of ISAF VII, the British have taken a leadership role of PRT North West, an extremely large PRT that includes personnel from eleven different countries. Though the mission of this PRT remains the same --- to assist the Government of Afghanistan in extending its authority in order to facilitate development of a stable and secure environment --- its main efforts are focused on promoting the police as protectors of the local population.^{xviii} This effort is supported by a modified command structure where a civilian police advisor plays a leading role.

The British led PRT is concerned with two primary activities: security sector reform and government institution building in the development of Afghan customs, judiciary, the National Army and the National Police. Careful coordination occurs with local NGOs to prevent replication of projects. PRT North West has also been involved in brokering cease fires and encouraging peaceful talks between warring tribes.

Concerns about the PRT Model

The PRT model has had its critics. Some members of the NGO community question the progress made by PRTs in the provinces. They feel that the military is unfit for development projects, as its primary mission is to fight wars. Even civil affairs teams, who are trained in a variety of functions that seem well suited to reconstruction operations, may not have the appropriate manpower to successfully complete larger development projects. With soldiers rotating out of the country constantly, projects can easily become disjointed or even abruptly put on hold. In contrast, NGOs who have been operating in the country for years can remain committed to projects in addition to the benefits of having unparalleled local knowledge and cultural understanding.

NGOs are assuming incorrectly that PRTs do not have the technical expertise to be involved in development projects. The Army Corps of Engineers has a strong legacy of construction work in the United States and abroad. The assumption also ignores the fact that PRTs are not exclusively military entities. USAID team members are just as technically apt as their NGO counterparts. Since their JRT days, some PRTs have moved away from quick impact projects like digging wells and building schools and taken on specialized projects which are perceived as traditional military missions (such as security sector reform).

Members of the humanitarian assistance community have also expressed concerns about PRTs' associated mandate of extending the authority of the central government. As summarized by Barbara Stapleton of the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR),^{xix} PRT activities invade what has traditionally been humanitarian space and violate core humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality and neutrality by intentionally supporting the central government.

It is true that PRTs have been involved in humanitarian relief activities, but their goal is to facilitate long-term development. While core humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality and neutrality may underlie some development work, it is also true that donors value the concept of strategic aid and the importance of aid effectiveness. If one creates a distinction between development and humanitarian operations, PRT activities may be not in violation of humanitarian assistance principles because they are not humanitarian operations. Rather, they are part of a strategic development initiative for Afghanistan.

Some feel that PRTs, with their emphasis on development and negotiations, are not doing enough to improve security, particularly at a national level. As posited by Stapleton,^{xx} PRTs are “security on the cheap” or “nation-building lite” and the military is putting resources into development areas already covered by NGOs and the international community when they should be focusing on their core capabilities of providing more “hardcore” security.

Given that the commitment to Afghanistan is relatively small, particularly in comparison to the number of troops to Iraq, military personnel already have enough on their plate in attempting to deal with security challenges in-country. Critics questioned why soldiers should be building roads when an NGO is capable of completing that project when no one else can do what the military does in terms of providing security. The military’s primary focus should be on addressing the many security issues that remain: tribal conflicts, general lawlessness, transnational terrorism, and narcotics. There are also international objections to PRTs negotiating agreements with warlords who have committed human rights atrocities. Disarmament should not be a negotiation, but part of an aggressive security agenda that mandates by force if necessary the destruction of weapons.

These questions and arguments reflect a misunderstanding of what PRTs are intended to do. They are not peacekeepers. They are not cheap security forces. Civil affairs soldiers and other civilian members of a PRT are not the traditional combat forces that humanitarian actors seek. Therefore, their assignment to PRTs does not drain the manpower dedicated to traditional security functions. The level of security desired by NGOs and others is not within the charter of a PRT. What PRTs are capable of is reinforcement potential – or the ability to immediately request conventional combat support if necessary.

Many criticisms of PRTs hinge on an assumed malevolent intent (again a violation of humanitarian principles) to “buy” security through aid – build an Afghan school and the “deal” is that the locals will give up the Taliban hiding in the village. Whether this really is the case or that we are seeing a true conceptual and human interaction between security and development calls for a closer analysis.

ANALYSIS

To gauge the usefulness of PRTs in the case of the reconstruction of Afghanistan, the history of its implementation can be examined in terms of the intended mission. One of the difficulties in conducting this analysis is that the PRT model has been evolving. As illustrated in previous sections, the United States military has re-clarified its mandate for PRT teams over the past three years. Members of ISAF have also adapted PRTs to their own needs. In practice PRT teams have to be implemented with flexibility, thus resulting in apparent inconsistencies. This state of affairs can be viewed as opportunities or test cases for how PRTs can be modified to address concerns.

Criteria for Evaluating PRTs

Based on the intended mission of PRTs in Afghanistan and the concerns raised about this model, six criteria are used to evaluate their effectiveness. This analysis will focus on whether PRTs have: (1) expanded development activities into the provinces; (2) extended the authority of the central government; (3) helped secure Afghanistan, (4) improved communication and coordination between actors working towards stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan; (5) demonstrated cost effectiveness; and (6) improved conditions for reconstruction without adverse impact on the safety of humanitarian workers. The first through the fourth criteria are directly derived from the mission of PRTs as defined by the U.S. Department of Defense. Criteria five and six reflect concerns voiced by members of the humanitarian aid community. These six criteria are inclusive of both intended and unintended consequences of PRTs.

Gauging PRT Performance

Expansion of development activities into the provinces: One of the main objectives of PRTs was to bring development to areas outside of the Afghan capitol. PRTs have achieved this goal reasonably well. The U.S. established PRTs in hard-to-reach and conflict-ridden areas and focused their activities on infrastructure projects that facilitate travel and commerce. For example, Kandahar province remains a stronghold for the Taliban and some al Qaeda associates. The security situation was deemed far too dangerous for many foreign assistance workers. In June 2003, only two dozen aid workers remained and most agencies had suspended their reconstruction projects.^{xxi}

After establishing a PRT in Kandahar, military engineers have been able to complete a network of roads across vast areas of the southern Afghanistan within a year. A total of seven road projects link the main ring road (a large highway that stretches around the country) to smaller highways heading into each of the provincial capitals.^{xxii} The Kandahar PRT is also working on city-wide water systems, site selection for national-level schools, construction of clinics, hospitals and police stations, and training local security forces. PRT personnel are working with Kandahar University's engineering department to get them proper testing materials for construction projects. The Army Corps of Engineers is providing classes to the engineering department professors so they can use new engineering techniques and be able to play a stronger role in rebuilding their own country.^{xxiii}

PRTs have also facilitated the movement of populations back to the provinces by working with the U.N. on internally displaced persons (IDP) reintegration projects. Returning refugees and IDPs are often employed by PRTs. Many PRT commanders have made sure that reconstruction contracts specifically include special requirements mandating the use of local labor.^{xxiv}

Extending the authority of the central government: The Afghan central government continues to face capacity and legitimacy issues that challenge its ability to establish authority. Most of the educated professional class fled the country and have yet to return. Corruption is a significant problem and exacerbated by a lack of government accounting systems. Hence, the central government does not have the capacity to secure areas outside of Kabul, nor does it have the proper systems in place to manage its own development projects. Moreover, the general Afghan population is still adjusting to the notion of a strong

central government. Afghanistan is a tribal nation and its past is fraught with conflict. Trusting authority outside of the family or the tribe is very difficult for many Afghans.

These conditions have been challenging to PRTs. While their reconstruction efforts have been made on behalf of the central government, PRTs are still very much American entities. Projects can appear as gifts from the United States, not from the Afghan central government. In response, PRTs have tried to move away from implementation towards facilitation. Afghan citizens approach PRTs daily with their concerns. They are perceived as a safe venue for people to bring forward local issues – health problems, unexploded ordinance on the road, village conflicts and needs. PRT personnel get citizens in contact with the proper people in the Afghan central government to help solve their problems.^{xxv} Afghan Interior Ministry representatives are assigned to the PRTs in Gardez, Konduz, Bamiyan and Mazar.

In addition, PRTs have strengthened the reach of the Afghan central government by helping with the political process. They provided monitoring, registration and security support to the Constitutional Loya Jirga. The PRT in Mazar (now under the command of the UK) played a central role in diffusing factional fighting and brokering a ceasefire between warlords. PRT commanders have also been present in facilitating disarmament agreements.^{xxvi}

The Afghan Transitional Authority’s National Development Framework and National Development Budget^{xxvii} states that ownership of the reconstruction process will be grouped around three pillars – humanitarian aid and human rights, physical reconstruction, and trade, governance and security. Each of the pillars must operate in unison with the others in order for Afghanistan to move forward and grow. PRTs were intentionally

designed to support all three pillars by providing technical assistance and acting as a communications node for independent players who fall into any of the functional categories of the National Development Framework. Thus, contrary to the assumption of critics, security is not being bought with aid. Security is naturally being supported by as well as enforcing humanitarian aid, human rights, reconstruction, trade and good governance.

Building security: PRTs have improved security in Afghanistan by creating conditions that generate economic growth and subsequently provide opportunities to those who may be involved in crime like theft or the narcotics trade.

PRTs train and deploy Afghan National Army units and mentor Afghan National Police. They established an Afghan highway patrol that set up checkpoints along the Ring Road, disrupting the flow of illegal weapons and drugs. PRTs are also able to provide information to the U.N. about the security situation in remote villages as well as provide status updates on the reconstruction of critical infrastructure.^{xxviii}

PRTs have brokered peace agreements between warlords. For example, the Mazar PRT negotiated a ceasefire between Abdul Rashid Dostum and Ustad Atta in November 2003. PRTs are especially good at creating negotiated agreements between warlords because they are seen as honest brokers (who are not affiliated with a particular tribe or ethnic group).

Improvement of communication and coordination between actors working towards stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan: The hope was for PRTs to act as a communications node (i.e. a point person for all actors on the ground in an Afghan province) and improve coordination so the needs of the Afghan people are being met and stabilization and reconstruction efforts are not duplicative or counteractive. This has worked relatively

well in terms of communication between U.S. government agencies, United Nations and the Afghan central government. It has not worked well in terms of coordinating with NGO partners, but has the potential of bringing about inter-agency coordination within the U. S. government.

NGO coordination: The problem is an ideological divide and it exists because many NGOs do not want to be associated with a military run operation. It has been stated by many that humanitarian and development agencies are fundamentally different from the military. No ideological bridge can be formed because of deeply conflicting core principles. Hence mixing military and development actors is not synergistic, but instead muddies the water and leads to infringement of sacred operational space; in the case of PRTs, invasion of humanitarian space.

A strong argument can be made here, especially when one looks at this issue from the perspective of local civilians. The military often characterizes civilian deaths as collateral damage. In the quick transition from major combat to S&R operations, how can members of a PRT change local perceptions from military perpetrators to helpers?

The answer is that there has to be an honest broker in this whole situation. In some cases, that simply cannot be a uniformed member of the U.S. military. However, it also does not mean that only NGOs and members of the development community can interact with the local population or amongst themselves. The nature of PRTs is that they are multi-national, inter-agency entities. The diplomatic element of a PRT as represented by the Department of State can serve as the middle ground.

Inter-agency coordination: It should be recognized that PRTs by their nature are a step forward in the interagency process. Very often interagency work is about general

strategy meetings without much actual coordination on the ground. The issue of stovepipes is frequently mentioned within the U.S. government – the partitioning of players who should be interacting from a planning phase all the way down to ground operations and incorporation of lessons learned. The staffing of PRTs means that multiple agencies of the U.S. government are operating on the ground together. A remaining issue is who should have authority within the U. S. government over PRT teams, an issue to be addressed under future options.

Cost effectiveness: It is too early to tell whether or not PRTs are cost effective. As mentioned earlier, PRTs were initially funded by a joint DOD/DOS humanitarian assistance fund, but the fund restrictions did not allow them to diversify their activities. Hence, many PRT activities were in fact duplicative of projects being conducted by aid agencies (a perceived waste of money). It is also easy to assume that humanitarian aid operations are less expensive than military operations since DOD often adds large overhead costs to any military projects. But as of yet, there is no statistical basis for the assumption of cost inefficiencies.

PRTs by their nature should reduce costs because their primary responsibility is coordination and unity of effort. This should prevent duplicative development efforts – a cost savings. When PRTs are involved in the actual implementation of a project, they have a policy of hiring only local labor which is significantly cheaper than an NGO bringing in foreign personnel. Moreover, PRT commanders have been using funds from the \$40 million Commander's Emergency Response Program. This allows them to gain access to appropriated funds without the months of bureaucratic delays and associated processing expenses.^{xxix}

Improving conditions for reconstruction without adverse impact on the safety of humanitarian workers: In her paper of January 2003^{xxx} Stapleton discusses how PRTs violate core humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality and neutrality which have allowed NGOs to safely operate for years. PRTs, with their personnel constructing schools and other activities typically done by aid organizations, make humanitarian personnel targets of violence. It is true that many PRT soldiers were out of their military uniforms while in the villages doing assessments. This meant that al Qaeda or Taliban who were intentionally targeting military personnel would have a hard time distinguishing between NGO personnel and their PRT counterparts.

This issue is mitigated by the fact that PRT placement is based on where NGOs are not able to operate due to security concerns. Additionally, radical extremists appear to not respect NGO neutrality (as demonstrated recently by numerous kidnappings and murders in Iraq). Attacks on NGO personnel have occurred in Afghanistan, but the escalation of these incidences occurred prior to the establishment of PRTs. Furthermore, attacks against aid workers have caused suspension of aid operations, hence providing the operational space for PRTs. Issues regarding PRT personnel being outside of uniforms were promptly addressed by the military in the first three months of PRT operations and a uniform-only policy remains to this day.

Options for the Future

It is very unlikely that policymakers will instruct the military to stop using PRTs. PRTs have grown in number over the past three years and ISAF has chosen to expand its operations North and West of Kabul exclusively through the PRT model. In the past month,

U. S. and NATO troops examined potential sites for a new PRT at Chakhcharan in the Ghor Province, west of Kabul. Lithuania will be heading up this new PRT with logistical support from Americans.^{xxxii}

It is not clear as to who should have authority within the U. S. government over PRT teams. Right now PRTs are a military entity, but civilian agencies are invited onto the teams and encouraged to participate in planning phases. One option is to use the German PRT model with a dual authority (civilian and military) leading the PRT at all times. Another option would be for PRTs to fall under the exclusive authority of the Department of State Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization where military and civilian personnel are detailed over and form rapid action teams that train together before a crisis begins. This would be a much more dramatic evolution of the PRT concept because it removes primary authority from the Department of Defense.

Policymakers are faced with three options for the operation of PRTs in the future— (1) PRTs focused exclusively on security sector reform activities (SSR), (2) PRTs operating independently and coordinating minimally with NGOs and accepting a wide range of activities, or (3) PRTs fully coordinates with and supporting activities of all actors on the ground.

Option (1): SSR-focused PRTs. This model is based on the British approach where PRT personnel focus exclusively on security sector reform. Military members of the PRT would train local contingents of the Afghan National Army and police forces. Civilian members of the PRT would focus on capacity building for local police as well as judicial sector reform.

SSR-focused PRTs would moderately expand development activities into the provinces because they contribute to overall improvement of security. They also would extend the authority of the central government by increasing training of the Afghan military and police by coalition forces. This would cause PRTs to rely exclusively on NGOs to complete all other humanitarian and reconstruction projects, but the interplay between security and development is ignored. Unless NGOs view SSR-focused PRTs as immediately solving their security dilemma, they will be slow to return and security may deteriorate just as quickly as the coalition can train local forces.

This option does not improve communication or coordination between actors on the ground because the military and humanitarian actors work on separate agendas. However, separate agendas would address the safety concerns brought up by humanitarian assistance organizations, as the military would no longer be infringing on their operational space.

Option (2): Minimally-coordinated PRTs. This model would mean that all PRTs would operate as they currently are, but without any special efforts to coordinate their efforts with NGOs. If the security environment in a province changes because a PRT is present, an NGO can choose to resume operations. A PRT will include the resumption of NGO activities in the area as part of its internal assessment process and may modify its agenda in the future. For example, if an NGO comes into town and decides to build schools, the PRT will consult with the Afghan central government and the U.N. mission about whether the PRT should continue to build schools. They may be instructed to continue building or they may be told to construct hospitals instead.

This option is not optimal because there is little communication between all the actors on the ground. It assumes that the Afghan Central Government and the U.N. mission

are able to track NGO activities well and provide timely information to PRTs. It is, however, often the case that the central government and the U.N. rely on the PRTs to give them regional updates. So this model is highly susceptible to duplication of reconstruction efforts and will not be cost effective. In fact, PRT commanders have reported in the past that they would drive to remote locations to start a project, only to find an NGO already at work.^{xxxii}

Option (3): Fully-coordinated PRTs. This option requires a dramatic change in operational doctrine for both humanitarian and military actors. PRTs would be composed of team members from government agencies (DOD and civilians) as well as have regular consultations with NGOs, the Afghan Central Government and the U.N. This would parallel the ISAF PRT Steering Committees which bring together all players to provide guidance and oversight of all PRT operations. The military and humanitarian actors would share resources on the PRT for logistical support such as airlift capability. Due to legal restrictions, NGOs cannot have unfettered access to military equipment, but they can certainly guide the military in focusing its attention on problematic regions of the country.

This option maximizes the level of communication and coordination between all players on the ground and uses the PRT as a single point of contact for everyone. This may prevent duplication of effort (even between NGOs) and allow optimal focus of resources. Fully coordinated PRTs will not put humanitarian workers in more danger if this option moves authority of PRTs away from the Department of Defense, and into the hands of the Department of State through the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization.

Figure 6 summarizes the three options available to policymakers as evaluated by the six criteria of PRT effectiveness: (1) expanded development activities into the provinces, (2) extended the authority of the central government, (3) helped secure Afghanistan, (4) improved communication and coordination between actors working towards stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan, (5) demonstrated cost effectiveness, and (6) improved conditions for reconstruction without adverse impact on the safety of humanitarian workers.

Criteria	Option 1 SSR Focused	Option 2 Minimally Coordinated	Option 3 Fully Coordinated
Expanded development activities into the provinces?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Extended the authority of the central government?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Helped secure Afghanistan?	Yes	Maybe	Yes
Improved communication and coordination?	No	No	Yes
Cost effectiveness?	Yes	No	Yes
Adverse impact on the safety of humanitarian workers?	No	Maybe	No

Figure 6 – Future Options for PRT Evolution as Evaluated by Six Criteria

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the issues and concerns identified in this paper, the current mandate of PRTs should reflect option 3 – *fully-coordinated PRTs*. This will not only improve PRT effectiveness, but also will address concerns raised by the NGO community. The proposed policy changes and implementation strategy are intended to ensure that PRTs serve U. S. stabilization and reconstruction goals well in the target country.

It is recommended that fully-coordinated PRTs:

- (1) *Receive operational mandate from the U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization. Since S/CRS defined its core function as leading and managing civilian response teams for post-conflict*

operations and coordinating U. S. government participation in multilateral operations,^{xxxiii} it is likely to have essential country data as well as experience integrating lessons learned from previous S&R operations. Moreover, with a PRT moving away from military leadership, NGOs and members of the international community may not feel as threatened by their presence.

- (2) *Focus military assets on security sector reform, particularly the training of Afghan National Police and National Army.* PRTs should use the core competencies of a wider range of military personnel, not just civil affairs soldiers. Since PRTs promote themselves as enablers, not peacekeepers, their activities should align with this mandate. While establishing schools and building infrastructure is very important, only the military portion of a PRT is capable of training soldiers and police. Therefore, this should be a stronger focus on their efforts (though not exclusively so).
- (3) *Direct civil affairs personnel to provide technical assistance to build up local governance capacities in areas that aid agencies cannot operate.* In order to avoid being accused of duplication, civil affairs personnel should continue to provide technical assistance to Afghans and train them in principles of good governance. When NGOs are available to provide this training, PRTs should assume a logistical support role (helping with airlift and communications in remote areas).
- (4) *Maintain close ties with UNAMA and the Afghan Central Government.* All assessments conducted by PRTs should be informed by the Afghan government. After all, the core mandate of PRTs is to help extend the authority of the central government, not to meet every security and development challenge they are

presented with in the provinces. Prioritization of activities will have to occur, and in order to avoid being accused of playing partisan politics, PRTs must carefully coordinate their activities with the central government and with the United Nations.

- (5) *Are staffed by civilian and military personnel who have participated in joint training before deployment to a particular country.* Many problems of PRTs can be overcome by training and open communication before deployment. There are language and cultural issues between U.S. government agencies, between the U.S. and NGOs, and between the U.S. and international players. Many problems are a matter of poor management and lack of communication, not an inherent flaw in the PRT model itself. Joint training before deployment may also help to shape the nature of a PRT so that personnel capabilities match well with strategic priorities in a particular province.

CONCLUSION

Within the U.S. government, there is beginning to be more policy coherence between security and development. A recently released USAID white paper on strategy^{xxxiv} stated that development is one of a three-part strategy for national security. The PRT concept is an extension of this belief. Improvements are possible with fully coordinated PRTs that address past concerns and problems. The PRT model has been a reasonably effective tactical and operational bridge to implement transitional goals in the case of Afghanistan. It could be a viable solution for other fragile or failed states around the globe.

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