Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan:
A Case Study of Military-Led Development

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At the end of December, 2014, the United States withdrew the last of its combat troops from Afghanistan, ending a 13-year mission that began as an effort to replace the Taliban government with a more responsible one that would govern in a way more aligned with accepted international norms. Over the course of those 13 years, political and economic development became principal goals of the mission to stabilize Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the security environment present in much of Afghanistan for most of those 13 years precluded traditional development agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) from operating safely, and the massive scale of development needed to bring Afghanistan into the twenty-first century posed coordination challenges that few – if any – had the capacity to overcome. In this complex environment, the US government tasked the military with the unenviable task of spearheading and coordinating the development effort as part of the broader reconstruction and stabilization mission. This article examines the role of the principal mechanism for military-led development in Afghanistan, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

Theoretical Context for Post-Conflict Development

Provincial Reconstruction Teams, or PRT's, were the first institutionalized effort to synchronize and coordinate civilian and military development efforts since the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) programme in Vietnam. Although designed with an emphasis on security and force protection in light of the high-threat environment they faced in Afghanistan, the PRT's were intended to reflect a "whole of government" approach to development in Afghanistan, incorporating civilian experts in development and government within a military team. These experts would direct the teams' development efforts and help them coordinate with international development agencies and NGO's. It was (and remains) a fundamental tenet of US policy that security and development are inextricably linked. Significant development can only happen in a relatively secure environment. However, development can lead to improved security by creating jobs, improving the economy, and improving people's quality of life, giving them hope for the future and a reason to support existing government institutions. Counter-insurgency (COIN) doctrine identifies development as an important mechanism for separating the population from the insurgency, denying the latter support and sanctuary (US Army, 2006). The American PRT's conducted small-scale, humanitarian development projects as a way to prove their good intentions, build trust and loyalty with the local population, and demonstrate the advantages that came with supporting the coalition and the Afghan government. This was expected to lead to improved security conditions as locals ceased their support for the insurgency and began to cooperate with the PRT, taking a more

active role in their own security and providing the PRT with information about insurgents and their operations, ultimately helping the coalition to drive the insurgency out of the area. With improved security, the PRT could then undertake or facilitate larger-scale development projects that had the potential to significantly boost economic growth and improve the reach and service capacity of the central government.

While there is little academic scholarship devoted to the type of stabilization efforts embarked on in Afghanistan, stabilization operations incorporate aspects of a number of issue areas that are well-explored in the literature, including weak and failed States, intervention and peacekeeping, development aid, and democratic transition. Unfortunately, almost all of this scholarship points to the inevitable conclusion that the stabilization and development mission in Afghanistan was doomed to failure.

A high level of economic development is one of the few causal factors that is consistently and positively correlated with improved security.[1] Unfortunately, at low levels of economic development, the causal relationship between economic growth and security may well run in the opposite and negative direction. High levels of violence, political instability, and civil war deters foreign investment, damages infrastructure, and forces governments to prioritize spending on the military and security apparatus over investment in key drivers of growth, such as education, health care, agricultural reform, and infrastructure.[2] So even had a functioning government existed, the existing security environment did not bode well for development efforts; given the nascent and ineffective government that did exist, development efforts in hindsight seem like wishful thinking at best.

Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban had all of the characteristics of a failed State : collapse of the central government and political order, widespread violence and mobilized (in this case tribal) militias, widespread poverty, low life expectancy, and high rates of illiteracy.[3] It existed as a political entity only in a state of what Fearon and Laitin (2004) refer to as *neotrusteeship*, under which control over domestic political authority and basic economic functions is largely overseen by a "*complex hodgepodge of foreign powers, international and non-governmental organizations, and domestic institutions*" (p.7). While the objective of neotrusteeship is to create a functional State capable of providing order, under these failed State conditions, there does not exist "*any viable theory about how to build a functioning State apparatus*" (Fearon & Laitin, 2004, p.37).

Given the presence of so many international partners, and the United States in particular, it was vital to establish popular legitimacy for the Afghan government. Legitimate governing authority throughout Afghan history was grounded in two of Weber's (1947) three identified types of legitimate authority : charismatic and traditional. There is no cultural precedent in Afghan history, however, for Weber's third type –

[1] *Cf.* Hegre, 2003 ; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004 ; Hegre & Sambanis, 2006 ; Dixon, 2009.
[2] Russet, 1969 ; Nigh, 1985 ; Enders & Sandler, 1996 ; Li, 2006.
[3] Ndulu *et al.*, 2007 ; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004 ; Goldstone *et al.*, 2003.

rational − which is exactly what the US-led coalition hoped to establish through popular elections (Johnson & Mason, 2009, p.5). Governments can attempt to establish rational legitimacy through good governance and through positive economic growth, but neither is possible in an environment where weak coercive capacities allow insurgent, criminal, or terrorist groups to flaunt government authority or challenge the government directly (Cheatham, 1994). As such, coercive capacity, particularly in the early stages of State-making or post-conflict reconstruction, is a prerequisite for political and economic development, and, when used appropriately, for legitimacy. Unfortunately, weak democratic governments like that in Afghanistan often lack the coercive and administrative capacity to extract resources from society, control territory, and suppress violence, leading to high levels of unrest and domestic violence (Benson & Kugler, 1998). The freedoms and liberal reforms that accompany democratization in these circumstances can be exploited by opposition forces to spread their message, recruit more openly, and operate more freely.[4] Lacking charismatic or traditional legitimacy, and unable to establish rational legitimacy, Karzai's government had little chance to resist the spreading insurgency after 2004 ; doing so generally requires support of 85-90% of the population, and Karzai's legitimacy never came close to that level (Johnson & Mason, 2009, p.4).

The logic which underpinned the coalition strategy – using military force to provide security and international aid to spur development – seems rational on its face, but ignored the demonstrated reality regarding the effectiveness of these tools. International aid can be effective at fuelling development, but only in what the World Bank refers to as a "*good policy environment*" (Dollar & Pritchett, 1998, p.2). Afghanistan, characterized by poor institutions, high levels of corruption, poor economic management, and widespread violence, was anything but a good policy environment. Therefore the stabilizing efforts of the military needed to succeed at creating the institutions and political environment needed for aid to work. But this involves an almost complete transformation of the existing society, and post-conflict stability operations are incapable of such transformational change (Marten, 2004, p.155). The result reflects what is known as the micro-macro paradox of development aid : while the US and its coalition partners can point to many examples of success at the micro level, in aggregate the billions of dollars of aid which poured into Afghanistan proved largely ineffective.

The examination which follows reveals that the PRT's – and by extension the development mission writ large – failed to achieve their development goals for three principle reasons. First, the PRT's were too few in number and insufficiently resourced. This limited their capacity to effectively stabilize their areas of responsibility and conduct development on the scale necessary to make a lasting change. A second reason was the failure to create effective support and coordination mechanisms for the PRT's, which resulted in crippling inefficiencies. Finally, the PRT's were attempting to impose Western-style order and values on a culture with a long tradition of decentralized and autonomous tribal authority, a history of deep tribal and clan rivalries, a near-institutionalized

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[4] Wilkinson, 2001 ; Li, 2005 ; Dixon, 2009.

acceptance of patronage and corruption, and a debilitating lack of human capacity. The failure to fully understand these cultural realities led to tactical and strategic mistakes which undermined the PRTs' efforts to foster stability and security through development.

Evolution of Provincial Reconstruction Teams

In early 2003, the US-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) established four PRT's in Gardez, Kunduz, Bamyan, and Mazar-e Sharif, strategic locations that corresponded to heavy concentrations of the country's four main ethnic groups – Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks. PRT's were intended to monitor the security situation, be the eyes and ears of coordinating bodies in Kabul, and be the locus of civil-military efforts to facilitate political and economic development, a parallel line of effort to the kinetic counterterrorism activities of the coalition forces (McNerney, 2006). US forces established three of the first four PRT's, while the British stood up the PRT in Mazar-e Sharif. However, before the end of 2003, the US turned over control of the PRT's in relatively stable Kunduz and Bamyan to coalition members Germany and New Zealand, respectively, freeing up US assets to expand PRT's into higher-threat provinces in the south and east.

In late 2003, Lieutenant General David Barno took command of US and coalition forces, and immediately laid out a plan to expand the PRT's throughout Afghanistan. LTG Barno believed that the military strategy needed to shift from the capture or kill of counterterrorism to a counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy, with an emphasis on extending the security footprint in order to separate the local populations from the residual Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters, and on extending the reach of the Afghan government and the international presence to areas with which they had had little or no contact.[5] American COIN strategy is premised on transitioning through three phases – a kinetic "clear" phase in which the insurgent forces are pushed out of an area, a stabilizing "hold" phase during which coalition forces provide security while local authorities establish their credibility and capacities, and a final "build" phase, in which American and international development assistance is used to build the economic and political infrastructure needed for long-lasting stability (US Army, 2006). Establishing more PRT's throughout the provinces would create pockets of security from which to coordinate economic development and build the capacity for governance at the local level, which could then be linked to the central government in Kabul.

By mid-2005 PRT's were established in 21 of the 34 provinces (there would be 26 at their peak in 2009), and the strategy appeared to be working. In the north, things were quiet and relatively peaceful. PRT's in these areas were either established by or turned over to non-US coalition partners, but development capacities, competencies, and resources varied widely. Those run by the British and Germans had fairly robust development capabilities, but most others performed largely in a more traditional peacekeeping role, leaving development activities to international agencies and NGO's (USIP, 2009*i*). In the

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[5] Telephone interview with LTG David Barno, American commander of Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan from 2003-2005, March 29, 2012.

south, an increased US troop presence and the expansion of the PRT's had pushed the remaining Taliban insurgents mostly out of the provinces and into Pakistan.

Then came the spring offensive in 2006, and for the next five years a reenergized insurgency spread throughout the southern and eastern provinces, and even into pockets of the north and west. Violence increased dramatically as insurgents resorted to asymmetric tactics, most effectively the use of improvised explosive devices (IED's), remotely- or automatically-triggered bombs that could be hidden from view and exploded with devastating effect against US and coalition troops and vehicles. In 2009, violent attacks and US casualties reached their highest levels of the war. Over the next five years, violence continued largely unabated, and after 2010 the PRT's began to slowly shut down in anticipation of the US withdrawal in 2014. Despite the investment of billions of dollars, and no small number of visible development successes, the development effort had failed to inspire sufficient economic development to undermine the insurgency or stabilize much of Afghanistan.

Lack of Capacity

There were effectively two aspects to the development mission of the PRT's. The first was to provide small-scale, quick-impact development projects that would foster good will among the Afghan population. Digging wells, rehabilitating or building schools and clinics, and building or paving roads created jobs, injected money into the local economy, and established relationships between the PRT and the local population. These projects usually met humanitarian needs that were beyond the capacity of the Afghan government, and so would otherwise have gone unaddressed. Such projects are often referred to as part of a "hearts and minds" campaign, but they are more accurately about building mutual trust, understanding, and respect, which can help to drive a wedge between insurgents and the population and advance the stabilization mission from the hold to the build phase.

The second aspect of the development mission was to assist the provincial authorities to create a plan for longer term development, and to coordinate the approval, funding, and completion of those projects with the government in Kabul, ISAF, and international development agencies and NGO's. This aspect of the mission was also intended to help build the capacity of the provincial government, link it to the central government, and produce visible achievements that the local population could associate with the government.

Unfortunately, American PRT's in Afghanistan lacked the capacity to effectively carry out either of their development missions in two important ways. The first is the fact that they were grossly insufficient, both in number and in size, given the geographic context in which they were employed. At best, each PRT was responsible for an entire province, hundreds of square miles of imposing, mostly uninhabited terrain, with few roads and little to no infrastructure. In the north and west, some PRT's were at times responsible for as many as four provinces, making it impossible to reach all but a small number of

districts and villages with any consistency, if at all.[6] In some provinces, the combination of inaccessible terrain and poor security restricted the PRT's to the provincial capital and its immediate environs, leaving them with little or no awareness of what was happening at the district level, much less in the villages (Combat Studies Institute, 2008*b*).

As a strategy, the lack of attention and development resources dedicated to the northern and western provinces seems somewhat at odds with the COIN principle of clear, hold, and build. The permissive environment in the north and west could have allowed PRT's there to consolidate their hold on the region and begin an extensive build campaign as early as 2004, giving the Kabul government the opportunity to establish legitimacy among the northern population and government officials the chance to gain valuable experience that could later have been transferred to more challenging areas in the south. The US strategy, however, beginning in 2004, followed the dictates of "economy of force", focusing the majority of US effort in the areas in the south where the enemy was strongest.[7]

There was also a huge disparity between the capacities of the American PRT's and those run by other coalition nations. The German and British PRT's had relatively good development capacity, but were limited by national policies and priorities mostly to small-scale development projects (USIP, 2009*n*). The other coalition PRT's were very lightly resourced, and since they were established in the more secure provinces of the north and west, they concentrated their efforts on security sector reform and training local Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), leaving development in the more permissive environ-ment to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and NGO's (USIP, 2009*i* ; 2009*j* ; 2009*k*). Coalition partners were generally responsible for all coalition activities in their province, so while the US generally had State Department representatives on the coalition PRT's, it directed very little, if any, money for development to these provinces. Civilian and military personnel alike serving on PRT's in the more stable provinces report feeling ignored or neglected by Afghan and ISAF decision makers in Kabul (USIP, 2009*c* ; 2009*m* ; 2009*n*). Ironically, this created a perverse incentive among warlords, tribal leaders, and even government officials to stir up trouble, since they saw development money flowing into areas where security was poor.[8]

The second factor affecting the capacity of PRT's to do development work was the inability of the civilian interagency – in particular the State Department, the Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) – to support the teams with enough civilian development experts.[9] During the first several

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[6] Under the peak distribution of 26 PRT's, a few covered two provinces, while the majority covered a single province.

[7] Telephone interview, LTG Barno.

[8] Telephone interview, Nuristan PRT commanding officer.

[9] This discussion focuses on US PRT's, but coalition PRT's that saw their mission as primarily peacekeeping were similarly short on civilian development capacity. The US tried to assign interagency representatives to coalition PRT's, but they usually came with no resources and were there primarily as a conduit for information to US leaders and to coordinate with NGO's doing development work in the region.

years, many positions simply went unfilled, and those that were filled were usually filled by junior personnel without much relevant experience or expertise. They also had no authority to commit agency funds, and lacked the institutional knowledge to competently represent the interests and capabilities of their parent agencies (McNerney, 2006 ; USIP, 2009*c*). Additionally, civilian agencies often lacked operational funding to support their people, so team members were reliant on the military for all of their critical life support, including accommodations, food, transportation, and body armour (USIP, 2009*a* ; 2009*d*).

The civilians were intended to take the lead on development and governance issues, but in contrast to the PRT commander, a Lieutenant Colonel or Navy Commander with 17-20 years of leadership experience and ample military resources on which to draw, their relative lack of experience and resources undermined both their credibility and value, and relegated them to an advisory role (State, 2006). Without agency funding to support their own initiatives, they were left to lobby the PRT commander to allocate military funds to projects they felt were important. This meant that decisions about development projects were often made by military personnel without significant experience in development, leading to an emphasis on security-related projects and quick-impact projects that were intended to help build relationships, but that frequently were not sustainable. Many civilian PRT members felt that military commanders, because of the professional incentives to demonstrate effectiveness, often based their decisions on how many projects they could initiate and bring to completion in their limited time in country, rather than on what was most needed or sustainable (USIP, 2009*f* ; 2009*h* ; Stapleton, 2007).

The military had its own issues with regard to assigning personnel with the necessary skills. As PRT's increasingly contracted with local contractors and NGO's to carry out development projects, they often did so without trained or experienced contract officers or lawyers from the Judge Advocate General Corps (US Navy, 2009*a*; 2010; USIP, 2009*m*). The military component often included civil engineers from the Navy SEABEEs or Army Corps of Engineers, but this was not standard, and they did not always have expertise specific to the kinds of projects being undertaken (US Navy, 2009*b*). This made it difficult to provide oversight and ensure quality control by local contractors. The military also relied heavily on the Reserves and National Guard. Many of these personnel possessed invaluable skills and experience from their civilian jobs, but they were generally deployed as a unit, and no effort was made to match civilian skills with the specific needs of the various PRT's (Combat Studies Institute, 2008*a*).

The biggest mismatch between capacity and need was in the agriculture sector. More than 80% of the Afghan population is involved in agriculture, most of it at the subsistence level, and yet USDA was able to provide only very limited support to the PRT's, and a majority of USAID funding was devoted to infrastructure projects. Very few military members of the PRT had relevant agriculture experience, so commanders often chose to put their efforts and money into schools, clinics, and roads that were more visible and could be contracted to locals. Ironically, National Guard units throughout the Midwest have been fielding Agribusiness Development Teams (ADT's) to Latin America for over 20 years,

leveraging the farming and agriculture experience of Guard members to improve agriculture processes and production (US Army, 2008). Yet for some reason, these teams were not deployed to Afghanistan until 2008, and in 2012 there were only eight in country, despite the fact that at least 12 states have ADT's in their Guard units (USIP, 2009*f*).

Support from civilian agencies began to improve in 2006, slowly at first, but by 2010 it was apparent that both Congress and the executive branch were committed to bolstering civilian reconstruction capacity. The Bush administration created the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) within the State Department in 2004 as a first step towards synchronizing civilian support for reconstruction with the military. After 2006, Congress appropriated increasing programme support to hire and train more than 3000 additional civil servants and Foreign Service Officers at State and USAID and doubled appropriations for State and other interagency overseas operations between 2006 and 2010 (State, 2010 ; "Executive Budget Summary"). Congress also authorized the establishment of a Civilian Response Corps (CRC) under S/CRS, which by 2011 included over 1200 "active" and "standby" civilian employees from seven different agencies who could be deployed to support reconstruction operations around the world. As a result, by 2011, most teams had gained the representative from State, USAID, and USDA that they had been lacking, as well as occasional representation from Justice, Energy, Commerce, and other agencies (State, 2011*b*). Unfortunately, in May 2012, President Obama and President Karzai signed the Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement, which called for the phasing out of all PRT's by 2014 (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2012).

Support and Coordination

Post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan called for a synergized, holistic, civil-military effort that took advantage of the logistical capacity, manpower, and initiative of the military and of the development experience and expertise of the civilian interagency. Coordinating such an effort called for well-defined and agreed-upon processes and mechanisms to align mission objectives with national priorities, and to synchronize allocation of resources and lines of effort, both vertically and horizontally. Unfortunately, no mechanisms for such close coordination existed at the outset, and the combination of poor security conditions and military resources that dwarfed those of the interagency rendered reconstruction a military-led and dominated effort from the very beginning. As reconstruction progressed, planning and coordination mechanisms evolved to try to support development at all levels. However, coordination was challenging, given the multitude of actors – civilian, military, American, Afghan, coalition partners, UNAMA, NATO, inter-national organizations, and NGO's – all well-intentioned and committed to the goal of a stable Afghanistan, but each with different objectives, philosophies, policy guidance, and capabilities. Some of these mechanisms greatly improved the ability of PRT's to promote development at the provincial level and below, while the absence or poor design of others created inefficiencies and undermined effectiveness. Throughout the 11 years PRT's operated in Afghanistan, they were left largely to their own devices and ingenuity to navigate the

web of competing or conflicting guidance emanating from Kabul, Washington, and other national capitals.

Undoubtedly, one of the most challenging aspects of putting together a civil-military team to promote development was the culture clash between the disciplined, hierarchical, and well-resourced military and the bureaucratic, independent, and poorly-resourced civilian agencies. The loose guidance issued to the PRT's in order to give them flexibility to adapt to widely varying circumstances also created a great deal of confusion about the role of civilian members. While interagency civilians were intended to be the lead agents for political and economic development, they were often relegated to advisory status because of a lack of experience and funding (State, 2006). Without specific guidance or a defined hierarchical relationship, civil-military relations on the PRT's were, to a great extent, a function of the personalities of the PRT commander and the representatives from the interagency. In many cases, the interagency civilians and PRT commander worked very well together, but the challenges to team-building were many.

For the first two years, civilians did not go through pre-deployment training with the military team members, and their rotations were as short as three months, which was inadequate time to get enough of a sense of the situation and the mission to make any kind of real contribution. For the first several years, civilian billets were filled on a largely *ad hoc* basis, with the result that many did not have the skills, experience, or temperament needed by the PRT's.[10] Many in the military assumed that State representatives were experts on political development and governance, when in fact, most had little to no relevant experience or expertise in how to run a government. Personnel from USDA often had very specific agricultural skill sets, applicable in only certain regions or environments, yet they were initially assigned without regard to matching their skills to the needs of the province (USIP, 2009*c*).

Without clearly defined roles and responsibilities, the PRT commander often determined the tenor of the civil-military relationship. An interagency assessment in 2006 concluded that there was often a "*lack of understanding of the importance of incorporating non-Department of Defense representatives into strategy development and decision-making*" (State, 2006, p.14). But to military officers, who approached every mission by first identifying goals, objectives, and available resources and then developing a strategic plan, the civilians did not appear to have any sort of plan or systematic approach to accomplishing their mission (Combat Studies Institute, 2006). Some PRT commanders dictated the priority of all plans and operations, marginalizing those civilians who refused to get on board; others valued civilian inputs and incorporated them into their planning (USIP, 2009*l*). Although a military officer was officially in charge of the PRT, some civilians resented being subordinate to them, believing that "*the military should be a resource of the civilians, not the other way around*" (USIP, 2009*a*). Sometimes personality clashes resulted in civilians being sent home, or simply opting out of the mission, leaving

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[10] Military manning of the PRT's was also largely *ad hoc* for the first several years. Not until 2005 was there an effort to institutionalize the training and composition of the PRT's (Combat Studies Institute, 2008*a*).

military team members to fill their role. One USAID representative felt his authority was being usurped by the ADT, and asked to be reassigned elsewhere rather than working with them (USIP, 2009*f* ; 2009*m*).

Despite these difficulties, many PRT's were able to establish effective and supportive working relationships within the team. Teams lucky enough to be assigned military commanders who understood the importance of team-building and civilians who were knowledgeable and who could adapt rapidly to new situations and take initiative were often able to overcome the inherent structural inefficiencies. Many on both sides described their counterparts as "indispensable", "critical", or "top-notch". Most importantly, the problems and failures identified over the first several years translated into proactive institutional changes within the interagency, and by 2009 many of the most debilitating issues had been or were actively being addressed (State, 2011*c*).

A concerted effort by Congress and both the Bush and Obama administrations included the creation of the CRC, increased budget authority, and improved interagency coordination mechanisms in Washington. These actions tripled the number of civilians committed to the effort in Afghanistan by 2011 and induced a policy shift from filling vacancies with available bodies to assigning people with relevant training, experience, and expertise (Prague Security Studies Institute [hereafter PSSI], 2010 ; USIP, 2009*g*). By mid-2011, there were over 1000 federal civilians deployed to Afghanistan, up from 320 at the beginning of 2009, with a total of 1200 expected by the end of the year (State, 2011*c*). Of 421 civilians that arrived in 2009 as part of a "civilian uplift" (the interagency avoids the term *surge*), 270 were deployed outside of Kabul to PRT's, manoeuvre battalions, and brigade and division headquarters (USIP, 2009*g* ; 2009*l*). Civilian deployments were more often synched to those of the military, and most civilian representatives on PRT's began training with the military team for all or most of the pre-deployment training. Many deployed for a second time, or extended their deployment in the same location through two or more PRT rotations, providing invaluable continuity and field experience to the teams (US Navy, 2009*a*). Civilian instructors were also integrated into the training to better educate the military on the capacities of the other federal agencies. These changes helped to build mutual understanding and respect, break down preconceived notions and biases, and create a true civil-military command leadership team, greatly improving the functionality and effectiveness of the PRT's.

The *ad hoc* nature of funding for the PRT's was an additional source of tension between civilians and the military. Initially, most of the money came from a pre-existing DoD account used by the military worldwide for small scale development projects and disaster relief. In 2004, Congress began funding the Commanders' Emergency Relief Program (CERP), designed to provide commanders in the field with readily available, unprogrammed money to "*respond to urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction requirements*" with quick-turn, high-impact projects that would have an immediate effect (US Congress, 2003). CERP money came with few strings attached, often allocated as cash to PRT and other military commanders to be used at their discretion.

State and USDA representatives, on the other hand, came with no money and no authority to commit agency funds. Not surprisingly, the agency that controlled the money set the priorities, and for the military commander, whose first priority was security and force protection, these were often projects that he felt would have an immediate impact and build some credibility and loyalty among the local population (Abbaszadeh *et al.*, 2008). So while civilians were supposed to be the lead decision-makers for political and economic development, they were forced to lobby the PRT commander to spend CERP money on projects they felt were important (USIP, 2009*f*). USAID team members did have access to funds from the Quick Impact Program (QIP), but bureaucratic regulations, a lengthy approval process, and the requirement for all projects to be coordinated and overseen by a USAID implementing partner made this program less responsive than CERP and limited its value to the PRT's. Using CERP funds and hiring local contractors or NGO's, the PRT was often able to complete projects in less than half the time as those funded through QIP (State, 2006).

Although interagency access to funding improved over time, the disparity between civil and military funding on the PRT's remained a structural reality, with 70% of PRT development projects paid for with CERP funds (USAID, 2012 ; US Navy, 2009*b*). Coordination on the use of CERP funds did improve dramatically, however. In part this was due to improved understanding and cooperation on the teams themselves, but it was also due to institutional changes put in place up the food chain from the teams. Guidance from the US military commander in 2005 directed that all CERP projects be coordinated with USAID through civilian counterparts on the PRT's and, after the civilian "surge" that began in 2009, at battalion, brigade, and division headquarters (State, 2006). Additionally, various spending thresholds were established, above which "dual-key" authorization was required by the lead civilian and the military commander at each level (USIP, 2009*g*).

A third challenge for the PRT's was the need to coordinate their development activities with a multitude of external actors. These other actors generally fell into three categories: officials of the Afghan provincial and national government; parallel civilian and military chains of command; and NGO's.

Although an important objective of the PRT's development mission was to improve security and force protection by building good will among the local population, the mission's larger goal was to promote sustainable economic development while simultaneously expanding the reach and legitimacy of the Afghan government. By working with the Provincial Governor, who was appointed by the central government, to bring needed infrastructure and other development to the provinces, the PRT's tried to demonstrate to the population the capacity and commitment of the government to bring stability and prosperity to the country. This was accomplished by helping the governor orchestrate a Provincial Development Plan (PDP), which prioritized projects within the province given the available funds from Kabul, the PRT, or ISAF. Provincial Development Committees (PDC), established in 2005, linked the provincial government with both local leaders and ministers in Kabul in order to align local priorities with the Afghan National

Development Strategy (ANDS), and ensure sustainability and commitment of resources from the national and provincial governments.[11]

In practice, like so many other aspects of reconstruction in Afghanistan, coordination of development between the PRT and the provincial government rarely functioned as intended. Success often depended significantly on the governor. Some of these were men (and one woman) of integrity and courage committed to doing right by their people, but many others were corrupt and cowardly, prone to patronage, ethnic and tribal bias, and taking bribes. These men were generally unwilling to take political risks that could affect their standing in Kabul or to venture out of the capital except to cut ribbons at completed projects (US Navy, 2009*a* ; 2009*c* ; 2010 ; USIP, 2009*m*). PDC's in many provinces were not established or not functioning until PRT's were established, some as late as 2010, so the PRT often put together the development plan, and then presented it to the governor and other officials for their approval to put an Afghan face on it (US Navy 2009*a*). Building up the capacity and legitimacy of the PDC's was a major line of effort for many PRT's : mentoring local leaders to address the needs of their people and to route their requests through the PDC ; getting the governor to engage in the process rather than simply directing requests to the PRT ; mentoring officials to lead the planning process; and fighting corruption (USIP, 2009*f* ; 2009*m* ; US Navy, 2009*b* ; 2009*c*).

Where they were successful, the PRT's used the PDC and the PDP process to highlight government responsiveness to the people and ensure that the plan effectively addressed prioritized local needs. This built legitimacy and support for both the provincial and national governments, and improved the security situation for the PRT and ISAF forces in the process (US Navy, 2009*b*; 2010 ; USIP, 2009*f*). However, according to the assessment of at least one State Department representative, the process would quickly revert to traditional practices of patronage and bribery without the constant efforts of the PRT to enforce transparency and the integrity of the process and to assist the PDC with the hard work of developing a long-term plan (USIP, 2009*m*). Corruption remained a common problem, and locals often tried to approach the PRT's directly with requests for development assistance, since they knew that is where the money was coming from, or because they were tired of the governor or members of the PDC demanding payment for inclusion in the PDP (USIP, 2009*f*).[12] Sub-governors or tribal leaders whose projects failed to gain the support of the PDC often become spoilers, refusing to provide security for travel or other projects in their area if their own projects are not approved (US Navy, 2010).

Linking the PRTs' development efforts with the greater national effort was also difficult. A State Department-led interagency assessment conducted in late 2005 concluded that their efforts were, for the most part, not coordinated with national-level programmes (State, 2006). In fairness, the ANDS was not developed until the same year ; prior to that

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[11] ISAF, 2008 ; USIP, 2009*f* ; Dziedzic & Seidl, 2005.

[12] Telephone interview, Nuristan PRT commanding officer.

there had only been a list of National Priority Programmes (Stapleton, 2007). Nor was there any standardized guidance for vertical coordination of development projects until ISAF published the ISAF PRT Handbook in 2006. But as late as 2009 there were still PRT commanders and entire brigade staffs who were completely unfamiliar with the ANDS (USIP, 2009*l*).

Development was fraught with failures of vertical coordination between the national, provincial, district, and village levels, significantly undermining the effectiveness of the combined international effort (PSSI, 2010). At times, the Afghan government criticized the PRT's for running a parallel development programme, uncoordinated with national strategies and beyond the financial control of government ministries, but the PRT's responded that effective counterparts at the provincial and district levels simply did not exist (Stapleton, 2007). With a national literacy rate of less than 30%, qualified locals were in high demand, and could often earn much more money working directly for the coalition or for international organizations and NGO's. Those that did choose to work in government preferred to do so in Kabul or one of a few smaller provincial capitals, where security was better, pay was higher, and they were closer to the centres of power, rather than out in the provinces and districts where they were needed to help extend the reach of the government (Kemp, 2011 ; USIP, 2009*m*). The deterioration of the security situation in much of the southern and eastern provinces after 2006 also contributed to the disconnect between PRT efforts and the ANDS. As the insurgency spread, PRT commanders reported having to abandon approved projects, many of them major ones, due to lack of security. They often then reverted back to small, uncoordinated but quick-turn and immediate impact projects in order to try to restore local relations and improve security (US Navy, 2009*a*).

Coordination within the American architecture proved equally complex and inefficient. Along with the expansion of the PRT's in 2004, the US strategy divided the country into five regional commands, with a military division assigned to each region as the "battle space owner", responsible for the full spectrum of activity in its region. The Division Commander, a one or two-star general, further divided his battle space among a number of brigades. The Brigade Commander, a colonel, commanded the manoeuvre battalions that comprised his brigade and any PRT assigned to his area of responsibility, making him the individual most responsible for the operations of the PRT.

The relationship between ISAF and the PRT's was somewhat muddled because of the level of national autonomy reserved to the lead nations (Welle, 2010). Although ISAF had supervisory authority over all PRT's, actual operational authority over American PRT's really lay with the Division Commander, who also controlled the allocation of CERP funds. ISAF at times issued operational or policy guidance directly to the PRT's, bypassing the Division and Brigade Commanders. This created confusion, but when direction from ISAF was uncoordinated or in conflict with orders from Division, PRT commanders generally ignored ISAF and complied with the orders of the US Army general who wrote their fitness reports and controlled their development funds (Combat Studies Institute, 2011 ; USIP, 2009*e* ; Stapleton 2007). Attempts by ISAF to get PRT's to report on common metrics so

that ISAF could maintain a nationwide awareness of progress and "atmospherics" failed to produce more than 20% of the data requested, largely because ISAF reports were a low priority for PRT commanders due to the informal nature of the relationship (Welle, 2010, p.57). Ironically, the lack of feedback from the field led to the development of policies by ISAF that PRT members charged were made in a vacuum and without PRT input.[13]

A parallel reporting system existed for the civilians, but it was even more confusing. Until 2009, State, USAID, USDA, and other interagency members each reported directly to representatives from their parent agency at the US Embassy in Kabul, or sometimes directly back to Washington. Not only did this hinder awareness, coordination, and information sharing, but it meant that the civilian leads for development were jumping over the brigade and division which directed the operations of the PRT and controlled the lion's share of development funds. Not until after the civilian uplift in 2009 did the interagency consolidate all civilian activities under a single Deputy Director for PRT's at the US Embassy and gain the capacity to mirror the military chain of command by assigning a lead civilian representative of equivalent rank to the commander at the brigade and division levels (USIP, 2009*e* ; 2009*g*).

Horizontal coordination at the national level was plagued by similar inefficiencies. Prior to the promulgation of the ANDS in 2005, individual agency strategic plans drawn up in Washington or at the embassy were not coordinated with each other and did not connect the PRT efforts to broader national programs (State, 2006). Coordination between State and other agencies at the embassy and ISAF was plagued by parochial attitudes, poor communications, and civil-military tensions. Despite the Ambassador's standing as the senior US representative in Afghanistan, the military was clearly the most dominant player, and the embassy staff was reluctant to push back on initiatives of the commanding general, even when it appeared he was making a mistake (USIP, 2009*a*). Insufficient vertical coordination with civilians on the PRT's and poor information systems meant that, as late as 2009, USAID did not have reliable data on the location and status of all of its completed, planned, and on-going projects around the country (State, 2006). This failure had been identified by an interagency assessment in 2005, but USAID had been unable to remedy it, and was reluctant to share what information it did have with counterparts at ISAF or in the Afghan government. State Department leaders were also uncooperative, resisting Afghan government efforts to have a greater say in PRT development efforts and refusing to participate in an ISAF effort to establish common goals and metrics for all PRT's because they did not align with the American objectives being promulgated from the embassy (USIP, 2009*b*).

Some of the coordination failures, both vertical and horizontal, were a function of capacity. Lacking their own equipment, civilian representatives often relied on the military for communication with the embassy, and so could not always make or receive regular reports, choking off the vital flow of information in both directions. Even when they could

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[13] Telephone interview, Nuristan PRT commanding officer.

get through, embassy manning until 2009 was extremely thin and turned over often, so the person they were trying to reach for support was frequently out of the office, recently arrived and still trying to build awareness, or on their way out the door (Usip, 2009*l*). The Prt concept was predicated on the assumption that civilian team members were a conduit to reach-back support at the embassy and in Washington, but for the most part that support did not exist.

Not surprisingly, this architecture often led to conflicting and confusing guidance to the Prt's. To some extent, Prt's were a "rogue element", responsible to so many masters that they effectively did not work for anyone (Combat Studies Institute, 2011). Much of their autonomy came from their ability to spend Cerp money. However, the loose control of Cerp funds proved to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it has enabled Prt commanders to respond quickly and effectively to leaders from the governor down to the village level when doing so could improve working relations between the Prt, local government, and the population. Since it was the main source of funding for development, it also gave the Prt leverage over the governor and Pdc to enforce a transparent and responsible development process that responded to the needs of the people (US Navy 2009*b*). Although the locals understood that the money was coming from the Americans, allocating Cerp money primarily to those projects that were integrated into the Pdp and approved by the governor helped to connect the Kabul government to the people all the way down to the village level.

Unfortunately, loose control and a lack of standardization across divisions for delegating authority to commit Cerp funds also resulted in poor oversight, creating the potential for fraud, corruption, and waste (DoD, 2011). As a result, the Defense Department eventually increased the controls and restrictions on Cerp funds, which increased the administrative burden on the Prt and slowed response and approval times. Demonstrating the disconnect between policy makers in Kabul and Washington and the reality on the ground in Afghanistan, most Cerp expenditures were forced to comply with DoD Financial Management Regulations (Fmr) and Federal Acquisition Regulations (Far) manuals, which are intended to govern how DoD does business with US and international contractors under normal circumstances, but are a poor fit for post-conflict reconstruction in a country like Afghanistan. Under the Fmr and Far, most projects in Afghanistan were required to meet US building codes. This entailed the use of non-local materials, advantaging international contractors over local ones, and increased costs as much as ten times over the cost to construct the same project using Afghan techniques, standards, and materials. Absurdly, compliance with the Far also undermined Prt efforts to fight corruption and fraud by requiring the Prt to compensate corrupt or incompetent Afghan contractors when the Prt cancelled contracts with them. This created the perverse incentive for the Prt to focus on smaller, less expensive projects that the commander could approve and control himself, rather than on larger projects that would have better supported the Ands and long-term economic development (telephone interview, Nuristan Prt commanding officer).

Coordinating development with NGO's was particularly frustrating for the PRT's. PRT's were generally most successful in regions where poor security precluded NGO's from operating, making the PRT's the only game in town (State, 2006). In principle, as security improved and NGO's moved into an area, PRT's should have been able to reduce their development activities and focus more on security sector reform. They would continue to support both the development and governance missions by participating in the PDC and development of the PDP and helping to identify and fund development projects that could be undertaken by UNAMA or NGO's. Many NGO's, in fact, worked closely with the PRT's, to their mutual benefit and to that of the Afghans. However, many others refused to cooperate or coordinate with the PRT's, for a variety of reasons.

Some objected on ideological grounds to the military's involvement in development. They charged that what the military calls "humanitarian assistance" is driven not by altruism but by political and military strategic objectives, and that the military does not comply with development best practices, sacrificing sustainability and capacity-building for quick results that further the COIN effort (Dziedzic & Seidl 2005). American officials did not dispute the fact that military-led development efforts also further the goals of stabilizing the Afghan government and undermining support for the insurgency. Rather, they countered that the PRT's served development needs that would otherwise go unmet, either because civilian agencies did not have the capacity to respond to immediate needs or because NGO's could not meet the needs given the security environment. The DoD also did not dispute that the military lacked the training and expertise needed for development work, or that this resulted in costly mistakes. Yet the PRTs' overall track record was quite good, and the incidence of poorly-implemented projects was comparable to that of NGO's (Dziedzic & Seidl, 2005 ; US Navy, 2009*a*). Critics from the NGO world conveniently ignored the fact that the concept of exactly what "best practices" are is itself controversial in the development community, and that many NGO's also pursue political objectives outlined by the governments of donor nations (Stapleton, 2007).

Other NGO personnel objected for the more practical reason that the military's involvement in development for strategic purposes made all development projects and workers targets for insurgents intent on destabilizing the government and delegitimizing the American and coalition presence. The concern was that PRT's blurred the lines between military and civilian development and assistance efforts, shrinking the "humanitarian space" in which NGO's have to work and calling into question their impartiality (Sedra, 2005). Their fears were not unfounded. NGO workers were increasingly targeted as ISAF and the PRT's expanded their footprint after 2003, and many NGO's were forced to pull out of rural areas. The open cooperation between international military forces, the Afghan government, and the UN on development caused some NGO's to guard their independence fiercely, since being associated with stabilization efforts could put them at increased risk (Stapleton, 2007).

Ideological and security concerns about cooperating with the military were behind the refusal of many NGO's to attend meetings of the PDC or participate in the development

of the PDP, despite invitations to do so by governors (USIP, 2009*m*). Many were unwilling to share information on their projects with the PRT's, leading to a duplication of effort and hampering efforts to build a comprehensive development picture. Lack of communication also denied the PRT's the expertise of NGO personnel with extensive experience in Afghanistan, particularly knowledge of local culture, personalities, and drivers of conflict that could have significantly aided the PRTs' development and governance missions and probably helped them to avoid costly mistakes (State, 2006; Sedra, 2005). Unfortunately, it also at times prevented the PRT from responding to threats to NGO workers in their area (Dziedzic & Seidl, 2005).

Even under these difficult circumstances, PRT's accomplished a great deal in terms of humanitarian and infrastructure development, building schools, clinics, roads, wells, irrigation projects, police headquarters, and government buildings, often with little over-sight or direction from their chain of command. The interagency eventually made significant efforts to address many of these issues. The expansion of the State Department's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization after its creation in 2004 and the creation of the CRC improved planning and coordination in Washington and increased the number of civilian personnel available to support the mission in Afghanistan. The Obama administration's civilian uplift in 2009 increased the capacity at the embassy, consolidated the leadership of the civilian effort, and integrated civilians in the military chain of command, all of which greatly improved civilian support to the PRT's and the ability to coordinate development efforts across the country. Unfortunately, these improvements came too late to undo the damage done by years of poor coordination, inefficiency, confusion at all levels of the chain of command about the status of development, and sometimes costly mistakes that were counterproductive to the mission of improving security and enhancing governance.

Cultural Terrain

When the US declared war on Afghanistan in 2001, few people in America knew anything about life in Afghanistan. Even at State and the DoD, knowledge and expertise was extremely limited. So it is not surprising that the PRT's faced a steep learning curve as they approached the development mission. Had they been somehow enlightened with the knowledge and understanding of Afghan culture that US forces gained over the last decade, they would have undoubtedly altered the focus of their development efforts in rural areas. A better understanding of the cultural terrain would also have helped them to better contend with the widely varying tribal and ethnic dynamics, and to alter their development efforts in order to reinforce the importance of local governance structures.

In any discussion or assessment of PRT development efforts in Afghanistan, the projects most often referred to are roads, schools, clinics, and wells. There is no doubt that building roads was one of the most critical and empowering projects that PRT's could pursue. They contributed to the construction of over 4000 kilometres of paved roads, connecting the provinces to Kabul and other population centres, and making it possible to

get goods to markets that were previously inaccessible (PSSI, 2010). Education was a high priority for local and provincial leaders, who often asked for schools to be built. Similarly, health care was almost non-existent outside of major cities, so clinics were in high demand. New schools and clinics were relatively quick and inexpensive to build, provided great photo opportunities for the PRT and the Provincial Governor, and brought a rush of hope, enthusiasm, and support for the PRT and the government. They also fit the US narrative of the coalition forces bringing new freedoms and opportunity and better quality of life to the people of Afghanistan, helping to maintain domestic support back home, where reports of an increase in primary education enrolment from 19% in 2001 to over 90% by 2006 were seen as indicators that US efforts were making a difference (Jones, 2008). However, poor security often made travel outside of the local area dangerous, even on the new roads, and most people in rural Afghanistan were engaged in subsistence-level farming, with little extra to sell in a market. Schools and clinics were often built without consideration for whether the provincial and national government had the human capacity to staff and support them, creating a sense of betrayal and making the central government look corrupt and incompetent when the buildings remained empty after they were built.

While there was certainly a great need for these projects, arguably what was needed most in rural areas was small-scale agricultural development to increase crop yield and improve storage capacity, so that villages could become self-supporting and have produce to take to markets via the new roads (Combat Studies Institute, 2011 ; SOCOM, 2012). Much of the institutional and traditional knowledge regarding farming techniques was lost with the destruction of the khans and tribal elders under the communists, and local capacities had atrophied further under the Taliban regime. Rural Afghans needed irrigation projects and assistance with the most basic farming techniques even more than they needed schools and clinics. Yet, in a country in which 80% of the population is involved in agriculture (in some provinces it was as high as 95%), agricultural development was largely ignored until 2005, and the PRT's were apparently unaware of a USAID program designed to rebuild agricultural markets (USIP, 2009*n* ; State, 2006). USDA had minimal capacity to support the PRT's and no dedicated funding, and the first National Guard ADT did not deploy until 2008, more than six years into the reconstruction effort (Kemp, 2011 ; USIP, 2009*f*). The one area of development that did focus on agriculture was poppy eradication, which was a high priority for the US. But in many places, poppy eradication was a failure, because alternative agricultural development efforts were insufficient or because poppy was so much more lucrative than substitute crops. Where eradication was successful, it often had the unintended consequence of depriving locals of their livelihood ; without an alternative, many joined the insurgency (Combat Studies Institute, 2006 ; 2011 ; USIP, 2009*k*).

A major factor that hindered development in the south was a poor understanding of traditional Pashtun culture, and the way in which development efforts fed the Taliban narrative of a war on traditional values in rural Pashtun areas. In these areas, most of them beyond the effective reach of the central government, the Taliban established shadow governments which provided services such as justice and education that lent some measure

of stability to tribal life, even if it was at times harsh (Usip, 2009*d*). The ability of the PRT to bring life-improving development – on a scale beyond the capacity of the Taliban – to these areas, particularly in the form of roads and other infrastructure, represented an asymmetric advantage over the Taliban (Kemp, 2011). However, this type of development, which was designed to build support for the central government and increase connections between the provinces and Kabul, by its nature threatened the authority and autonomy of the traditional and fiercely independent rural tribes in the south. The fact that these projects also tended to advantage the more settled and urbanized groups and extend the modernizing influence of the centre supported the Taliban narrative that these efforts were part of an American-led war on Islam and traditional tribal culture, a narrative that resonated with many in the rural south (Tac, 2010). Similarly, the Prt emphasis on value-driven goals like education and expanding women's rights, priorities for American leaders and domestic audiences, was often unwelcome in these areas. Not only did these ideals threaten fundamental Islamic traditions, but they were far less important to many than the provision of basic necessities and predictable security (Usip, 2009*e*).

As a result of this dynamic, Prt development efforts in the south in some ways helped to strengthen the insurgency. Taliban leaders in some places moved in after the construction of schools and installed their own teachers and curricula, excluding girls and extending their influence over the next generation of young men (Usip, 2009*c*). Major projects like the upgrade of a power plant at Kajaki Dam in Helmand province that could extend the power grid to unserved areas generated fierce Taliban resistance, since connecting rural villages to the power represented a major extension of the modernizing influence of the centre. The Taliban attacked not only the project itself, but also its supply lines and the workers employed by the projects, highlighting the inability of the central government to provide the security and stability it had promised.[14]

Lastly, the pervasiveness of low-level corruption in Afghan society plagued development efforts in all parts of the country. Corruption by government officials at all levels with influence over the Pdp undermined efforts to use development to build legitimacy for the provincial and national government. At times, Prt commanders determined they were better off negotiating smaller projects directly with local leaders in order to circumvent corruption within the system the Prt itself was trying to implement.[15] The limited ability of the Prt to effectively monitor all of the projects under its purview led to extensive fraud in the form of shoddy construction, substitution of inferior materials, incomplete projects, and skimming of funds by local contractors. Government office buildings funded by the Bamyan Prt became unusable after one winter when substandard plumbing and insulation caused pipes to burst, flooding the buildings (Usip, 2009j). In 2009, as security conditions worsened, Prt and Brigade commanders began cancelling projects they could not effectively monitor, because without oversight corruption by contractors and local officials was rampant (US Navy, 2010 ; Usip, 2009*l*). Paradoxically,

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[14] McKenzie & Brody, 2011 ; Standifer, 2014.

[15] Telephone interview, Nuristan Prt commanding officer.

efforts by the PRT to reduce or punish corruption by cancelling projects or marginalizing corrupt officials often created anger and frustration among the local populations and their leaders who had been promised these projects, ultimately damaging overall mission effectiveness.

Conclusion

The decade-long experiment in synchronized civil-military stability operations undertaken by the PRT's is difficult to characterize as simply a success or a failure. For every example of abject failure in one part of the country, there is an example of stunning success in another. Looking at the state of Afghanistan after the withdrawal of US and international forces, however, it is clear that the PRT-led development strategy was unable to achieve the widespread economic and political development that US officials had hoped would neutralize the insurgents, stabilize the country, and provide the foundation for the establishment of responsible and responsive government.

The inability of the PRT's – and the coalition forces more broadly – to achieve stability through economic and political development can be attributed to a wide array of factors, but most of them were a function of the lack of capacity needed to perform the mission, poor support and coordination, and a Western perspective that failed to grasp the intricacies, nuance, and importance of Afghan culture, history, and heritage. Insufficient numbers meant the PRT's could never cover the area of responsibility they were assigned, leaving the Taliban and other insurgents room to counter or undermine each gain they made in local villages. The lack of civilians experienced in development and government led to numerous mistakes by well-intentioned military leaders trying to further their mission objectives as best they could. Similarly, mistakes caused by poor coordination – vertically within the US military and horizontally between the US military, civilian agencies, the Afghan government, and coalition partners – consistently undermined efforts to win over the loyalty of the Afghan people and establish support for the Afghan government.

Perhaps most damaging, the lack of understanding of Afghan culture and society led military and civilian leaders at all levels to develop and execute strategies which were often counterproductive to their intended goals. They failed to align their expectations to the realities on the ground or to tailor their efforts and tactics to the unique needs and attributes of each province and each ethnic group. Instead, the PRT's and other military and civilian actors tried to apply Western organizational principles and standards, or techniques that had been successful in other parts of the country, without regard to the vast cultural and ethnic differences that separated Afghans from Americans and from each other. Particularly with regard to the ethnic Pashtuns in the south, they failed to comprehend the long history of decentralized authority and tribal autonomy, or to recognize that their efforts to develop modern infrastructure and enhance the capacity of the central government would threaten that autonomy and inadvertently feed the insurgency.

If the United States is going to successfully carry out a forward-leaning, engaged foreign and security policy that includes a significant effort to help foreign partners

develop economically, politically, and militarily, then it must apply the lessons of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan in order to create the knowledge, capabilities, and mechanisms required to seamlessly integrate civilian and military efforts across a broad spectrum of conditions. This means continuing to increase the capacity of the civilian interagency, through the Bureau of Conflict and Stability Operations and the Civilian Response Corps, to respond rapidly and effectively to development needs in unstable regions of the world. It means the military needs to improve the training provided to deploying units, including courses, lectures, and exercises on development best practices, governance, working with NGO's, and cultural awareness for the region to which they are heading. The DoD should create a database of personnel, particularly in the reserves, with leadership experience on PRT's who could be tapped to lead small civil-military teams elsewhere in the world on short notice if the need arises. Further, more mechanisms are needed to establish civil-military links at both the strategic and the tactical level, and to expose both sides to the capabilities and expertise each has to offer, in order to facilitate cooperation and mutual support at all levels in future stability operations.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the military needs to expand partnerships with academia and the development community, identifying ethnic, cultural, and regional experts who can develop training curricula for deploying units and perhaps work directly with them in an advisory capacity, in order to improve cultural awareness and language skills. Military deployments to permissive environments also offer incredible opportunities for research, creating an incentive for graduate students or academics to embed with military units the way that journalists now do in conflict zones. Greater effort should be made to extend similar opportunities to members of the interagency, who would gain experience both with the military and in their designated region of expertise or responsibility. Without the need for a security element in such environments, the US could deploy small civil-military teams of a dozen, 20, or 30 people for a period of weeks or months if needed, or create a civilian capacity within deploying military units to lead or coordinate aspects of development that are more appropriately conducted by civilians. These initiatives would go a long way towards improving the ability of the civil-military apparatus to conduct coordinated, efficient, and effective development and other stability operations worldwide in support of American foreign policy objectives.

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