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Provincial Reconstruction Team Challenges in the Complex Insurgency in Afghanistan.

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Abstract

This paper explores the problems faced by the PRTs in attempting to achieve their goals in the ISAF led operations in Afghanistan, and discusses why these problems continue to exist after more than seven years of PRT operations. It argues that the complexity of the insurgency environment in Afghanistan coupled with the PRTs role as an interim solution has resulted in problems that are too complex to be easily solved and prevents the PRTs from transitioning to the host nation civil society and international agency led Afghan reconstruction and development. Thus, the problems faced by the PRTs need to be 'tamed' by trialling and developing options that can allow the problems to be better understood thereby reducing the problem complexity where they can be more easily resolved through linear deduction. Understanding the cultural environment better through introducing Afghan cultural advisers, human terrain mapping, and embedding additional civilian experts into the military protected PRTs are options to be considered. It is also recommended that the feasibility of embedding Afghan military, police and civilian agencies into the PRTs to provide longer term stability of PRT personnel and to improve the legitimacy of the PRT actions may be researched.

In 2001, the US-led military coalition operation in Afghanistan toppled the Taliban in just over two months.[1] It was a further twelve months, in November 2002, before the United Nations established International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) began to transition from combat operations to reconstruction and stability operations. In the interim, the US established small outposts manned with Army Civil Military Affairs soldiers called 'Chiclets' to assess humanitarian needs and perform small-scale reconstruction projects under the direction of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in conjunction with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) operating in their localities.[2] As an alternative to a traditional peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan, these small teams were expanded with a force protection component and elements of other government agencies into the concept of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). The role of the PRTs, as identified in the PRT Working Guidelines, was to "expand the legitimacy of the central government to the regions and enhance security by supporting security sector reform and facilitating the reconstruction process."[3] Since 2002 the number of PRTs in Afghanistan has grown to over a dozen nations providing 26 PRTs across the four regional ISAF commands.[4]

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[1]Michael McNerney, "Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model Or a Muddle?" *Parameters* 35, no. 4 (Winter 2005-06), 32.

[2]Robert M. Perito, *The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, [2005]), http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr152.pdf. (accessed February 05, 2009), 2.

[3]Peter Viggo Jakobsen, *PRTs in Afghanistan: Successful but Not Sufficient DIIS Report 2005:6* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, [2006]), 11.

[4]North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT's)," http://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/prt/index.html (accessed February 14, 2009).

The PRTs in Afghanistan have received mixed reviews. According to some critics, the PRTs have done more harm than good.[5] This is because "inconsistent mission statements, unclear roles and responsibilities, ad hoc preparation, and most importantly, limited resources have confused potential partners and prevented PRTs from having a greater effect on Afghanistan's future."[6] The PRT Working Guidelines Handbook states "the PRTs are an interim structure, which, on fulfilment of its mission, should be dismantled."[7] Some humanitarian organisations contend that the PRTs have gone well beyond this interim, security mandate.[8] The functions that many of the PRTs are performing continue to be important in the development of Afghanistan, particularly in insecure areas where civilian agencies are unable to work. Although the PRTs have been successful in many provinces by helping to extend the authority of the Afghan government by facilitating reconstruction and reducing violence, they have not been able to address the underlying causes of insecurity in Afghanistan.[9] In Tarin Kowt, where Australia contributes a Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force (MRTF), security remains problematic.[10] Removing the PRTs from Afghanistan will not provide a better environment for stability operations to occur due to the capability gap that other organisations are unable to fill. Therefore

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[5]Save The Children, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Humanitarian-Military Relations in Afghanistan* (London: Save The Children, [2004]), 3.

[6]McNerney, *Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model Or a Muddle?*, 33.

[7]Oxfam, *Afghanistan: Development and Humanitarian Priorities*, [2008], http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/conflict_disasters/downloads/afghanistan_priorities.pdf. (accessed March 08 2009), 8.

[8]Oxfam, *Afghanistan: Development and Humanitarian Priorities*, [2008], http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/conflict_disasters/downloads/afghanistan_priorities.pdf ., (accessed March 08 2009), 8. Oxfam contends that the PRTs are performing too much development work, limiting the ability of local government institutions to use their own budgets, and develop their own accountability. Additionally, Oxfam states that the intervention by PRTs in provincial political and administrative affairs has generated considerable local resentment.

[9]Jakobsen, *PRTs in Afghanistan: Successful but Not Sufficient DIIS Report 2005:6*, 4.

[10]Patrick Walters, "A Fight we must Take Seriously," *The Australian* 2008, September 20.

the problems the PRTs have in achieving their goals need to be understood within the complexity of the environment in which they work, if they are to continue to be a tool to conduct a counterinsurgency in Afghanistan.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the problems faced by the PRTs to achieve their goals, and discuss why these problems continue to exist after more than seven years of PRT operations. Additionally, areas of thinking towards tackling PRT problems will be considered that may lead to solutions to meet the Australian and Afghanistan strategic interests of providing a secure and stable Afghanistan. In order to do this, this paper will firstly discuss Australia's interests in supporting a PRT in Afghanistan, and the purpose of the PRT. The second part of the paper will describe the complexity of the counterinsurgency environment faced by the PRTs. The environment is complex because there are physical, socio-economic, political, and state and non state actors, military and civilian all mixed with a region that has experienced centuries of turmoil all competing for multiple agenda's. This complex environment provides the helps to explain the third part of this paper – an analysis of the main problems that confront the PRTs, and reasons why these problems persist in Afghanistan today. These problems include finding reliable measures of success for the tasks of the PRTs, understanding their capability to improve security, and determining transition points to civilian agencies and the host nation. Additionally, there challenges faced by military personnel conducting tasks that are not traditionally part of a military campaign. Provincial differences provide a range of problems for PRTs and the role of the PRT is made more difficult by their limited human resources. The aim here is to discuss if the approach to these problems can be 'tamed', or if these problems are so complex that alternative methods for resolution will only be 'good enough' to improve security and permit reconstruction in Afghanistan. The complexity of the problems can be tamed through research, development and testing alternate operating methods, much like successful counterinsurgent tactics have been tried

and tested in the past. Some examples of where this thinking is heading will be discussed in the final section.

The purpose of PRTs in Afghanistan

The Australian strategic interest in Afghanistan is aimed at preventing Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for international terrorists.[11] Under Operation Slipper the Australian Defence Force (ADF) contributes to the efforts of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan with a force of 1090 personnel including a MRTF consisting of engineers and a security detachment for self protection, of approximately 440 personnel as part of the Netherlands-led task PRT in Tarin Kowt, in Oruzgan Province of Afghanistan.[12] Additionally small elements of Australian civilian organisations are present in Afghanistan with the goal to assist the Afghan Government and people to achieve a stable, self-sustaining democratic Afghan state. The intent of Australia's involvement is to enhance stability and security in the region to create an environment for positive political, economic and social development.[13]

The PRTs were implemented as the 'second best' solution after the US and allies declined to deploy large numbers of troops in a traditional peacekeeping operation following the toppling of the Taliban in Afghanistan.[14] Peacekeeping is defined as:

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[11]Australian Government, "Operation SLIPPER," http://defence.gov.au/opex/global/opslipper/index.htm (accessed March 08, 2009).

[12]Tyson Sara, Senior Adviser to the Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP, Minister for Defence, Australia, letter to author, 25 February 2009.

[13]Australian Government, "Afghanistan - Approach to Humanitarian and Development Assistance 2007–2010," http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/afghanistan_strategy.pdf (accessed March 07, 2009).

[14]McNerney, *Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model Or a Muddle?*, 32. After the success in expelling the Taliban from Kabul, Afghan President Hamid Karzai and UN officials had called for ISAF to expand its operations into the provinces.

a non-coercive instrument of diplomacy, where a legitimate, international civil and/or military coalition is employed with the consent of the belligerent parties, in an impartial, non-combatant manner, to implement conflict resolution arrangements or assist humanitarian aid operations.[15]

A traditional peacekeeping operation would not be effective in Afghanistan because consent of all the insurgents has not been gained to maintain peace. A peaceful environment would undermine the insurgents cause, and fail to prove that the current government is unable to provide a level of security for the population. Therefore, since an international peacekeeping force was not available, nor did a military peacekeeping force have the right reconstruction and development skillsets to contend an insurgency, the PRTs were implemented to

fill the gap in the development of governance and reconstruction domains when the international community and nongovernmental organizations were unable, or unwilling to operate in certain areas, largely due to security concerns.[16]

The nature of operations in Afghanistan PRTs are seen by the US as a way of enhancing stability and security at a lower cost and risk without the requirement for large numbers of troops.[17] A similarity that the PRTs do have with a traditional peacekeeping force is that they depend on their negotiating skills and the consent of the local parties for success. In this sense PRTs are more of a diplomatic than military tool.[18]

The aim of the PRT program is to provide the conditions necessary to transition from an environment where international military forces are necessary, to an environment where the Government of the Islamic Republic Afghanistan (GIRoA) and provincial and local government

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[15]Commonwealth of Australia, *Australian Defence Doctrine Publication 3.8: Operations Series - Peacekeeping Operations* (Canberra: Defence Publishing Service, 2004), 1-4.

[16]Mick Ryan, "The Military and Reconstruction Operations," *Parameters* (2007), http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/07winter/contents2.htm (accessed 15 January, 2009), 59.

[17]Save The Children, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Humanitarian-Military Relations in Afghanistan*, 20.

[18]Jakobsen, *PRTs in Afghanistan: Successful but Not Sufficient DIIS Report 2005:6*, 12. The role of the PRTs as a diplomatic tool is described by Jakobsen.

institutions have been established and fully functioning.[19] The PRTs exit strategy can only be

achieved when the Afghan people have the tools necessary for economic sustainment and growth.

According to the PRT Executive Steering Committee Charter, the PRTs were formed to assist the

GOA to strengthen and extend its authority, establish stability and security in the identified area

of operations, and enable reconstruction efforts. Additionally, upon request, ISAF PRTs can

facilitate humanitarian activities carried out by international organizations and NGOs.[20]

Humanitarian functions are not generally performed by the PRTs because this is traditionally the

role of humanitarian organisations.[21]

The success of a counterinsurgency campaign requires the commencement of

governance and reconstruction activities from the beginning of the campaign, not just when

combat operations are complete, in order to gain the support of the population.[22] The roles of the

PRTs are to provide basic needs to create an environment that provides jobs for locals. The

purpose is to buy back the allegiance of local leaders and the population from the insurgents, and

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[19]North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, "Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Executive Steering Committee Charter 02 December 2004 (Revised 03 August 2006)," http://www.unamagroups.org/PRTESCCharterandPRTWGCharter3Aug06en.pdf (accessed February, 15, 2009), 1.

[20]Jakobsen, *PRTs in Afghanistan: Successful but Not Sufficient DIIS Report 2005:6*, 15.

[21] Alexander Costy, "The Dilemma of Humanitarianism in the Post-Taliban Transition," in *Nation Building Unraveled? Aid, Peace and Justice in Afghanistan*, ed. Antonio Donini, Norah Niland, and Karin Wermester, 143-165 (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, Inc., 2004), 157. Costy notes that historically, assistance agencies address civil-military organisations with trepidation because they operate in a different organisational culture causing misunderstanding, the military is insufficiently trained in delivery assistance, the military causes potential obstacles to humanitarian neutrality constraining their space, the military support military objectives rather than strictly humanitarian, and there is confusion by locals when armed people wear civilian clothes exposing genuine assistance workers to attacks. Additionally there is concern that militarised aid could become the norm, removing aid resources.

[22]Mick Ryan, "The Military and Reconstruction Operations," *Parameters* (2007), http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/07winter/contents2.htm (accessed 15 January, 2009), 60.

create an atmosphere of development that persuades the population away from supporting the insurgents.[23]

The complexity of the counterinsurgency environment in Afghanistan

Insurgencies are inherently complex. Insurgents don't comply with conventional warfare tactics, rules and laws, while it is the expectation of a legitimate government to do so. The insurgent environment is Afghanistan is no different. The multiple groups of insurgents use non conventional tactics in an attempt to gain support of the population and change the state of Afghanistan towards their agenda. An insurgency is

> an organised, violent and politically motivated activity conducted by non-state actors and sustained over a protracted period that typically utilises a number of methods, such as subversion, guerrilla warfare and terrorism, in an attempt to achieve change within a state.[24]

The aim of the counterinsurgency therefore is not to kill as many adversaries as possible, but to win the competition against the insurgents for "the right and the ability to win the hearts, minds and acquiescence of the population."[25] Too much or inappropriate use of firepower can cause collateral damage to property and people that leads to increased support for the insurgency. Instead of kinetic force, the involvement of the PRTs in supporting local politics, local patrolling and police functions to enforce the law and preserve the peace, and reconstruction and development efforts are important functions to ensure security of life and property and allow the host nation to develop. In the words of Kilcullen, "counterinsurgency is armed social work; an

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[23]Carter Malkasian and Gerard Mayerle, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams. How do we Know They Work?* (US Army War College,[2009]), http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?PubID=911 , 10.

[24]Commonwealth of Australia, *Australian Army Land Warfare Doctrine LWD 3-0-1 Counterinsurgency Developing Doctrine* (Canberra: Australian Army, 2008), 2-1.

[25]Dr David Kilcullen, "Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-Level Counterinsurgency" *Military Review* May-June, (2006), 103.

attempt to redress basic social and political problems while being shot at."[26] Successfully improving the way of life and safety of the population is critical to increase the public support of the government of Afghanistan and reduce the support for the insurgents. This work has been the function of the PRT, and therefore the importance of PRT success as a "stop-gap" measure becomes paramount in the counterinsurgency fight in Afghanistan.

The problems the PRT face in an insurgency environment are inherently complex, with several forces of fragmentation at work to undermine the central government. The problems are not well defined and therefore are not necessarily *tame* problems. Tame problems can be solved with linear methods of thinking. However, the problems faced by the PRTs may be so complex that there can be little understanding what the problem is. These problems are often termed *wicked* problems.[27] Wicked problems are ill-defined, ambiguous and associated with strong moral, political and professional issues. There is a high level of social complexity that makes communication between agencies that have similar goals very difficult. This is the state of play between the PRTs and many of the civilian aid agencies. The solutions to wicked problems may not have a definitive stopping point. For example, how secure does an area need to be before civilian agencies are able to feel safe enough to conduct reconstruction activities such as governance? There may not be right or wrong solutions to wicked problems and solutions in one province may not be easily copied in another province due to the different local identities, cultures and threats.

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[26]Ibid., 107.

[27]Tom Ritchey, *Structuring Social Messes with Morphological Analysis*, [2005-2008], http://www.swemorph.com/pdf/wp.pdf (accessed 04 April, 2009). The term 'wicked problems' was coined by Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber who observed that there is a whole realm of social planning problems that cannot be successfully treated with traditional linear, analytical approaches. These are called wicked problems, in contrast to tame problems.

The problems confronting PRTs today and tomorrow

After seven years of PRT activities, the proof that PRTs have made a difference in Afghanistan is uncertain. A common criticism is that there has been a lack of rigorous assessment of the effectiveness of the PRTs.[28] Although tactical battles have been fought and won against insurgents, winning tactical battles does not mean strategic success. As noted by General Craddock, NATOs Europe Commander, "NATO has no reliable way to assess the performance in the war. There are no metrics to tell NATO if the country is secure."[29] The PRT Steering Committee has been tasked to determine verifiable measures of progress in support of their goals; however these have not been produced.   PRT reviewers have produced measures of effectiveness for the PRTs such as; how well they improve tactical-level coordination, build relationships, and build capacity, although these have analysed without clear metrics. The result that the measures broadly assessed the PRTs as having a positive impact in Afghanistan, with agreement that even with clearer metrics these measures would still be a 'bit of a muddle.'[30] Some metrics may be used for success or failure depending on the understanding of what the measures actually represent. For example, a common indicator of the success or failure of the ISAF in Afghanistan is the number of attacks. An increased number of attacks have been used to indicate a decrease in security in a region. The number of attacks could however be used to indicate success. This is because if a campaign is performing well, insurgents will go on the offensive as the situation has become so dangerous to them through their displacement from the environment that their only

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[28]Malkasian and Mayerle, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams. How do we Know They Work?*, 10.

[29]Andrew Gray, "NATO Can't Measure Afghan War Performance: General," *News Daily* 25 March, 2009, http://www.newsdaily.com/stories/tre52n752-us-usa-afghan/ (accessed 05 April 2009).

[30]Michael McNerney, "Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model or a Muddle?" *Parameters* 35, no. 4 (Winter 2005-06): 43.

resort is to attack the population.[31] It is challenging to provide accurate measures of

effectiveness of the PRTs that are impartial in a socially complex environment where one

qualitative assessment will vary to another depending on the interests of the reviewer.

Determining measures of effectiveness that provide solutions to problems will continue to persist

for the PRTs. It is still important to conduct measurement of the PRTs, however there are so

many variables that there will not be a right measure, but a range of measures suitable to the

endstate the authors are attempting to find.

The most important metric sought in Afghanistan is the level of security. Security for the

population is a pre-requisite for development of a nation. Despite security being the immediate

objective of forces in Afghanistan, and one of the three goals of the PRT, the relationship

between the PRTs and security provides no evidence that the PRTs have quelled violence.[32]

Malkasian and Mayele recently examined the accomplishments of three US PRTs speaking to

PRT staff, ISAF civilians, UN personnel, USAID, journalists, NGOs and most importantly a

range of Afghan personnel including local leaders, contractors, and the general population. They

noted that "in respect to security and governance, PRTs seem to make a contribution, not just a

decisive one; neither stability nor good governance is going to appear on account of the PRTs."[33]

Finding solutions to reduce instability will continue to be problematic when the level of

instability is unable to be measured, and the problems that cause instability are not well

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[31]Kilcullen, "Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-Level Counterinsurgency", *Military Review,* May-June, (2006), 107. Kilcullen's 25th rule is to fight the enemy's strategy, not his forces. The temptation will be to go on the offensive once the insurgent has attacked, however offensive combat operations usually undermines the population's confidence.

[32]Malkasian and Mayerle, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams. How do we Know They Work?*, 24.

[33]Ibid., 24.

understood. The complexity of the insurgency in Afghanistan only adds to the problem of solving the security dilemma.

With an uncertain security situation in Afghanistan, a significant challenge for PRTs is to determine when their mandate can transition to civilian agencies including international agencies and indigenous authorities and society. Handing over security, governance and reconstruction activities to the host nation and international civilian agencies is conducted when the security conditions permit, or when indigenous capacity is available to take on the functions. There are many government and non-government agencies in Afghanistan's more stable regions ready to move into those less stable regions in the south and west when security conditions permit. These include foreign and national organisations such as Afghanistan's National Solidarity Program that supports indigenous capacity building and can strengthen local governance thereby extending the reach of the Afghan central government more than the PRTs.[34] Some of the confusion in transitioning the functions of the PRT to civilian agencies is caused by the range of danger that various civilian organisations are prepared to operate in, as well as the uncertainty that local security conditions will not rapidly change for the worse. When both the PRTs and civilian agencies operate within the same area, coordination of activities has presented some challenges. Some humanitarian organisations argue that the PRTs discriminate aid support based on political reason, they encroach on the humanitarian space blurring the line between soldiers and non-combatant aid workers that puts their lives at risk, they duplicate services, and the military does not have the capacity for the development type of work thereby jeopardising long-tem development projects.[35] However as much as the security situation prevents civilian

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[34]Ibid., 37-38.

[35]Australian Government, *Desktop Analysis Report - Provincial Reconstruction Teams* (Centre for Army Lessons, [2005]), 2.

agencies from operating throughout Afghanistan, NATO is pressing for more civilian involvement as "the military-only style previously favoured has become a weakness that asymmetric opponents have become expert at exploiting."[36] The NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, has stated that "[w]e need a greater civilian effort, married up more effectively with our military operations if we are not to waste precious time and resources."[37] Therefore the integration of the PRT with civilian organisations is more likely and will continue to present challenges for military-civilian cooperation. Engagement with civilian agencies to understand the problems with this relationship, as well as an increased understanding and involvement within Afghan society will be required to add value to civil-military operations.

The military personnel in PRTs have limited experience and knowledge of the roles they are expected to perform. The primary purpose of western forces is to train for conventional wars, however they are increasingly being asked to perform military roles across the full spectrum of operations from combat operations to humanitarian and counterinsurgency operations.[38] There is a higher expectation of military personnel in PRTs than combat troops to perform across the full spectrum of operations in Afghanistan as PRTs live, move and work within the territory of the insurgent in complex urban and rural terrain on a daily basis. This same population may support and include insurgents. The PRT roles present a paradoxical dilemma for Western militaries training doctrine. The doctrine is focussed on winning a conventional war through overwhelming

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[36]Gillespie, AO, DSC, CSM, Vice Chief of the Defence Force, Lieutenant General Ken, *Stabilisation Operations Delivering Effects to Win: The Importance of Effective, Immediate and Responsive Reconstruction*, 143.

[37]North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, "NATO Can't Allow Afghan Failure," http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7900367.stm (accessed 03 April, 2009).

[38]Full Spectrum Operations is the simultaneous conduct of operations by a force across the full spectrum of conflict. It is a preferred synonym for General Charles Krulak's term 'the three block war'. General Krulak stated that at one moment a military force will be conducting humanitarian aid on one city block, peacekeeping operations on a second block and war flighting or combat operations on a third block.

force, however in supporting the national interests today; the military is tasked to work across the full spectrum of operations. Reconfiguring training programs to cater for operations other than war, particularly in a counterinsurgency environment would present significant training burdens to any modern military. The alternative is that military personnel operating in the PRTs are constantly battling to understand the cultural environment they work in, and therefore their progression in PRTs is based on trial and error. The ability for military personnel with limited training and experience to perform without the cultural understanding of the working environment they operate in will continue to impinge on PRT efforts in a complex environment. Training to operate within this environment while maintaining the core competencies of military warfighting presents a wicked problem that continues to exist for the PRTs.

The PRTs operate differently across the provinces. There are 26 PRTs sponsored by 13 nations. The PRT Steering Committee has been formed to develop policy, guidelines and establish priorities for implementation, operation, and expansion of the PRT concept.[39] They have also developed a set of PRT Working Guidelines and a Handbook that specifies the goals of the PRT. While there is general agreement on the three goals of the PRT, there is criticism by civilian agencies that each nation has diverging views on their relative importance.[40] Nations will tackle the problems in their province within the resources they are provided with, and in line with national guidelines and priorities. Additionally, the operating conditions in each province will focus resources to best effect perceived by the sponsoring nation.

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[39]North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, "Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Executive Steering Committee Charter 02 December 2004 (Revised 03 August 2006)," http://www.unamagroups.org/PRTESCCharterandPRTWGCharter3Aug06en.pdf (accessed February, 15, 2009), 2.

[40]Save The Children, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Humanitarian-Military Relations in Afghanistan* (London: Save The Children, [2004]), 19.

Another criticism of the PRTs is that the limited size of the PRTs reduces their capability to have an influence on security.[41] Currently, the PRTs are not large military organisations. The US PRTs consists of less than 100 personnel, while the German and Netherlands PRT have approximately 300 members.[42] There is no magic number for a PRT; however the success of the PRTs can be limited by inadequate resources. In insecure areas with a poorly performing police force, inadequate infrastructure and inefficient local government, resources required will be higher. With limited personnel numbers in the PRTs, humanitarian organisations would like to see PRTs focus on security, including disarmament, mediating conflicts between militias and some elements of security sector reform, such as supporting the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police.[43] The ability of the PRTs to disarm militias will be challenged by the limited size of the PRT to force or convince the militia's to handover their weapons. When this occurs, the reluctance of PRTs to force local militias to handover weapons is also seen as tolerating warlords.[44] Additionally, the size of the PRT limits the extent they can become involved in mediating disputes and conflicts. For example, PRTs were unable to intervene in fighting between warlords in Herat in 2004 due to the limited capability of the PRT.[45] The reach of the government can be expanded by supporting recruiting, training, and development of the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police that assists in containing general lawlessness and banditry.

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[41]Ibid., 29.

[42]Robert M. Perito, *The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, [2005]), http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr152.pdf. (accessed 05 February, 2009), 3.

[43]Save The Children, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Humanitarian-Military Relations in Afghanistan*, 32.

[44]Ibid., 33.

[45]Ibid., 32.

Current Research and Thinking for PRT Success

The expansion of civilians into Afghanistan to provide the expertise needed in reconstruction of the Afghan society has been advocated by NATO and ISAF contributing leaders.[46] In the safe 'green' areas of Afghanistan, this provides opportunities to develop governance and reconstruction, thereby legitimising the central government. In the hostile locations in western and southern provinces of Afghanistan, civilian organisations will not be able to operate in isolation. They will require force protection measures guaranteed by their host nations governments and company boards. The concept of embedding civilian personnel within the PRTs exists in Afghanistan in small numbers but with significant limitations on their movement that prevent them from exercising their expertise. A comparative analysis can be made in the similar insurgency situation in Iraq. In Iraq, the concept of embedding PRTs (ePRTs) within Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) has been tested. The Brigade teams provide security, transportation and logistics support for the PRTs. The Iraq ePRTs consists of 8-12 civilian subject matter experts that live in the field with the BCTs and integrate with the BCTs battle rhythm. This allows the civilians to work closely with provincial and municipal officials, local leaders and civil society groups within their area of operations.[47] The close living and working conditions also establishes good civil-military relationships. While the concept has imposed an additional support task on the BCT, the civilian experts have been able to improve municipal leadership training and connect district and sub-district government units to execute budgets

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[46]Australian Government, "Interview of Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Stephen Smith with ABC TV 'Insiders' 09 November 2008," http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/transcripts/2008/081109_insiders.html (accessed March 07, 2009). As stated by the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Stephen Smith, "it's very important that in the end the Afghanistan Government, the Afghanistan people have got the capacity to manage their own affairs. So we need a big civilian effort to build their institutions".

[47]Robert M. Perito, "Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams," http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace_briefings/2007/0220_prt_iraq.html (accessed April 04, 2009).

thereby extending the reach of the central government. A larger civilian composition to the PRT, or military forces supporting civilian organizations may be the next step, however the military forces available to provide a civilian support role would need to be considered in light of the limited military personnel to conduct combat operations in Afghanistan. It has also been commented in a testimony to the US Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations in 2007 that the security of civilians by the military has "reduced the need for private contract security guards resulting in an improvement in service and a marked reduction in cost."[48] These costs would need to be compared against the true costs of military personnel replacing these private contractors to verify the savings of military personnel over private security firms. Additionally, given the PRTs were a second best solution to a peacekeeping force that was unavailable, the limiting factor may be the availability of troops. Furthermore, some of the complexities described with humanitarian organizations coordinating and associating with military will still exist without understanding these problems. Overall, the concept of providing protection for civilian experts is one way to tame the wicked security-development dilemma and may provide alternate solutions to expose the real problems.

Countering the insurgency in Afghanistan requires an understanding of the cultural and social environment. The Sun Tzu phrase "know your enemies and know yourself and you can fight a hundred battles without disaster"[49] was written in the 4th century B.C., yet traditional methods of warfighting are still being applied against the insurgency in Afghanistan and have

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[48]Robert Perito, "The US Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq and Afghanistan," http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/OI101807/Perito_Testimony101807.pdf (accessed April 01, 2009).

[49]Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* trans. and intro. by S.B. Griffith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 50.

proven to be inadequate.[50] To fight a counterinsurgency you need not only know the enemy but also a "holistic, total understanding of local culture."[51] A cultural presentation to military personnel prior to deployment provides limited value. For cultural training to have any real value it must be employed and taught in the field with the people.[52] The deployment of cultural advisers with the PRTs, such as anthropologists, can provide a greater level of understanding of the local culture, politics, social structure, and economic environment needed to develop the joint intelligence preparation of the battlespace. Just as importantly, they can advise military personnel on methods of interaction with the local population to achieve the best results. Deployment of anthropologists and cultural advisers within the PRT would assist military staff to understand and work with the population.

Anthropologists can also be a key component to assist in human terrain mapping. Human terrain mapping collects the entire information on a neighbourhood in order to understand the population and their problems. Human terrain mapping can be used to facilitate personnel interaction with the community that provides human intelligence and develops relationships with the population. Once trust has been created, information operations effects can be assessed and personnel can better understand the politics, motivations and cultural issues of the population. Presence is a key principle of counterinsurgency operations to fully understand the human networks that make up an operational environment, thereby reducing the complexity of trying to understand the population, and provide the needs of the population to counter the insurgency.

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[50]Montgomery McFate, "Anthropology and Counterinsurgency: The Strange Story of their Curious Relationship," *The U.S. Army Professional Writing Collection* 3, no. March-April (2005), http://www.army.mil/professionalwriting/volumes/volume3/august_2005/7_05_2.html. (accessed 05 April 2009).

[51]Ibid.

[52]Montgomery McFate and Andrea Jackson, "An Organisational Solution for DODs Cultural Knowledge Needs," *Military Review* July-August (2005), 19.

Conclusion

Australia's interest in supporting the ISAF-led coalition in Afghanistan is aimed at preventing Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for international terrorists. Australia provides over 1000 ADF personnel to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, including a 440 person MRTF to support the Netherlands-led PRT. The PRT role is to assist the GIRoA to strengthen and extend its authority, establish stability and security, and enable reconstruction efforts until security conditions permit these roles to be handed over to Afghanistan society and international civilian agencies. The PRTs have experienced a range of complex problems that have persisted throughout their seven year history due to complexity of the insurgency environment, with fragmented actors and agenda's, their role as an interim solution, and their limitation on specialist resources. Analysis of the problems and their persistence do not offer easily identifiable solutions. Instead of trying to quickly resolve these problems, an alternative view is that the problems can be tamed to reduce the complexity of the problems to those that offer linear deduction to solutions. In the complex Afghan environment, attempting to understand the Afghan culture and conducting activities within the cultural guidance and needs of legitimate Afghan leaders are options that may provide some solutions, and expose opportunities to other solve other problems. Activities such as human terrain mapping, increasing the civilian component of PRTs with civilian cultural experts, and adding other civilian specialists to the PRTs with protection afforded by the military are additional alternative methods that can be trialed and developed to reduce the challenges faced by the PRTs. Future research that may be conducted may include researching the feasibility of embedding Afghan military, police and civilian personnel within the PRTs to provide longer term stability of PRT personnel and to improve the legitimacy of the PRT actions.

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