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A QUESTION OF LEADERSHIP: WHY PRTS MUST TRANSITION BETWEEN MILITARY AND CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP IN THE FIELD

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Exercise Solo Flight

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EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

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The numerous conflicts and interventions undertaken by primarily Western military forces (NATO and allies) in the post-Cold War period have been heavily criticized due to their lack of planning, preparation and execution of post-conflict activities, mainly those of stabilization and reconstruction. The US Marine Corps' doctrine manual, *Small Wars*, highlights the need for stability operations to be at the forefront of mission planning as follows:

Military planners might choose to consider the initial conventional combat phase as the shaping phase, rather than the decisive phase ... If our political objectives can only be accomplished after a successful stability phase, then the stability phase is, de facto, the decisive phase.¹

In order to set the conditions required for a state's political objectives to be realized in a conflict or post-conflict theatre, greater attention has been paid in recent years to a number of 'best practices' concerning the conduct of stabilization and reconstruction operations. Scholar Michael J. McNerney describes stabilization and reconstruction (S&R in US doctrine) as "the intersection of military led stability operations and civilian-led reconstruction activities."² It is this intersection between military and civilian specialists that is so integral to the sustainable success of post-conflict reconstruction, and yet, seems to be the area in which there is the most ambiguity between roles, responsibilities and missions.

In two of the most recent and protracted conflicts, Iraq and Afghanistan, NATO and coalition allies implemented a hybrid military-civilian concept, dubbed the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). These teams had a myriad of different missions and responsibilities depending on where they were deployed and the political objectives of their respective donor

¹Department of the Navy, *Small Wars Manual*, (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters of the US Marine Corps, December 1990), 4, <http://www.marines.mil/Portals/59/Publications/FMFRP%2012-15%20%20Small%20Wars%20Manual.pdf>.

²Michael J. McNerney, "Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model or a Muddle?," *Parameters*, Vol.35, No.4 (Winter 2005/2006): 34.

states. Despite their differences, however, all teams were similar in that they were comprised of some form of both military forces and civilian reconstruction and development experts. The PRT concept 'blurred the lines' between what was once a purely military realm (that of warfighting) with that seen to be a civilian construct (that of state-building, reconstruction and development). Despite differences in mandates, missions and a lack of a doctrinal framework, the PRT concept in Afghanistan was touted as a "novel instrument of conflict management that has attained a central place in the military and political landscape."³ In light of the PRTs' abilities to support the host nation government and bring about elements of stability in environments that were once too dangerous for any development actor to operate in, they were indeed successful. Conceptually, a PRT is a type of unit as well as an approach to conducting stabilization operations that could easily be applied to any future theatre in which the level of violence prevents other (primarily civilian) agencies from operating.⁴

This paper will begin by examining the basis for the concept of a PRT, and its evolution throughout the Afghanistan campaign. It will also examine, albeit to a lesser extent, the development and implementation of the PRT concept in Iraq. In examining the concept, it becomes evident that one of the most significant differences between donor states in the realm of the PRTs is that of leadership. This paper will delve into the differences, successes and failures of a pure military leadership of the organization, a purely civilian leadership, and ultimately, the evolution into a joint and transitional civilian-military lead. Ultimately, this paper will demonstrate that, in order to effectively implement a state's political objectives in a conflict or

³Touko Piiparinen, "A Clash Of Mindsets? An Insider's Account of Provincial Reconstruction Teams," *International Peacekeeping* Vol.14, No.1 (January 2007): 143.

⁴MGen (Ret'd) Roger Lane and Emma Sky, "The Role of Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Stabilization," *RUSI Journal* Vol.151, No.3 (June 2009): 46.

post-conflict theatre, PRTs must be designed to transition smoothly between military, joint military-civilian, and ultimately civilian leadership as the security situation permits.

CONCEPTUAL BEGININGS

PRTs were first conceived of, and deployed, in the Afghan theatre in 2002. An American initiative, they were created as a means to address two pressing concerns, the first being to “kick start the stalled development process ... in areas where US combat forces operated”⁵ and the second was to “minimize, as much as possible, the presence of foreign soldiers.”⁶ In order to avoid the heavy troop concentrations that could make the Afghan population fear a repeat of the Soviet invasion, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) needed to “expand the ISAF effect without expanding ISAF itself.”⁷ The PRT concept was, in essence, an experiment, one in which “civilian economic and government assistance and police training would be supported in a dangerous environment transitioning from combat to peace enforcement operations throughout Afghanistan.”⁸

In order to meet these two requirements, the concept of a small team, ranging in size from “60 to 100 soldiers plus, eventually, Afghan advisors and representatives from civilian agencies like the US State Department, the US Agency for International Development, and the US Department of Agriculture”⁹ was thrown together and deployed into the remote provinces, far away from the seat of power in Kabul. These teams were charged with conducting development, stabilization and reconstruction activities while maintaining the NATO philosophy that “the

⁵LtCol Matthew Jackson and Dr. Stuart Gordon, “The Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Their Part In ‘Stabilization’,” *Australian Army Journal*, Vol.5, No.3 (Spring 2008): 174.

⁶Dr. Craig T. Cobane, “Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Security Assistance: Comments on an Evolving Concept,” *DISAM Journal of International Security Assistance Management*, Vol. 27, No.4 (Summer 2005): 92.

⁷Ibid.

⁸David J. Bercuson and J.L. Granastein, *Lessons Learned? What Canada Should Learn From Afghanistan* (Calgary: Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, 2011), 13.

⁹Michael J. McNerney, “Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan . . . , 32.

transitional government is merely assisted, and is to be supported in its own efforts at pacifying and reconstructing the country.”¹⁰ Although challenged with a lack of resources, confusion about mission and mandates and inter-agency cooperation, these early PRTs did achieve some notable successes in bringing about development work in non-permissive environments.¹¹ NATO was quick to recognize the success of the PRT concept and in 2006, “several NATO states adopted PRTs as a part of their contribution to the UN authorized ISAF mission.”¹² The concept of a PRT was so promising that both the US and UK each added PRT units to their contributions in the Iraq theater as well, giving the concept “... much needed additional personnel and funding from other government agencies, as well as the increase in perceived legitimacy that greater multinational participation carries.”¹³ Prior to the start of draw-down activities, there were 26 PRTs operating in Afghanistan and 23 in Iraq.¹⁴

The concept of a PRT enjoyed political, as well as tactical success in that it allowed for donor states to reduce their troop contributions, while still having a positive effect on the ground. Additionally, the PRT offered many states a politically acceptable focus on reconstruction activities instead of combat. As international public support for the Afghan conflict began to wane in 2006, both Turkey and South Korea announced that they would each take on responsibility for, and contribute forces to, PRTs in theatre.¹⁵ Both these announcements were met with popular support from each state’s citizens, regardless of the hostile operating environment of the both the Afghan and Iraqi theatres.

¹⁰Markus Gauster, “Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan,” *George C. Marshall Centre For Security Studies, Occasional Paper* No. 16 (January 2008): 14, <https://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/14541/uploads>.

¹¹Michael J. McNerney, “Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan . . . , 33.

¹²LtCol Matthew Jackson and Dr. Stuart Gordon, “The Provincial Reconstruction Teams . . . , 174.

¹³Michael J. McNerney, “Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan . . . , 38.

¹⁴Kenneth Holland, “The Canadian Provincial Reconstruction Team: The Arm of Development in Kandahar Province,” *American Review of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 40, No.2 (June 2010): 279.

¹⁵Ibid.

As a concept, the utility of a PRT has been established; however, it is not without some significant criticism. Fundamentally, there are no doctrinal principles upon which to base the force composition, employment and division of labour between military and civilian agencies and partners. Former Deputy Commander of ISAF in 2006, MGen (Ret'd) Lane highlighted that “international support to stabilization in Afghanistan is hindered by national caveats, poor donor harmonization, inadequate support to security sector reform, ineffective technical assistance and limited absorption capacity of government.”¹⁶ All of these factors were evident in the PRTs that were deployed around the country, as some focused “totally on security sector reform, others on education and health and other on force protection.”¹⁷ During the Afghan campaign, NATO failed to produce a “clearly defined set of guiding principles to inform a more coherent civil-military relationship in Afghanistan”¹⁸, although it did make some progress on collecting donor nations’ ‘best practices’ under a centralized command structure within ISAF. A PRT Executive Steering Committee, co-chaired by both COMISAF and the Afghan Minister of the Interior (MOI) was established as an “ambassadorial / ministerial-level body... provid[ing] guidance for and oversight of all the PRT Troop Contributing Nations (TCNs).”¹⁹ In the Iraq theatre, the vast majority of the PRTs operating in-country were US units, as such, doctrinal adherence and synchronization between TCNs was significantly less of a concern, given that only 3 of the PRTs were run by non-US coalition partners.²⁰

¹⁶MGen (Ret'd) Roger Lane and Emma Sky, “The Role of Provincial Reconstruction Teams . . .”, 47.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Edward Burke, “Leaving the Civilians Behind: The ‘Solider-Diplomat’ in Iraq,” *Features* Vol.1, No.2 (2009): 32, <https://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/19623/uploads>.

¹⁹Public Intelligence, “ISAF PRT Handbook, Edition 4,” last accessed 09 May 2016, <https://info.publicintelligence.net/ISAF-PRThandbook.pdf>.

²⁰Robert M. Perito, “Special Report: Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq,” *United States Institute of Peace* Special Report 185 (2007): 4.

Despite differences between TCNs on the composition, role and missions assigned to various PRTs in both theatres, the concept has evolved into what is defined by Gauster as a three-pronged approach, with the following thrust lines “(1) The implementation of security, (2) institution building, and (3) the enabling and facilitating of reconstruction.”²¹ PRTs were conceived as exceptionally flexible units, as they are expected to adjust to the specific region in which they are deployed. Just as conflict is fluid, so too is a PRT, as its various elements of stabilization and reconstruction must be effectively blended to best suit the conflict or post-conflict reality within its AOR. Rigid adherence to a prescribed set of elements, such as force package numbers, composition or specific tasks would not set up any future PRTs for success, as they must be fluid enough to adjust along Gauster’s thrust lines as described above.

Another significant difference between the PRTs fielded by various donor states is that of leadership and command and control relationships. Some countries gave primacy to civilian development experts, relying only on military forces for force protection. Others saw their PRT as a military function, supported by a few junior civilians from their foreign aid or development agencies. The difference is not merely a tactical level one, but speaks to each donor state’s philosophy concerning stability operations. In the next sections, we will examine the two approaches in greater depth.

MILITARY LEADERSHIP OF A PRT

In its 2009 thought-piece, *Shifting Terrain: Stabilization Operations Require A Better Balance between Civilian and Military Efforts*, the RAND corporation bluntly states that “a peace-related mission that is sent to an arena marked by violent conflict and that does not include

²¹Markus Gauster, “Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan . . .”, 8.

a robust professional military force is doomed to failure.”²² The PRT concept evolved primarily from the fact that civilian agencies could not conduct stability and reconstruction operations in the non-permissive environments of Afghanistan and Iraq, but military forces could, and did, operate in those same environments. According to Piiparinen, the military forces assigned to a PRT are responsible for “force protection, information and psychological operations, medical, logistics and communications functions.”²³ Due to the significant instability within the Afghan and Iraq theatres, the military forces deployed to a PRT site had to take on additional missions, including development and reconstruction, as they were the only organization who could operate under such dangerous conditions.

Military led PRTs: Beyond COIN to Stability Ops

With the significant development of Counter-Insurgency (COIN) strategy in both the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, military forces quickly became adept at the battle for ‘hearts and minds’, and making the population of the host nation the centre of gravity for their operations. As a result, most Western militaries have developed their own concept of Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) units, which are generally well equipped to undertake small development and humanitarian tasks in support of their Commanders’ COIN strategy. The CIMIC concept originated in the post-conflict theatre of the Balkans, in which small teams of military personnel would work with the civilian community in the area of operations (AOO).²⁴ CIMIC tasks are typically small scale development opportunities that afford military forces a relatively well-

²²Thomas S. Szayna, Nora Bensahel, Terrence K. Kelly, Keith Crane, David E. Mosher and Beth E. Lachman, “Shifting Terrain: Stabilization Operations Require a Better Balance Between Civilian and Military Efforts,” *Rand Review* 33, 3 (Winter 2009/2010): 16.

http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/corporate_pubs/2009/RAND_CP22-2009-12.pdf

²³Touko Piiparinen, “A Clash Of Mindsets? . . .”, 149.

²⁴Matthew Jackson and Stuart Gordon, “Rewiring Interventions? UK Provincial Reconstruction Teams and ‘Stabilization’,” *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.14, No. 5 (November 2007).650.

defined role with a measureable end state; in essence, they are very much limited to the tactical realm.²⁵ CIMIC activities typically focus on “activities which maximize a Commander’s freedom of manoeuvre through ‘liaison’ and a range of consent building or ‘hearts and minds’ activities.”²⁶ Although some CIMIC activities have drifted beyond the tactical level, CIMIC personnel do not have the training and education to resolve complex stabilization issues, such as improving local governance or economic reforms.²⁷

Some donor states staffed their PRT contributions at the outset with a number of personnel who were trained, or had experience in the CIMIC realm. Under military leadership, PRT type activities seemed like the logical progression for CIMIC personnel and missions. Displaying a typically military pro-active attitude, military led PRTs immediately set about to stabilize their AOR using a variety of non-kinetic measures, based largely on tactical-level, CIMIC ideals. Many coalition militaries included host nation capacity development as part of their COIN strategy, highlighted by the US Army Field Manual (FM) 3-07, Stability Operations, which codified best practices for how the US Army can assume responsibility for defence, diplomacy and development.²⁸ Canada’s early foray into PRT leadership, in Kandahar in 2005, was another example of a military force that touted a “3D approach – involving defence, diplomacy and development.”²⁹ In the Canadian example, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) were originally given the lead for security and tasked with establishing a secure environment for other Canadian government departments to perform development work. As a result of the non-permissive environment in Kandahar at the time, the CAF quickly assumed control over the

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Matthew Jackson and Stuart Gordon, “Rewiring Interventions? . . .”, 650.

²⁸Edward Burke, “Leaving the Civilians Behind: The ‘Solider-Diplomat’ in Iraq . . .”, 29.

²⁹Caroline Leprince, “The Canadian-led Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team: A Success Story?,” *International Journal* Vol.68, No.2 (2013): 360.

strategic guidance of the PRT mission, relegating the other departments to a limited, supporting role.³⁰

In theaters where the situation is still one of medium to high intensity conflict, a PRT tends to play “a supporting, advisory role for the military [combat forces], providing them with the civilian expertise they would not otherwise have access to and offering suggestions on how to shape operations.”³¹ This is effective during high to medium intensity missions, where the primary mission is one of establishing security with a view to allowing for future stabilization operations. When a military led PRT has accomplished its initial task of providing a secure environment, the focus must shift to long term, sustainable, operational-level development. It is in this operational-level development environment where military led PRTs have suffered the greatest criticism. Several noted development specialists had harsh criticism for military led PRTs in Afghanistan. Paul Barer, the head of CARE International, called into question the sustainability of US Military led PRT GHAZNI, stating “the US PRT’s projects are bad development policy, as the military has neglected to examine the local requirements in any great detail and to involve the population.”³² With little to no expertise in local capacity building initiatives, military led PRTs have been observed as relying heavily on a military, tangible results focused approach, quickly becoming “all things to all people, but not actually accomplishing anything vital to the political or military mission.”³³

The PRTs in Afghanistan that were military led were primarily American, and were heavily criticized for inadvertently shifting the balance of power within their respective regions

³⁰Ibid., 364.

³¹Rusty Barber and Sam Parker, “Evaluating Iraq’s Provincial Reconstruction Teams While Drawdown Looms,” *United States Institute For Peace Special Report* (December 2008): 9.

³²Markus Gauster, “Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan . . .”, 22.

³³Michael J. McNerney, “Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan . . .”, 36.

and undermining the very Afghan governmental institutions that they were deployed to support. In Afghanistan, the US PRT mindset was one of “waging a successful war on terror by maintaining permanent US bases.”³⁴ US military led PRTs engaged in a strategy of arming local militias with a view to essentially ‘purchase’ their allegiance against local insurgent groups. The unintended consequence of this strategy was the undermining of the governmental institutions, such as the Afghan National Police (ANP) and Army (ANA), and a shifting of the balance of power within those regions.³⁵

In the Canadian example, the focus of military leaders on supporting the ongoing COIN operations was coupled with a lack of clear development priorities within a national strategy. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) was highly critical of the military’s efforts to bring about stability in the Kandahar region, claiming that the CAF was overly focused on the “bricks and mortar aspects of development.”³⁶ CIDA’s criticism also reflected another side effect of partnering with military led PRTs. The organization (likely due to influence from the international development community) worried that “a close association with the CAF would compromise its neutrality and impartiality with world development partners.”³⁷ Regrettably, this fear was realized when, in 2006, NGOs CARE and World Vision refused to accept funding for development projects, citing CIDA’s lack of neutrality with its involvement with the military led PRT.³⁸

PRTs from the Afghan theatre owe much of their success to their initial tactical level achievements, where they were “one of the few efforts... to approach civil and military S&R

³⁴Markus Gauster, “Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan . . .”, 22.

³⁵Ibid., 23.

³⁶Caroline Leprince, “The Canadian-led Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team . . .”, 366.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

tasks in a coordinated fashion at the tactical level.”³⁹ In order to ensure sustainable, long term stabilization and reconstruction effects, however, donor nations must draw upon the expertise of a variety of civilians. As such, a purely military lead for a PRT in the future is likely to be successful at the outset, but may fail to apply the necessary rigour to complex development and reconstructions issues once the initial tactical level milestones have been reached.

CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP OF PRTs

PRTs in Afghanistan were only fully led by civilian authorities after years of joint military and civilian leadership. As previously discussed, each donor state had its own terms for the leadership of its PRT, some of which will be highlighted and expanded upon in this section. By contrast, US PRTs in Iraq were civilian led, due to the focus on state building operations in that theatre. This section will examine some of the complexities of a purely civilian lead of a PRT, primarily based on the US’ Iraq experience.

PRTs in Iraq operated at the provincial level, growing from 10 in 2005 to over 20 by 2011.⁴⁰ Similar to their military led counterparts in Afghanistan, the civilian PRTs did not follow any doctrinal composition, instead they were “task organized, which is to say that they were uniquely staffed and structured to meet their local needs.”⁴¹ They ranged in size from 20 to, in some instances, over 100 personnel and were a mix of civilian and military experts in a range of disciplines, similar to the Afghan theatre PRTs.⁴² The Iraq PRTs were specifically focused on

³⁹Michael J. McNerney, “Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan . . .”, 33.

⁴⁰Brett C. Doyle, “Civilian Stabilization Team Leadership Success: Perceptions for Iraq Provincial Reconstruction Teams,” *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* Vol.2, No.3 (2013): 1.

⁴¹Ibid., 2.

⁴²Ibid., 2.

‘state-building’ type operations, specifically in the form of “local governance, economic and women’s development, health, agriculture, rule of law, and education.”⁴³

In the Iraq theatre, the majority of the PRTs operated from military bases, as they were either embedded or co-located for security purposes. The military force supported the PRT by “providing security teams for movement outside the military base, provision of living quarters and work spaces... awareness of security risks and access to military project funding (the Commander’s Emergency Response programme).”⁴⁴ Many PRTs were staffed with a military Deputy Team Leader, which allowed for better cooperation and coordination with the military battlespace owner, however, the decisions about the day to day operations, reconstruction initiatives and overall leadership of the PRT rested completely with the civilian Team Leader from the Department of State.

The Iraqi civilian-led PRT experience brought to light some important capacity gaps based on two unique issues; a lack of qualified and experienced civilian volunteers, and a dependence (almost crippling in some instances) upon military forces for security as well as life support which resulted in a compromise of the principle of neutrality and protection by non-association.

A dearth of qualified ‘volunteers’

In a very deliberate distinction from the Afghan theatre PRTs, US PRTs in Iraq were led exclusively by “civilian personnel from the Department of State, rather than by military officers.”⁴⁵ Providing this level of leadership was a new endeavour for the Department, which,

⁴³Rusty Barber and Sam Parker, “Evaluating Iraq’s Provincial Reconstruction Teams . . .”, 1.

⁴⁴Brett C. Doyle, “Civilian Stabilization Team Leadership Success . . .”, 8.

⁴⁵Brett C. Doyle, “Civilian Stabilization Team Leadership Success . . .”, 1.

when coupled with the fact that the entire PRT concept was new and without existing best practices, gave opportunity to a number of critics to publish articles and commentaries (often negative) about the ability of the Department of State to fill such a role.⁴⁶ After conducting several ‘exit interviews’ with PRT staff over several years of the mission, Doyle highlighted that in the early years of the Iraq PRT concept, it was obvious that Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) lacked training and experience in “the management of large staffs or groups of people.”⁴⁷ As the mission matured, however, the Department of State undertook “significant efforts to screen and prepare its PRT leaders.”⁴⁸

Although the theory of civilian-led PRTs is sound, its application in current operations has been described as ‘bumpy’.⁴⁹ In a practical sense, there are just not enough trained civilians who are willing to work in war zone conditions, and there is a significant gap in the capabilities that can be provided by various Departments and Ministries of Foreign Affairs. In the Iraq theatre, “the State Department had trouble finding volunteers, particularly among essential mid-level officers with regional experience and language skills.”⁵⁰ Although the problem was not unique to Iraq, it had a farther reaching impact due to the leadership component that was unique to the Iraq PRTs. Admittedly, maintaining appropriate levels of civilian staffing is essential, ensuring continuity of PRT leadership is critical. Doyle cites an example of a PRT that went through as many as 5 different civilian Team Leaders over the course of a 12 month deployment and was detrimental to the effectiveness of that unit.⁵¹

Dependency on military forces

⁴⁶Ibid., 2.

⁴⁷Ibid., 6.

⁴⁸Brett C. Doyle, “Civilian Stabilization Team Leadership Success . . . , 3.

⁴⁹Rusty Barber and Sam Parker, “Evaluating Iraq’s Provincial Reconstruction Teams . . . , 1.

⁵⁰Robert M. Perito, “Special Report: Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq . . . , 3.

⁵¹Brett C. Doyle, “Civilian Stabilization Team Leadership Success . . . , 9.

The civilians from the various US agencies that made up the Iraq PRTs were volunteers, however, they were generally afforded greater levels of personal security than their military counterparts. As a result, their movements around their AOR were often restricted by the very forces responsible for their protection:

PRTs relied upon the ‘manoeuvre units’ [BCTs] for security, transport, and logistics... Requests for movements ‘outside the wire’ must be given 48 hours in advance. Failure of the BCT to provide transport on a timely basis can immobilize PRT personnel and prevent them from meeting with Iraqi officials.⁵²

These movement restrictions meant that the PRTs couldn’t be as responsive as they needed to be in order to be effective. Many PRT staff reported that high-level meetings in the communities they were supporting were missed, and there was a lack of timely oversight on projects as well, due to the inflexibility of transportation arrangements.⁵³ A civilian-led and equipped PRT must contend with dependence upon military assets for life support, as civilian agencies from all donor states lack the integral capacity to support their personnel in medium to high intensity conflict operations.

Additionally, the civilian led PRTs who were co-located, or embedded, with military forces were often uncomfortable with the arrangement. The humanitarian community, especially, believes firmly in the notion that they can achieve security through the strict adherence to the principle of neutrality. NGOs have complained that the delivery of aid by personnel associated with military forces jeopardizes the principles of neutrality that they adopt and can ultimately make them a target for attacks.⁵⁴ Many NGOs also report that civilian led PRTs engage in continuing stabilization operations, long after the situation in the AOO has stabilized. The continued provision of aid by PRT forces (typically delivered by the military personnel within

⁵²Robert M. Perito, “Special Report: Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq . . .”, 6.

⁵³Brett C. Doyle, “Civilian Stabilization Team Leadership Success . . .”, 10.

⁵⁴Markus Gauster, “Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan . . .”, 34.

the PRT) can, according to leading NGOs, “confuse the local population with the PRTs heavy military presence.”⁵⁵ Because of the civilian leadership of the Iraq PRTs, this concern was more easily addressed with civilian counterparts among the NGO community than it was with the military led PRTs. Nevertheless, the potential to violate the principal of neutrality and ensuring protection through non-association will remain a challenge for any PRT, regardless of leadership.

INTEGRATED JOINT CIVILIAN-MILITARY LEADERSHIP

As discussed in the previous sections, the default military lead of a PRT is effective in the early, high to medium intensity stage of a conflict zone. The force is responsible for establishing security, and has proven to be effective in doing so. Military led PRTs achieve security predominantly through the reliance on an expansion of COIN theory, and achieve tactical level successes (or ‘bricks and mortar’ development) through the use of familiar CIMIC type mechanisms. This approach has been criticized in that “the tactical level, piecemeal, *ad hoc* and traditional form of CIMIC have increasingly proven insufficient for dealing with the challenges that Iraq and Afghanistan have generated.”⁵⁶

By contrast, a purely civilian lead of the PRT concept, although more focussed on sustainable development and host nation capacity building, has not appeared to be the ideal model for the concept either. Civilian led PRTs still require significant military engagement in terms of life support and force protection, and are often hampered by a lack of clear national strategy for the implementation of development projects in accordance with accepted norms. They also struggle to attract the right, qualified, civilian experts from within the donor nation

⁵⁵Kobi Michael and Eyal Ben-Ari, “Contemporary Peace Support Operations: The Primacy of the Military and Internal Contradictions,” *Armed Forces and Society* Vol.37, No.4 (2011): 670.

⁵⁶Matthew Jackson and Stuart Gordon, “Rewiring Interventions? . . . , 177.

who are willing to endure (on a voluntary basis) the dangerous and harsh conditions of a semi-permissive security operating environment.

The most successful of the PRTs in Afghanistan were those who not only employed a joint civilian-military structure, but also embraced the concept from both the military and civilian points of view, using the strengths that one side brought to the table to compensate for weaknesses in the other. The Canadian led Kandahar PRT (KPRT), for example, is notable primarily due to its evolution in leadership throughout the years that it operated (2005 – 2011).⁵⁷ In its early years of operation (2005-2007), the Canadian PRT was exclusively military led, with minimal civilian expertise and support from other Canadian government departments.⁵⁸ Due to the high level of insecurity in its AOR at that time, the CAF was “originally given a great deal of control over the strategic guidance of the [PRT] mission, while DFAIT and CIDA had limited influence.”⁵⁹ The perception of being subordinate to the military, and disagreement about the conduct of stabilization and reconstruction missions, led to the understaffing and subsequent under-representation within the PRT of civilian staff. In 2006, the entire civilian expertise of the Canadian PRT comprised “one person from CIDA, three from Foreign Affairs, and two RCMP officers.”⁶⁰ In contrast, the military personnel that made up the unit numbered 150 personnel. An in-depth examination of the interoperability and leadership within the KPRT by the Government of Canada in 2007 described its civilian-military partnership as “dysfunctional, debilitated and broken.”⁶¹ With the benefit of hindsight, Canadian researcher Buchan highlighted that

⁵⁷Kenneth Holland, “The Canadian Provincial Reconstruction Team. . .”, 281.

⁵⁸Caroline Leprince, “The Canadian-led Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team . . .”, 364.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Janice Gross Stein and Eugene Lang, *The Unexpected War: Canada in Kandahar* (Toronto: Viking, 2007), 260.

. . . the most crucial impediments to collaboration at the KPRT was that the Canadian government provided neither guidelines to indicate how these organization should collaborate in the field. This situation tended to the WoG approach susceptible to clashes of organizational cultures, competing mandates, and conflicting personalities.⁶²

Based on recommendations from the Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan, released in 2007, the Canadian Government implemented significant changes that impacted the KPRT. Primarily, the imbalance between civilian experts and military personnel was addressed, leading to an increase in civilian staff at the PRT by over 50 personnel by the fall of 2008.⁶³ This influx of civilian development and reconstruction experts also ushered in a change to the leadership construct of the KPRT. Beginning in 2008 with the creation of the position of KPRT Director, a civilian shared equal leadership with the military force commander.⁶⁴ Although faced with bureaucratic challenges, the teamwork and cooperation that were fostered within the KPRT manifested into significant sustainable development work in the Kandahar province. The KPRT was specifically looked to as an example of civil-military cooperation by other donor nations⁶⁵ and, based on the steadily improving security situation, transitioned to full civilian leadership in the spring of 2010.

CONCLUSION

Noted COIN scholar and strategist David Galula highlighted that a cornerstone of a successful COIN campaign is a firm civilian lead, as, he argues, "giving the soldier authority

⁶²Gavin Buchan, "Civil Military coordination: Canada's experience in Kandahar, 2005-2009" in *Canadian Perspectives on the Comprehensive Approach* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 102.

⁶³Caroline Leprince, "The Canadian-led Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team . . .", 368.

⁶⁴Caroline Leprince, "The Canadian-led Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team . . .", 371.

⁶⁵Ibid, 359.

over the civilian would thus contradict one of the major characteristics of this type of war.”⁶⁶

Burke further expands upon this as follows:

The need for a civilian lead on setting policy for stability operations does not mean that the military cannot undertake political/ humanitarian tasks where civilian officials are unable to do so. However, civilian supervision is required to monitor such activities to ensure that policy is not set by the military. Crucially, civilian leadership helps to dispel the perception of the host population being under military occupation.⁶⁷

This sentiment perfectly echoes ISAF’s primary interest in the PRT concept; it was designed and implemented as a ‘light footprint’ in order to assure the local population that they were not simply being invaded by yet another foreign force.

Despite their internal differences in cultural characteristics and inherent strengths and weaknesses, PRTs performed a significant stabilization, reconstruction and development function the battlespaces of both the Afghan and Iraqi theatres. Upon examination of the different approaches in leadership (either purely military or civilian, or a hybrid), it is apparent that the most effective form of leadership of a PRT is one of transitional leadership. A transitional leadership will align a PRT with Gauster’s 3 pronged approach: a military lead will ensure the implementation of security, a joint civilian-military lead will transition the unit to supporting host nation institution building and finally, a purely civilian lead will allow for great enabling and facilitating of reconstruction efforts.⁶⁸

The need for significant military engagement in the early deployment of a PRT is obvious. Scholars Michael and Ben-Ari capture the benefits of military forces in PRT by describing the situation as follows:

⁶⁶David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), 61.

⁶⁷Edward Burke, “Leaving the Civilians Behind: The ‘Soldier-Diplomat’ in Iraq . . .”, 29.

⁶⁸Markus Gauster, “Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan . . .”, 8.

When operating in any form of high intensity conflict zone, the assumption is that the military continues to be the central actor even beyond the stage of pacification and stabilization. This assumption is often reinforced by the idea that the armed forces is the only organization capable of carrying out such missions as it is large, disciplined and used to working under trying circumstances and wields resources.⁶⁹

The expertise in leadership of a joint military-civilian unit in a high to medium intensity conflict zone rests purely with the military. A military PRT commander will be able to assess the security situation on the ground and employ their forces using both kinetic and non-kinetic means in order to establish security for both the PRT itself and the host nation community in which it operates. Care should be taken, however, for donor states to ensure that the military lead is well supported with a host of civilian experts, who will ensure that sustainable development protocols are implemented from the initial stages.

As the security situation stabilizes and the intensity of conflict reduces to the medium and low ranges, it becomes appropriate for the leadership of a PRT to become joint between civilian and military. As illustrated by the KPRT case study, joint leadership brings about synergy between a multitude of development factors, a mix of “quick impact projects, political engagement with and the empowerment of moderate actors, outreach to isolated communities, programmed to resuscitate and extend key institutions and essential services.”⁷⁰

Ideally, the end state for a successful PRT is a full transition to civilian leadership and a shift in focus to one that is purely concerned with long term, sustainable development and governmental capacity building. In this final transition stage, a PRT should be focused more on supporting and ensuring that effective governance mechanisms and institutions are established, and less on stabilization or reconstruction initiatives.

⁶⁹Kobi Michael and Eyal Ben-Ari, “Contemporary Peace Support Operations . . .”, 669.

⁷⁰Matthew Jackson and Stuart Gordon, “Rewiring Interventions? . . .”, 178.

Ultimately, in order for a PRT to be successful, it must be prepared from the outset to transition leadership, as conditions on the ground dictate, between military and civilian authorities. As a concept, the PRT is an effective instrument for conducting long term stabilization and reconstruction operations, and should be included as part of any future conflict intervention strategy for Canada in the future.

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