

Civil Military Relations in reference to Afghanistan

12/02/04

Civil Military Relations and their form as the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Afghanistan, pose a series of important questions, not just for NGOs working in Afghanistan, but for Japan and Japanese NGOs and their relationship to their own military.

It is important to understand that there is a set series of general steps when dealing with Civil Military relations, and that the history of civil-military relations has been very long. Essentially the aim of the military in engaging with the civilian population is to legitimize support for a central/invading power. It is the way that this is done that is of concern here. Traditionally the military has kept itself to providing security, basic emergency health care and reconnecting services (i.e. water) to areas where they were cut off during fighting.

There has been an understanding since the end of the Cold War that the role of the military should be expanded to include peace keeping mission and stabilizing missions. These present another shade of the military involvement with the local population because in peace keeping the military force is envisaged to be multinational and as such has legitimacy for what it is doing.

The UN also reviewed its policy on peacekeeping and has greatly expanded the mandate of forces that it has set up, especially that in East Timor, to include the provision of humanitarian aid. This comes in part from the belief held by the UN that it is no longer possible to separate humanitarian issues from peace and security issues.¹

While within NATO this has been defined as the 'Petersberg tasks' which means that NATO could be 'used by the European Union for humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking.' These tasks would be implemented by a Rapid Reaction Force of up to 60,000 troops for a maximum of a year's deployment.² It must be stated that until the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan it is the NATO forces of IFOR, SFOR and KFOR that have been the most active in working in the humanitarian field.³ Furthermore they have stated that Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) teams are a combat-support function and not the main purpose of the military presence, however as will be seen in the example of Afghanistan the boundaries are not that clear on the ground.⁴

Finally, the US has been the most recent advocate for improving Civil-Military relations. In 2001 they only had one battalion that was CIMIC trained, after the attacks in September 2001, they trained all of their reservists in Civil Military relations, with either a 4 or 13-week training course. Most of the soldiers in PRTs are reservists; it is only the special operations team, used for the protection of a PRT that are full time soldiers.⁵

However it is the most recent evolution of the Civil Military relationship where the military actually gets involved in reconstruction that is of greatest concern. Though the idea is not actually that new, the Romans had 'soldier builders' which extended the power of Rome through not only military conquest but local building work,⁶ but what is new is Civil Society

1 Meinrad Studer; The ICRC and Civil-Military Relations in armed conflict IRRC June 2001 Vol 83 No 842 p371

2 Taken from Strengthening European Security and Defence Capabilities December 2000 <http://www.nato.int/docu/facts/2000/dev-esdi.htm>

3 Meinrad Studer; The ICRC and Civil-Military Relations in armed conflict IRRC June 2001 Vol 83 No 842 p373-4 'SFOR in Bosnia is involved to varying degrees in supervising police forces, setting up new administrative structures, arresting war criminals, monitoring elects, rebuilding roads and bridges, clearing mines, restoring infrastructure, etc.'

4 Meinrad Studer; The ICRC and Civil-Military Relations in armed conflict IRRC June 2001 Vol 83 No 842 p378

5 Interview with Maj Sand, Commander of CMOC, Jalalabad PRT, January 2004

6 Gen. (Rtd) Phillipe Morillon speaking on Peace and Security at the EU-UNU Tokyo Global Forum, Tokyo 5/2/2004

and Humanitarian Agencies are concerned that this involvement by the military is undermining their own position.⁷ In addition to this it has been acknowledged by the US that it can 'use' humanitarian actors as 'force extenders' for their own ends.⁸

The humanitarian response to the developments in thinking by the UN, EU, NATO and the US has mainly been on the basis of protecting 'humanitarian space', and along with that, the independence and impartiality of the humanitarian community.⁹ It is interesting to note that while the UN strives to be independent in its actions, it makes no claim to be impartial in its decision making, with the implication that humanitarianism could be a political tool.¹⁰

The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT)

It is at this point where we can discuss in depth the reality of these new developments in relation to the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Afghanistan. The PRTs give us a good opportunity to review the evolution, in the military's thinking, of Civil Military relations for several reasons, firstly they are small, and as such it is easy for us to monitor them and gather information on their activities. Secondly they are relevant to current and future crisis and finally they are on the ground right now.

History

Following the fall of Kabul the US set up the CJCMOTF¹¹ to act as a coordination body for the Civil-Military relations. This in turn created CHLCs¹² in provincial capitals, they were groups that acted in many ways like CMOCs¹³ do in present PRTs, except they did not open shop fronts. They often worked in plain clothes and were supported by USAID staff. These were the basis of PRTs.¹⁴

It is from here in summer 2002 that PRTs start to emerge (they were originally called Joint Reconstruction Teams but this was changed on the wish of President Karzai) because US military planners started to plan for Phase IV which is supposed to be the 'stabilizing' phase of US military activities¹⁵. At this point the picture regarding the PRTs gets progressively more confusing. The original intention was to deploy 10-12 PRTs, however after the first three, in Gardez, Kunduz and Bamiyan,¹⁶ it was decided to wait for the pilot PRTs to show up problems in the system before expanding the programme. Part of the problem with understanding the development of PRTs is that in all the provincial cities where PRTs are planned there are already CMOCs working, and in some regards they act a lot like PRTs are supposed to.

The current situation is getting more and more complicated. The US has formally handed

7 Meinrad Studer; The ICRC and Civil-Military Relations in armed conflict IRRC June 2001 Vol 83 No 842 p367-391

8 Comment by Colin Powell in December 2003 before a NATO conference, reported by the BBC

9 Meinrad Studer; The ICRC and Civil-Military Relations in armed conflict IRRC June 2001 Vol 83 No 842 p372

10 Fransec Vendrell EU Representative to Afghanistan, and former UN Special Representative to Afghanistan, speaking on Peace and Security at the EU-UNU Tokyo Global Forum, Tokyo 5/2/2004

11 CJCMOTF: Coalition/Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force – based in Kabul, with principal responsibility for coordinating Coalition civil-military operations, including assistance and reconstruction activities: this is taken from the Humanitarian Affairs Advisory Group (HAAG) Meeting No 13 11th November minutes

12 CHLCs: Coalition Humanitarian Liaisons Cells

13 CMOC: Civil Military Operation Centre, please see charts for more information

14 Taken from Two Steps Back: Relearning the humanitarian-military lessons learned in Afghanistan and Iraq by Eric James October 2003 Journal of Humanitarian Assistance (JHA)

15 Humanitarian Affairs Advisory Group (HAAG) Meeting No 13 11th November minutes

16 Please see notes in table for the full list of dates and commands of PRT deployments, also the Gardez and Bamiyan PRTs were called Provisional Reconstruction Teams, so there are two versions of the PRT, but they are the same; Humanitarian Affairs Advisory Group (HAAG) Meeting No 13 11th November minutes

over control of Kunduz to the Germans and the plan is to hand more and more PRTs over to NATO allies in the coming months, as the US led PRTs set up in the more insecure South and South East. There are varying estimates of how many are planned, currently some believe there will be 16 PRTs in the regional centers, however some have stated that they would like to see PRTs in every province.¹⁷

PRTs are officially open in: Kunduz, Bamiyan (Samangan), Gardez (Paktia), Charikar (Parwan), Jalalabad (Nangarhar), Herat, Kandahar and Mazar-I Sharif (Balkh)

PRTs are planned to be set up in: Assadabad (Kunar), Tirin Kot (Oruzgan), Qalat (Zabol), Khost, Ghazni

Mandate

The PRTs were originally supposed to tackle the following problems: The terrorist threat; poor infrastructure; economy and education; regional instability; difficult internal relationships between various power brokers.¹⁸ This rather wide understanding of their work was refined to three aims:

1. To extend the authority of the central Government
2. To monitor, assess, report and share information on local developments
3. To assist in the reform of the security sector¹⁹

Even with this refined role the scope of the PRTs is still wide and open to a large degree of interpretation. As will be noted later actual actions and perceived roles of the PRTs by NGOs varies considerably from these 3 idealized aims. Indeed others have quoted one of the aims of the PRTs as being:

4. To assist in Phase IV (i.e. Reconstruction)²⁰

It is important for us to differentiate between what is being said at strategy/country level and what the reality is on the ground. From the strategy point of view it is claimed that by being present in an area the PRTs will allow great security and therefore more reconstruction, and if they play a part in reconstruction that is good, but it is not the sole aim.²¹ However at local level, some PRTs claim that they are providing security *through* being involved with reconstruction. It is important to stress that the involvement in reconstruction varies but the *preferred* style of involvement being in the assessment of projects, and then they are supposed to be sub-contracted out. But there is a fund within each PRT for doing projects themselves.²²

What confuses the issue more is that there is more than one command structure and more than one organization defining the mandates for PRTs. The majority of the PRTs are under US control, both Bamiyan and Kunduz were originally US led, while there is a continuing shift towards NATO management, it has only taken effect in Kunduz. This is further complicated by the presence of the UK led PRT in Mazar which has carved itself a unique role which seems to be unrepeatable in other areas, mainly due to political will.

The US claims that it would like to see NATO take control of all the PRTs²³ and in addition

17 Interview with Col Key of CIMCOORD US Military in Kabul January 2004

18 Humanitarian Affairs Advisory Group (HAAG) Meeting No 13 11th November minutes

19 Humanitarian Affairs Advisory Group (HAAG) Meeting No 13 11th November minutes

20 The Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan and its role in reconstruction 31st May 2003

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/0/7fa2a04b0431553b85256d6a00740fe2?OpenDocument> or <http://www.cooperationcenter.org>

21 Interview with Col Key, Col Wood and Col Reyna of CIMCOORD US Military in Kabul January 2004

22 Interview with Maj Sand Commander of CMOC in the Jalalabad PRT January 2004

23 Comments of Donald Rumsfeld just before the NATO summit of Defense Ministers on December 1st/2nd. Taken from Afghan Online Press/Reuters

they see no conflict between the mandates or styles of the US PRTs and the Kabul based NATO CIMIC teams.²⁴ For a detailed look at the structure of US PRTs please see Appendix 1.

It is worth noting that while the US PRT command, CIMCOORD, may not see big differences between US and NATO Civil Military relations there is a sense that the NATO view, espoused in its taking over of Kunduz and enlarging the PRT to 450 troops with a specific focus on Police Training will be a departure in some respects to the US PRTs. This view is tempered by the fact that within Kabul ISAF (now under the command of NATO) will also be heavily involved in reconstruction as well.

'(they) have carried out 530 village assessments focusing on **education, water and health**. 17 projects have been finalized, 20 are ongoing and 66 are planned. 577 policemen from 10 police districts have been trained and passed on to the International Police Training Mission. There has been involvement in the training of the Afghan Border Police and the Afghan National Army.'²⁵

This is in addition to information from the ISAF newspaper, which showed British, Canadian, and German CIMIC teams in opening ceremonies for some of their projects.²⁶

Co-ordination in Afghanistan

The PRTs contact with the NGO community comes through two main channels. Through UNAMA, and through ACBAR (and specifically ANSO), but several NGOs have contacts directly with PRTs in their area. The intention through this co-ordination is to ensure that NGOs and the PRTs don't do the same projects or see each other out on the field. Both at a central and local level, PRTs feel that they have good contacts with the NGO community. However that is not always borne out by people who work in the areas in which the PRTs operate. There is a sense of unease about working with the PRTs especially among Afghans who feel that in the long term, once the PRTs and US military has left, the political landscape is unknown and they don't want to be seen to be aiding the US, which some sections see as a foreign occupying force.²⁷

The near future

The future of PRTs is no more clear than their recent past. The military definitely see their involvement in PRTs as medium term, maybe 3 years.²⁸ However it is the process of disengagement by the military which may cause the greatest concern to the NGO community. While there may be arguments of command structures and the exact terms of a PRTs mandate these issues can be seen within the general trend of Civil Military relations taking more and more of the humanitarian space. However there are plans to 'civilianise' and in this context 'Afghanize' PRTs so that they will become owned by the local people.²⁹

The beginnings of this process have started already. The US plans to send Police Generals from the Ministry of the Interior in Kabul to the PRTs so that there is an 'Afghan' face for local people to approach. In addition to this some of the PRTs use local Afghan Militia Forces (please see DDR later for more information). However this means that the US is supporting and using the troops of warlords who are not wholly supportive of the central

24 Interview with Col Key, Col Wood and Col Reyna of CIMCOORD US Military in Kabul January 2004

25 From the ISAF website http://www.afnorth.nato.int/ISAF/about/about_history.htm

26 Taken from Voice of Freedom (Sedaye Azadi) in Kabul in January 2004 it is an ISAF newspaper published in English, Dari and Pashto as part of ISAFs public relations/information programme.

27 Interviews with staff at UNAMA, ACBAR and PMS Jalalabad, January 2004

28 Interview with Col Key, Col Wood and Col Reyna of CIMCOORD US Military in Kabul January 2004

29 Interview with Col Key, Col Wood and Col Reyna of CIMCOORD US Military in Kabul January 2004

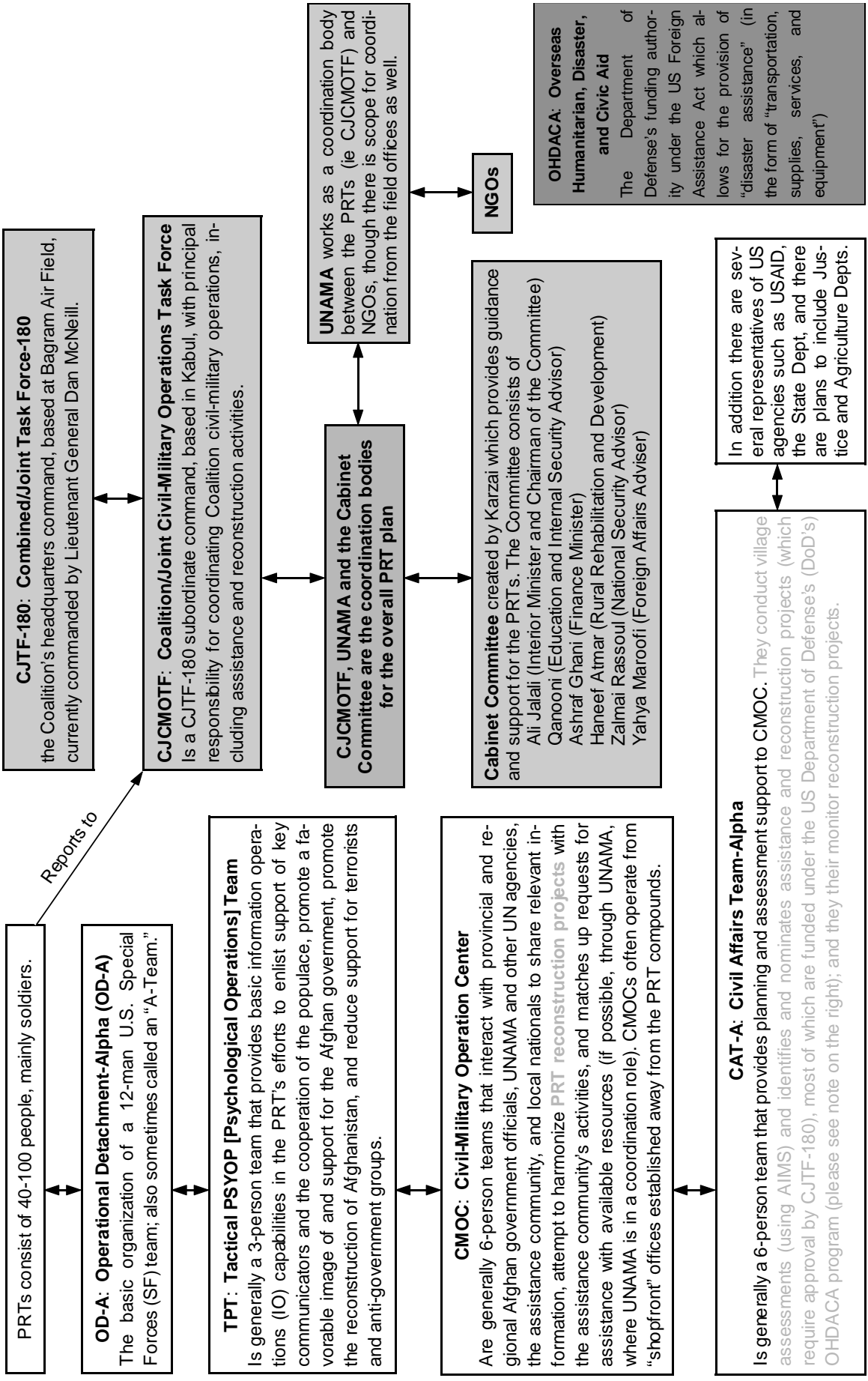
government under President Karzai, and this may 'cause problems' when these militia forces need to be disarmed.³⁰

Secondly, with the expansion of the PRT programme and its growing recognition, there is a sense that it is a prime target for insurgents to attack. This acknowledgement at both a central and local level is coupled with the expansion of security duties in some areas, namely the South and the South East. This recognition coincides with an increase in the number of patrols that some PRTs are conducting through civilian areas. Putting the two together means that the PRT may actually be increasing the risk to the local population in major population centers and therefore making them more difficult and dangerous to work in.³¹

30 Interview with Maj Sand Commander of CMOC in the Jalalabad PRT January 2004

31 Interview with Maj Sand Commander of CMOC in the Jalalabad PRT and Security meeting with ANSO Jalalabad with comments by a PRT officer January 2004.

Structure of the US Lead PRT in Gardez



Structure of the British lead PRT in Mazar-i-Sharif

