CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION

THE SECURITIZATION OF RELIEF EFFORTS IN EMERGENCY, POST-CONFLICT, AND COUNTERINSURGENCY SITUATIONS

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Acronyms

ACBAR: Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
ANA: Afghan National Army
ANP: Afghan National Police
ANSF: Afghan National Security Forces
CA: Civil Affairs
CFC-A: Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan
CIMIC: Civil-Military Coordination
CMWG: Civil-Military Working Group
COIN: Counterinsurgency
DACAAR: Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
DANIDA: Danish International Development Agency
ECHO: European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department
IASC: Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP: Internally Displaced Person
ISAF: International Security Assistance Force
MCDA: Military and Civil Defense Assets
MSF: Médecins sans Frontières
NGHO: Non-governmental humanitarian organization
NGO: Non-governmental organization
NRM: Natural Resources Management
OEF: Operation Enduring Freedom
PRT: Provincial Reconstruction Team
QIP: Quick Impact Project
RC: Regional Command
RSM: Resolute Support Mission
SSED: Small Scale Enterprise Development
TCN: Troop Contributing Nations
UN: United Nations
UNAMA: United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UN OCHA: United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USAID: United States Agency for International Development
USIP: United States Institute of Peace
WASH: Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WE: Women’s Empowerment
Blurring the Lines: Securitization of Aid

With the combination of emergency relief efforts across the globe and increasing levels of involvement in “unconventional” warfare, military and humanitarian actors have inevitably - and ever-more frequently - been pushed to interact and coordinate as they move towards the larger goal of stability and development. Such entanglement, however, faces the obstacle of not just differing command structures, priorities, and resources, but also the concern of increasingly blurred lines between actors. The risk to civilian actors in such cases goes without saying, as does the consequential potential loss to those they aim to assist. It is with this in mind, alongside the shared aims of respect, development, and stability that one must take on the dialogue of civil-military coordination.

Different states, organizations, and branches provide a host of different terms for it - civil-military coordination, cooperation, coexistence, whole of governance approaches, and “co-thinking,” to name a few - but each boils down to one integral concern: managing the shared space, and sometimes shared goals, of military and non-military actors. For the purposes of this paper, the broader discussion will be considered and referred to through the lens of “civil-military coordination,” or CIMIC, as per United Nations and NATO definitions. Differing levels of engagement between actors, as suggested by the somewhat divergent connotations of “cooperation” and “coordination,” will be discussed in following sections.

Counterinsurgency Strategy in the War on Terror

Spurred in particular by the 2001 American invasion of Afghanistan under the banner of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), the nature of guerrilla warfare and insurgency in the 21st century became a priority issue for debate. What was historically known as “irregular” or “unconventional” warfare came to be recognized by many as “the commonest of conflicts throughout history,” as opposed to interstate, as often assumed. Military actors have thus been dealt the question how to operate in an environment where one is confronted with a seemingly continuous undercurrent of violent protest and insurgency. What’s more, how does one overcome combatants so carefully cloaked in a rugged and unknown land or, worse, deeply embedded in the population itself?

The primary American answer to this, especially as arising from the challenges of the Afghan war, came in the theories and methods of counterinsurgency, or COIN. As highlighted in David Kilcullen’s Counterinsurgency:

Even though insurgents have no permanent physical strong-points, no physical ‘decisive terrain’ in military terms, they do have a fixed point they must defend: their need to maintain connectivity with the population. ... This opens up an alternative method of operating, because protecting the population and cutting its connectivity with the insurgent movement is doable, even though destroying the enemy is not.3

From this was born the rejuvenated Vietnam-era “hearts and minds” doctrine, a process of conducting combat operations, patrols, and ongoing battles against insurgents while

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1In addition to “whole of governance” approaches, “complementarity,” and “co-thinking,”:
NATO, EU, Canada: CIMIC (civil-military coordination)
UN: CIMIC (civil-military coordination), or UN-CMCoord
U.S.: CMO (civil-military operations)
2 Kilcullen, Counterinsurgency, ix.
3 Ibid. 9.
simultaneously working to garner the support of the local population. Respecting and protecting the civilian population must always be a top concern in military strategy, but perhaps none more so than in the case of counterinsurgency; where the population base as a whole serves as the potential foundation for the enemy combatants, it is all the more vital that that population maintain, at minimum, “a more benevolent local attitude toward the U.S. military presence.”

Thus, counterinsurgency tactics, as currently employed, are designed and intended to carefully and simultaneously balance offense, defense, and stability operations – or, as General David Petraeus explained in The U.S. Army-Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual, “clear, hold, and build.” In the words of one analyst, “the U.S. military is capable of implementing the first two legs, since they are primarily military in nature. But it runs into problems with the open-ended nature of the third.” It is in the “open-ended nature” of the building phase that the blurring of traditional actor roles comes to the fore.

**Provincial Reconstruction Teams, “Winning Hearts and Minds”**

In early 2002, OEF began implementation of what was officially called Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cells (CHLCs), dubbed “chiclets,” with the so-called “build” goal in mind. The outposts were staffed by ten to twelve troops, typically Army Civil Affairs soldiers, whose job it was to assess humanitarian needs, carrying out small-scale reconstruction projects, gathering intelligence, and establishing relations with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and nongovernmental organizations present in theater. In November of that year, the OEF strategy expanded to incorporate larger Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), built upon the ideals of the CHLCs but comprising, on average, 50 to 100 team members.

In keeping with the methodology of COIN, PRTs were designed to address issues of governance, security, and reconstruction. Specifically, the PRT Mission Statement, as agreed upon in January 2005 by the PRT Executive Steering Committee, stated that “PRTs will assist the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to extend its authority, in order to facilitate the development of a stable and secure environment in the identified area of operations, and enable Security Sector Reform (SSR) and reconstruction efforts.” The initial sites – beginning with Gardez, and shortly followed by Bamian, Kondoz, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar, and Herat – facilitated connections with Afghanistan’s four primary ethnic groups and were prioritized for their proximity to former Taliban strongholds and local warlord bases, such as that of Ishmael Khan.

While PRT models – and even specific strategies – varied according to lead nation, each team was comprised of military troops (in the case of the U.S., around 80) and civil affairs teams, alongside civilian government representatives, translators, a representative from the Afghan Ministry of the Interior, and, ideally, a team of military police, at minimum. “National caveats” hindered standardization of an operational model regarding such matters as troop movement and policy priorities by troop contribution nations (TCNs). In addition, there were notable differences in resources available to each team in such critical areas as personnel and materiel. Regardless, the ultimate goal remained the same: establish small zones of stability, or what Simone Haysom terms the “ink-spot strategy,” that would then spread and enable better

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5 Jeffrey, “Why Counterinsurgency Doesn’t Work.”
governance and reconstruction possibilities.\textsuperscript{8} Carrying over from the “chiclets,” PRTs also offered the vital potential for local intelligence, USIP’s Robert Perito crediting the embedded State Department representatives with providing fifty percent of regional reporting to Washington.\textsuperscript{9}

Levels of Civ-Mil Engagement

Broader still than the core CIMIC components of PRTs was the environment as a whole, military and civilian actors coming into contact all the more frequently as military involvement in reconstruction and emergency relief efforts continued to expand. As defined by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), humanitarian civil-military coordination is: “dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors, essential to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency, and, when appropriate, pursue common goals.”\textsuperscript{10} The UN umbrella also encompasses official guidelines for such anticipated interactions, including Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA)\textsuperscript{11} and those from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).\textsuperscript{12} The U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP)\textsuperscript{13} offers similar guidelines, developed together with InterAction and the Department of Defense, as does the Kabul-based Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR). By May 2008, the Afghan-specific Civil-Military Working Group (CMWG) had also established a set of guidelines for coordination in theater.\textsuperscript{14}

The dialogue behind these working groups and joint guidelines, however, has been far from simple, and often far from productive. As Haysom notes, working groups such as the CMWG were often used more as a soapbox and debate platform rather than as a means to communication and understanding, particularly for NGOs with few other alternatives for voicing their opposition.\textsuperscript{15} These frustrations were increased by lack of direct communication lines to more influential military personnel, as CMWG attendance from ISAF was reportedly often limited to CIMIC staff and those with limited decision-making power, rather than those involved in strategy and planning.\textsuperscript{16} Adding to the confusion was a broader lack of unity within both civil and military sides and lack of differentiation when addressing one or the other. Humanitarian actors in particular lacked a unified voice in response, given the range of possible levels of engagement, while differing national PRT models or priorities, in addition to differing command structures from NATO to ISAF, continued to complicate any attempt at broader dialogue.

As suggested by the range of possible descriptors, from coordination to complementarity and cooperation, levels of engagement between civilian and military actors range from complete non-engagement to direct engagement, shared resources, and shared projects. The spectrum of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{8} Haysom, “‘You don’t need to love us.’”
\item \textsuperscript{9} Perito, “The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan,” 5.
\item \textsuperscript{10} UNOCHA. “Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord).”
\item \textsuperscript{11} UNOCHA, “Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief – Oslo Guidelines.”
\item \textsuperscript{12} Inter-Agency Standing Committee, “Civil-Military Guidelines & Reference for Complex Emergencies.”
\item \textsuperscript{13} U.S. Institute of Peace, “Guidelines for Relations between U.S. Armed Forces and Non-Governmental Humanitarian Organizations in Hostile or Potentially Hostile Environments.”
\item \textsuperscript{14} Afghanistan Civil-Military Working Group, “Guidelines for the Interaction and Coordination of Humanitarian Actors and Military Actors in Afghanistan.”
\item \textsuperscript{15} Haysom, “‘You don’t need to love us.’”
\item \textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
involvement is often simplified into four broad classes. One NGO considers these levels as largely: co-existence, information exchange, collaboration, and common projects, increasing in level of engagement as one continues up the scale. Following the same four levels, another analysis discusses “principled non-engagement; ‘arm’s-length’ interaction; proactive, pragmatic, principled engagement; (or) active, direct engagement and cooperation.” Given the nature of any complex system, however, it is critical to keep in mind that the decisions of one actor inevitably impact the others in the system; in this case, “at a local level if one agency is perceived as cooperating closely with the military, the population may assume the same of other local actors” (CMWG 9). The possible risks entailed with such a perception and its influence on perceived neutrality of humanitarian actors is necessarily of serious concern.

The Backlash

Throughout the dialogue and spectrum of possible engagement, all actors are grounded in a common cause – civil and military actors share not only space, but larger goals of stability, security, and development. The concept of “complementarity” thus emphasizes the need and the opportunities in both working together, dividing and coordinating labor as each highlights drastically different skill sets in moving towards a more stable and peaceful, thriving environment. Shortcomings, risks, and misunderstandings within this dialogue, however, are many, and civ-mil relations themselves have often become a palpable minefield of debate, miscommunication, and outright frustration. Such debates include issues with information sharing, risk to impartiality and operational independence, endangerment of humanitarian workers (and consequently their beneficiaries), and, in this case, confusion regarding the structure and mission of the PRTs themselves.

Information Sharing

At the most basic level of engagement lies the goal of information sharing, highlighting the shared space between actors, the need for local knowledge, and inevitable security concerns of operating in a volatile environment. CMWG guidelines, drawn up in consultation with representatives from UNAMA, ACBAR, ISAF, OEF, and ANSF, specify sharing intelligence regarding “security information, relief needs, humanitarian activities, mine activities, population movements, (and) movement of goods or personnel.” Military actors are also requested to provide accurate and timely information regarding relief activities, post-strike information, and pending operations.

Both sides, however, face serious difficulties in much of the above, most particularly in where to draw the line without encroaching upon their own institutional principles or endangering their mission – the military in terms of classified material, humanitarian organizations in terms of neutrality. Most officers in the military are far more likely to err on the side of caution, tending to over-classify information rather than risk violating security policies or, worse, endangering troops or nearby civilians. Verifying information disclosure allowances

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17 See Figure 1 in Appendix. DACAAR, “DACAAR’s position on relations to PRTs in Afghanistan.”
18 McHugh, “Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Humanitarian-Military Relations in Afghanistan,” 42.
is, unsurprisingly, a less than simple process, and many civilian actors, let alone military, may be unsure of what information is classified or the path required to access it.  

Impartiality and Endangerment

Beyond this, humanitarian actors rely heavily upon maintaining operational independence, and with that their reputation for neutrality and impartiality in provision of vital goods and services. Sharing too much information with military forces may raise questions about that promise of neutrality. Given that most such actors have adopted a security policy reliant primarily upon local consent and acceptance, a risk to their neutrality is inevitably a risk to their safety.

The case of Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) in Afghanistan, for instance, poignantly highlighted exactly this: following the roadside ambush and killing of five MSF workers in June 2004, the organization pulled its operations from the country, not to return until 2009. At the time, MSF had operated in Afghanistan for the preceding 24 years, with 80 international staff and 1,400 local employees working on projects in thirteen provinces just prior to its pull-out. Concern for worker safety following the attack resulted in withdrawal by the end of the following month, while the Afghan government and police forces failed to bring charges against the suspected perpetrators. Heavily adding to this and continued worker endangerment were local Taliban accusations that the agency had been in collusion with the U.S. military. MSF’s denial of the charges was accompanied by a larger debate that included charges by some highly critical observers that the U.S.-led coalition, particularly through the actions of PRTs, had “consistently sought to use humanitarian aid to build support for its military and political ambitions.”

Though the contributing factors are many – not the least of which being the sheer number of personnel present in such a dangerous environment – Afghanistan continues to hold the notorious title of most dangerous nation in the world for aid workers. In a late 2014 meeting of the Security Council, Masood Karokhail, Director of the Liaison Office in Afghanistan, emphasized that the country had hosted the world’s highest number of casualties among humanitarian workers, with 895 attacked since 2001 and 325 killed. Reports from UNOCHA point to a similarly disturbing trend that may be seen in OCHA’s 2015 Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan. As displayed in Figure 2, attacks against aid workers continue to be of peak concern, even taking into account increased violence surrounding the 2014 elections.

Responding to the 2013 spike in attacks, Zabiullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman, claimed, “In the places which are under our control, there aren’t any incidents. We do not target those NGO workers who aren’t working for the foreigners.” Even ignoring the responsibility claims of Taliban insurgents following numerous such attacks (as with the MSF ambush), the concluding disclaimer is a hefty one. Whether or not an NGO is working for or with the broadly targeted “foreigners,” and to what extent, is inevitably at the mercy of perception. Returning to

21 Left, “Médecins sans Frontières to Leave Afghanistan.”
22 UNSC/11524. “Increased Attacks on Aid Workers Due to Lack of Respect for International Humanitarian Law, Deputy Secretary-General Tells Security Council.”
aid organizations’ reliance upon local consent and acceptance, however, then brings to the fore the resulting necessity of their accessing and negotiating with Taliban insurgents – a move which, not surprisingly, heavily contradicts military preferences and priorities, let alone American law and politics. As stressed in one USIP policy briefing, such negotiations, as well as the actual implementation of aid, could be seen as somewhat “legitimizing” local armed groups, directly opposing the “winning hearts and minds” aims of overarching COIN strategy.\textsuperscript{25}

**Structure of PRTs**

Approaching the primary concern of safety and security, one finds both a common cause and a bone of contention. Being almost entirely comprised of military personnel, PRTs were frequently assumed to boast rules of engagement that were far more combat-oriented than the actuality. While security was an ultimate goal within the mission, the teams’ leading priority was to lay the foundation for good governance through stability, and that primarily through winning consent and cooperation from the local population. Much to the frustration and confusion of many, the armed element of PRTs was strictly intended for protection of the team itself, not to engage in combat or direct protection of others unless in an emergency situation.\textsuperscript{26} Rather, the teams were required to balance their priorities and resources between political goals and developmental ones, all in the midst of the ongoing insurgency.

Analyzing “challenges” with PRTs, a Save the Children report begins its list with the view expressed by many interviewees that “the military strength of PRTs is insufficient to meet existing security needs.”\textsuperscript{27} Such frustrations highlight the lack of understanding between actors, but also the lack of clear mission statement from PRTs across the board. The critique may be one PRTs themselves would be hard pressed to disagree with, but provided their limited security mandate, it was an inevitable one. Limited number of personnel compared to the task at hand must also be taken into consideration, especially depending upon the size of the assigned field of operations, correspondingly impeding visits to more distant reaches of the provinces.

In addition to the constraint of numbers, PRTs were undoubtedly hampered by high rates of personnel turnover, given average deployment lengths between nine and twelve months. The Paktia-based PRT, for instance, the first to be implemented in November of 2002, boasted fourteen different military commanders over the course of nearly nine years.\textsuperscript{28} The resulting lack of institutional memory was an unquantifiable loss, particularly with a mission and dialogue so vitally attached to local knowledge and building trusting, personal relationships, be it within the team, with civilian aid actors, or with local leaders.

A short-term mentality also applied to PRT missions and project plans, much to the consternation of long-term, process-oriented humanitarian workers. Given the security focus of military operations and a natural wariness of falling into “mission creep,” reconstruction efforts were to be confined to quick impact projects, or QIPs. The nature of this alone is not incredibly controversial – military reconstruction efforts are mostly to entail only emergency situations or larger necessities such as infrastructure, and, quite frankly, an average soldier would be ill-trained for long-term reconstruction projects. Division of labor is very much the ideal, as

\textsuperscript{25} Schirch, “The Civil Society-Military Relationship in Afghanistan.”
\textsuperscript{26} Perito, “The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan,” 7.
\textsuperscript{27} McHugh, “Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Humanitarian-Military Relations in Afghanistan,” 30.
\textsuperscript{28} Carberry, “U.S. Hands Over Nation-Building Projects to Afghans.”
emphasized by all actors involved. The danger comes in the consequences of focusing on efficiency in what ultimately adds up to nation building.

As military approaches innately focus on decisive action largely informed by security concerns, reconstruction projects often run the risk of being non-participatory or, if contracted out to locals, suffer the effects of limited oversight in implementation, let alone future maintenance.29 Such an issue not only endangers the future of the project and transition; it also necessarily puts into question the local reception of the project from the start. Thus the crucial factor of intelligence gathering in the local context and communication with local government officials and humanitarian workers regarding what has been done, what is in the pipeline, and what remains to be achieved.

**Guided Experience**

**Methodology**

In order to most tangibly demonstrate the depth and complexity of a wicked problem such as civil-military coordination, the above will serve as the foundation for a guided experience, centered on the case study of development efforts in Ghazni Province, Afghanistan. A guided experience capitalizes on the accessibility and impact of experiential learning, to be embodied by an interactive, virtual platform. This paper and the accompanying Prezi will thus provide the content and broad layout for continued development of the guided experience and, ultimately, others like it. Much like a flight simulator or virtual tour of a museum, the guided experience will lead the participants along the journey from the perspective of each primary actor, considering what may have led to decisions made along the way and the benefits and drawbacks of each.

The experience itself will begin with brief background notes, as drawn from the above, and highlight in particular the range of possible levels of engagement and the identified primary concerns in civil-military coordination. From there, the participant will begin the journey with an introduction to Ghazni Province, PRT Ghazni, and the chosen co-located humanitarian actor, the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR). As the journey progresses, participants will move from the perspective of one actor to the other, carefully taking into consideration the background and priorities of each in the given situations. At the conclusion of the given timeline, participants will be presented with the current situation in Ghazni and asked to reflect on the impact of choices made along the way.

Throughout, it is crucial to keep in mind that this guided experience is very much based in reality, and thereby structured around the actual statements, missions, and activities of both PRT Ghazni and DACAAR. Given DACAAR’s choice to restrict engagement to information sharing, the goal is to navigate the shared space – no more, no less. With this in mind, the timeline will highlight four key events, each followed by participant questions and remarks on the actual progression, or regression, of the situation. In this structure and given the years of simultaneous activities in theater, the experience will primarily span late 2003 through 2006, followed by a general review of later activities and current status.

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Case Study: Ghazni Province, Afghanistan

Roughly 75 miles southwest of Kabul and sitting halfway between the capital city and Kandahar lies the province of Ghazni, a notorious stronghold of Taliban and al Qaeda insurgencies. Largely reliant upon agriculture, the province suffers periodic droughts and flooding, has literacy rates not breaching forty percent, and is home to a diverse population of majority Pashtuns and Hazaras, as well as Tajiks and nomadic Kuchis. Pashtun-dominated areas in particular have proven a serious concern in battling the country’s ongoing Taliban insurgency since their ousting in late 2001.

Actors

Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR)

An apolitical, non-governmental, non-profit humanitarian organization out of Copenhagen, Denmark, DACAAR has been working towards sustainable Afghan development since 1984, and in Ghazni since 1999. The organization began its work in bordering Pakistan with refugees of the Soviet invasion, gradually leaving Pakistan and refocusing its attention to cover 29 of 34 Afghan provinces over the span of the next thirty years. DACAAR focuses heavily on local and stakeholder ownership of its projects, boasting 823 Afghan employees and 10 international employees, with the overall objective “to contribute to equitable and sustainable livelihoods for rural Afghans with a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups.”

Towards this aim, it focuses on four thematic areas: Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH); Natural Resources Management (NRM); Small Scale Enterprise Development (SSED); and Women’s Empowerment (WE). The NGO is also among thirty-two facilitating partners in the implementation of the National Solidarity Programme, launched in 2003 with the goal of strengthening communities and establishing democratically elected women’s and men’s Community Development Councils, simultaneously building capacity for local governance. DACAAR’s funds come from various sources, but roughly sixty percent is supplied by a combination of the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the Royal Norwegian Embassy, and the European Commission (ECHO).

PRT Ghazni

Ghazni Province falls within the American-led Regional Command East, and was among the first provinces in the implementation of PRTs, particularly ideal given its reputation as a stronghold of the insurgency and potential insight regarding the ethnic and tribal fractionalization of the country. Implementation of PRT Ghazni began in January 2004, and the U.S. Embassy observed an official opening of the PRT base in March. Though the team would later be joined by a Polish force, its initial years followed the primary U.S. model for PRTs: roughly eighty personnel, including a commanding officer, skeleton military staff, engineers, U.S. Army civil

30 DACAAR, “DACAAR: About Us.”
31 http://dacaar.org/programmes/water-sanitation-and-hygiene/
32 http://dacaar.org/programmes/natural-resources-management/
33 http://dacaar.org/programmes/small-scale-enterprise-development/
34 http://dacaar.org/programmes/womens-empowerment/
35 DACAAR, “Coverage: Current Geographical, Historical Geographical, Beneficiaries, and Funding.”
affairs officers, and typically a platoon of U.S. Army National Guardsmen. These were accompanied, ideally, by civilian representatives from the Department of State, USAID, and the Department of Agriculture, alongside Afghan interpreters and a representative from the Afghan Ministry of the Interior. Significantly, these civilian representatives were “co-equal to the commander, rather than his subordinates.”

While PRTs often lacked some contingent of these civilian elements, this guided experience will run under the assumption that PRT Ghazni met the ideal U.S. model team, incorporating each of the above. Even with a full team, of course, comes the difficulty of coordinating civilians and military within the PRT, somewhat tempering the clear sighted advantage of boasting a full team.

**Timeline and Key Events**

*September 2003: DACAAR workers attacked*

On September 9, 2003, DACAAR experienced the extreme loss that has been continuously reported from humanitarian actors in Afghanistan (recalling Figure 2). Returning from a water supply project in Ab Band district of the province, a car of Afghan DACAAR workers was stopped by a group suspected to have been Taliban insurgents. Four men were shot and killed, while a fifth escaped with injuries. According to the UNHCR report, the men were “ordered out of the car, lectured about working for an aid agency – thereby supporting the government – and summarily executed.”

**Participant:** The security situation in the province has clearly worsened, and the danger of seeming to work with the newly established Afghan government has increased exponentially as counterinsurgency operations rage on. Do you maintain presence (of local and foreign workers), limit operations, or exit entirely?

**Actual response:** DACAAR’s workers in the southern provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, and Uruzgan were told to temporarily suspend operations; unlike MSF, however, DACAAR was far from entirely pulling its operations. On the contrary, DACAAR, alongside ACBAR and numerous other NGOs at the time, joined a call to NATO and the international community for increased security forces in the country, stressing the need for stability both for its workers and for long-term national development.

*March 2004: PRT enters theater*

The first PRT was operational by the end of 2003, with eight following on its heels in early 2004; establishment of operations largely went to where they were considered most necessary, either in battling a well-rooted insurgency or in gathering intelligence and establishing necessary networks. An initial contingent of PRT Ghazni arrived as early as January 2004, with official opening statements from the U.S. ambassador in March 2004.

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36 Malkasian, “Provincial Reconstruction Teams: How Do We Know They Work?” 5.
37 UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency, “Lubbers Deplores Murder of Afghan Aid Workers.”
38 BBC. “Afghan Aid Staff Die in Ambush.”
39 DACAAR, “DACAAR’s position on relations to PRTs in Afghanistan.”
Participant: To what extent is it in DACAAR’s best interest to coordinate with the incoming PRT, if at all? Does the need for security forces conflict with the need for neutrality, particularly recalling DACAAR’s vast number of local employees? At what point might it become a conflict of interests? Choose between the four general levels of engagement, as depicted in Figure 1. What does this mean for the PRT, which could greatly benefit from local knowledge and general goodwill?

Actual Response: DACAAR’s position on PRTs, as solidified in a 2005 statement from Kabul and Copenhagen, strictly limits interactions to necessary information sharing. Given that, there is little accessible documentation of meetings, which NGOs would frequently prefer to be kept quiet for fear of retaliation or a perceived compromising of their operational independence. At the request of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DACAAR later agreed to send a WASH team to the province of Badakhshan, supplementing the Danish PRT intervention there, but joint projects were strictly off the table.\(^\text{41}\)

March 2005: Sultan Dam bursts, causing massive flooding

Floodwaters following one of Afghanistan’s worst winters cause a breach in the Band-e-Sultan dam, bringing with it a flood destructive to both people and infrastructure. At least six people were reported to have died in the flooding, alongside widespread devastation, including the washing away of land and massive damage to infrastructure.

Participant: How can both DACAAR and the PRT most efficiently contribute to relief efforts, particularly given DACAAR’s hesitation to directly participate in PRT-led or –funded projects? Coordinate directly or through a mediator, if at all?

Actual Response: While DACAAR maintained various projects in the area, including WASH projects, little documentation is available regarding its more direct involvement in relief. Emergency responses were, however, largely coordinated by UN agencies, the provincial government, and nearby military forces in terms of both the PRT and Coalition Forces (CF). In the immediate aftermath of the flood, five working groups were established for coordinated relief, headed by the PRT and CF, the Ministry of Public Health, UNAMA, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, and the UN Office of Project Services (a familiar partner to DACAAR). The PRT was in this way set to work assessing the integrity of the dam and the cause of the incident.

July 2006: DACAAR weathers additional ambushes, forced to relocate

As the security situation worsens, DACAAR workers once again take the brunt of ambushes, this time escaping unharmed but with the threat of worse. On July 2, three DACAAR staff were stopped en route to a project site in Barakat valley and warned to cease work, followed by a series of shots. Also in Barakat, a large group of masked and armed men ransacked the field office on July 10, threatening to kill the staff unless activities were ceased, setting fire to a vehicle, and leaving with mobile phones, motorbikes, and other DACAAR equipment.\(^\text{42}\)

Participant: Even with the PRT in theater, the resurgence of security threats and attacks in the province has been cause for serious concern. What is the cost of relocation, to the project

\(^{41}\)DACAAR, “DACAAR’s position on relations to PRTs in Afghanistan.”

\(^{42}\)ReliefWeb, “Afghanistan: Attacks Force DACAAR to Suspend Activities and Relocate Field Office in Ghazni.”
and beneficiaries, versus the risk of keeping workers in the area? How can, or has, the presence of the PRT helped to ameliorate the situation, if at all? Would further coordination with the team bring greater security or risk additional threats?

Actual Response: DACAAR suspended activities in 11 villages in Barakat valley, and further shifted its field office in Barakat valley to Ghazni city. The organization had been active in the valley since 1999, and since 2005 had begun implementing the Afghan government’s National Solidarity Programme through the establishment of 11 community development councils. DACAAR continued various other projects and emergency relief throughout the province security allowing, but currently has no permanent program in the province.43

Ghazni Province since 2006

As is specified in their own mandates and in numerous referenced guidelines, PRTs are to provide humanitarian assistance primarily when the situation is too dangerous or unapproachable for civilian workers, or when the project at hand is large enough to require the resources and structure more readily available through military channels, heavily emphasizing large-scale infrastructure. Ghazni province continues to fall into both categories. Though DACAAR persisted in providing relief efforts in times of crisis, such as flooding in August 2006, the organization does not currently list ongoing projects in the province.44 All else aside, it is also important to keep in mind DACAAR’s strong stance in support of local ownership, encouraging a smooth and ready transition of the project and, more often than not, running the project itself through local workers.

Meanwhile, PRT Ghazni continued its efforts with an unabated focus on supporting local governance, serving as a neutral party or “honest broker” between resident ethnicity groups and in that way aiming to provide a more positive, stable, and reassuring presence.45 The PRT, joined in its last five years by a Polish ISAF contingent, also funded and implemented numerous building projects, including new and rehabilitated schools, bridges, roads, and irrigation systems. The joint American-Polish base held a closing ceremony in 2013 in the midst of ISAF pullouts, to be shortly replaced by the newly installed Resolute Security Mission.

Reflection

Considering the events highlighted, what did the actors most need from each other? For instance, the PRT could likely most benefit from DACAAR’s knowledge through local workers and years of experience in the field. DACAAR’s security concerns, however, and repeated threats against the group led them to further stress their operational independence in hopes of maintaining local support, rather than risk being viewed as another aspect of Western invasion. Would you (the participant) continue DACAAR’s chosen strategy of strictly information sharing when necessary? Might you increase or lessen engagement along the way, and if so, what consequences might you have to anticipate in response? Most importantly in all of these

43 DACAAR, “Coverage: Current Geographical, Historical Geographical, Beneficiaries, and Funding.”
44 ReliefWeb, “DACAAR Provides Emergency Assistance after Floods Hit Eastern Afghanistan.”
considerations, do the possible benefits – for actors and local civilian beneficiaries alike – outweigh the possible negative consequences?

**Conclusion**

**Challenges in Transition**

With the official conclusion of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan came the question of transition, a process that many – civilians, military, aid workers, policy makers, local Afghanis – had both long awaited and dreaded. How successful was the intervention? And, before that question can be answered, how does one measure success? Each actor had a different understanding of “success” and how to achieve it, as demonstrated through the background narrative and guided experience.

Since the close of mission in 2014 and transitioning to ANSF with the support of NATO’s Resolute Solution mission, Afghanistan has seen the rise of a new, democratically elected president, and continued the conversation towards broader development and stability. The Taliban insurgency, however, persists in posing a substantial opposition to the national government and the underfunded ANSF, as do charges of corruption and debate surrounding the reintegration and voice of IDPs, intellectuals returning from the safety of living abroad, and warlords fighting to maintain their land, militias, and power. Meanwhile, NGOs like DACAAR press on where safety allows, and projects left behind by ISAF forces and the PRTs waiver between real usability and falling into disrepair, particularly given the lack of local ownership and stakeholders in their initial construction. Still, the installation of a democratic government, relatively peaceful runoff elections and turnover of power, and the ongoing push towards stability and broader development goals promise to spur the nation on the long road ahead.

**Beyond Afghanistan**

Responses during and after ISAF’s PRT missions in Afghanistan speak overwhelmingly of the importance of clearly defined and separated roles in responding to humanitarian need and emergency situations; military and non-military actors alike recognize the frustration and added complexity of PRT missions that were neither clearly defined nor uniformly enacted. Feedback on PRT support in the realms of security and, to some extent, governance, has been largely positive, but inevitably overshadowed by the confusion of misguided relief efforts, resulting risk to civilian aid workers and their projects, and the frequently short-term mentality of military-led rebuilding efforts.

Granted, military presence in such situations is never meant to be long-term and they are best suited for the quick, high impact projects that were stressed in revamped mission statements – nation building, however, is unquestionably a long-term process. The mentalities, resources, and skill sets of both military and non-military actors thereby form crucial pieces of the ideal solution. Even those NGOs most vehemently maintaining separation from co-located military teams recognized the need for security-focused intervention in the face of the insurgency. Sometimes, the situation simply does not allow the presence of civilian relief efforts.

It is for this reason that guidelines have been established, as above discussed, though they are far from perfect – as is, more concerning, their implementation in theater. Calls for clarified mission statements, increased training for all actors prior to arrival, and greater incorporation of
civilian representatives have all been discussed, and in some cases worked towards, as the initial intervention progressed. Keeping a steady eye on implementation thereof and open communications in the field, however, remains to be seen.
Appendix

Figure 1: DACAAR’s position on relations to PRTs in Afghanistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-existence</th>
<th>Information exchange</th>
<th>Collaboration</th>
<th>Common Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRTs and NGOs present in the same</td>
<td>PRTs and NGOs exchange information with each other concerning</td>
<td>Direct collaboration between PRTs and NGOs on agreed activities, but</td>
<td>Projects implemented jointly or by NGOs, financed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>province, but have no direct relation</td>
<td>security, reconstruction, and development issues</td>
<td>implemented separately</td>
<td>by PRTs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Attacks against aid workers in Afghanistan, Jan. 2012 – July 2014
Resources

General Civ-Mil


Guidelines


Afghanistan


Mil/ PRTs


DACAAR
