

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan: Filling the Gaps in Peace-building

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I. Introduction

1. The Scope of the Research

The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are ‘non-kinetic’ operations carried out jointly by small number of lightly armed military personnel and civilian staff from the diplomatic community and development agencies to promote governance, security and development in the post-9.11 Afghanistan. This paper sheds light on the functions of PRTs as a stopgap agent in the peace-building process in Afghanistan, and defines PRTs as small, inter-agency organizations that are (re)invented as a new form of civil-military coordination to maximize synergic effects among various agencies working towards peace-building in Afghanistan.

When the first PRT was established in Gardez in November 2002, such an effort was considered to be an idiosyncratic option for a specific security situation in Afghanistan, but in 14 November 2005, Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice made a surprise appearance at the inauguration of the first PRT in Iraq announcing that the United States was going to establish 15 PRTs in Iraq.ⁱ Moreover, on 10 January 2007, President George W. Bush announced in his new Iraq strategy that he would double the number of PRTs in Iraq to help accelerate Iraq’s transition to self-reliance.ⁱⁱ

While the notion of PRTs has already extended beyond the boundary of Afghanistan, this paper focuses on PRTs in Afghanistan, which have already passed their sixth-year anniversary since the inauguration of the first series of U.S.-led PRTs established between late 2002 and early 2003. Since then scholars, practitioners and policymakers in the United States and Europe have presented many arguments both for and against the utility of the PRT model. At the first appearance, PRTs received a volume of harsh criticisms from the humanitarian community working in Afghanistan, but a number of recent reports on the performance of PRTs indicated their utility in various aspects of peace-building in Afghanistan.ⁱⁱⁱ For example, one of the most

outspoken commentators on PRTs argues that although the current attitudes of many NGOs in the field towards PRTs can still be characterized either as mistrust or indifference, a position of ‘principled pragmatism’ has emerged among NGOs, and the NGO community has provided feedbacks to the military counterpart with an aim of achieving greater synergy between PRTs and NGOs.^{iv}

Nevertheless, these arguments were based on anecdotal evidences and put forward in the absence of a shared understanding of the activities of PRTs and their effect upon the peace-building process in Afghanistan, much less, agreed standards and measures of effectiveness, which are necessary to commence a fruitful dialogue between divergent perspectives.^v Furthermore, current debates on PRTs failed to be built upon the existing discourse on civil-military coordination and cooperation in peace and stability operations despite the fact that PRTs are a form of civil-military operation tailored to suit the situation in Afghanistan.

Hence, this paper purports to present a base-line analysis for developing a set of criteria for evaluating the performance of PRTs as a mode of inter-agency civil-military coordinating mechanism by referring to a discussion on civil-military coordination and cooperation in peace operations.^{vi} This paper seeks to provide an objective review of the concept and the performance of PRTs as a stopgap mechanism in the peace-building process in Afghanistan. By so doing, it seeks to contribute to a current debate on whether PRTs are effective tools in peace and stability operations, and on whether the PRT model represents a new form for civil-military coordination. In short, this paper supports an argument that the PRTs need a systematic approach to measuring their effectiveness.^{vii}

2. The Objectives of the Research

This paper is interested in evaluating the effectiveness of PRTs as a tool for what they are designed, i.e., a tool for filling the gaps that existed in the peace-building process in Afghanistan. The *PRT Handbook*, which was prepared jointly by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), acknowledges that the peace-building process in Afghanistan faces a problem in the middle transitional stage, and many areas of the country seems to be ‘stuck’ there, that is, while kinetic operations

are mostly over, yet the area has not progressed significantly and there is at risk of ‘slipping back’ if security forces are removed.^{viii} The *PRT Handbook* goes on to argue that this problem exists because often no actors aside from the military can operate in unstable areas. For the military to pass responsibility to appropriate civilian actors, it must deliver some level of stability in the area so that civilian actors can operate. However, the mission of transition assistance is beyond the expertise and capabilities of the military. Such expertise resides in civilian agencies, yet because of the instability these agencies are not able to operate in these areas using their traditional program delivery mechanisms.^{ix}

This problem is often articulated as the *Security-Development Dilemma*. In most of the post-conflict reconstruction effort of failed states, the gap between security and development approaches undermines a healthy progress in peace-building. As it was articulated clearly in the *2005 Afghanistan’s MDG Report* that, “Development without security is unachievable, and security without development is meaningless”, the peace-building process in Afghanistan seems to have fallen into this dilemma.^x Indeed, it was for this reason that the concept of PRT was invented, and PRTs were installed as a mechanism that could solve this dilemma by filling the gap that exists between security and development approaches by creating a framework that allows civilian and military actors to work together in a non-permissive environment to produce unity of effort and synergetic effects. The *PRT Handbook* states clearly that, “A PRT is a civil-military institution that is able to penetrate the more unstable and insecure areas because of its military component and is able to stabilize these areas because of the combined capabilities of its diplomacy, military, and economic components.”^{xi} Hence, the designers of the PRT concept also sought to solve the problem of civil-military coordination, or the *Civil-Military Gap*, by integrating civilian and military components into a single entity. In fact, PRTs are seen by many as a useful structure to coordinate military and civilian efforts in building a stable, and desirable government in Afghanistan.^{xii}

This paper focuses on potential benchmarks for assessing the effectiveness of PRTs, that is, PRTs’ performance in filling the two key gaps in peace-building: the *Civil-Military Gap*, and the *Security-Development Gap*. The paper aims to evaluate the performance of PRTs by addressing the following research question: Have PRTs been

effective in filling the Civil-Military Gap, and the Security-Development Gap in peace-building process in Afghanistan? Before turning into a review of PRTs' performance in filling these gaps, a brief description of the security and political environment surrounding the post-9.11 Afghanistan as well as the demography of PRTs will be in order.

II. PRTs in Afghanistan

1. Post-9.11 Afghanistan

September 11, 2001 is the date to be remembered which changed the picture of international security environment dramatically. The United States attacked Taliban-controlled Afghanistan in retaliation for providing shelter to the Al-Qaeda, which was suspected to have involved in the September 11 attack. On 7 October 2001, the United States formed a Coalition with the United Kingdom, and started the 'Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).' On the ground, acting in concert with the Coalition's maneuver, the Northern Alliance (a coalition of anti-Taliban warlords in Afghanistan) initiated a series of attacks against the Taliban regime.

The Northern Alliance overthrew the Taliban forces in many parts of the country with the support of the Coalition forces, and in November 2001 the Northern Alliance occupied the capital city, Kabul. The collapse of the Taliban regime led to *the Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions*, which is known as the Bonn Agreement of 2001. The warlords who were under the Northern Alliance and other anti-Taliban groups acted outside Afghanistan signed the Bonn Agreement, which defined the political process for a new Afghanistan.

On the other hand, the United Nations adopted what Lakhdar Brahimi called a 'light footprint' approach and set up a civilian political mission: UNAMA.^{xiii} Although UNAMA did not include military component in its organization, two distinct international military forces were operating in Afghanistan: one was the U.S.-led multinational Coalition force under OEF, and the other was ISAF under UN Security Council mandate. The Coalition force was still engaging in war-fighting with the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda in the south and east of the country. Initially, ISAF had five thousand troops on the ground from 19 countries and served as a peacekeeping force,

but its responsibility was limited to providing security in Kabul and its surrounding area.^{xiv}

While the Hamid Karzai regime seemed to have gained a certain level of legitimacy through the political process stipulated in the Bonn Agreement, the security situation in Afghanistan remained ‘non-permissive,’ especially in its remote provinces. Various warlords maintained de facto control of the most of provinces in Afghanistan, and insurgency movements by the remnants of Taliban and other anti-government factions did not seem to end. It has been more than seven years since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, but the U.S. and the Karzai government are still making strenuous efforts to counter-insurgency. Numerous incident reports on security problems and insurgency attacks can be found almost daily in the south and the east of the country although the situation has been relatively calm in the north and the west.

2. Overview of PRT

The roles and missions of PRTs operating under the Coalition force and ISAF were stipulated in the *Terms of Reference for CFC and ISAF PRTs in Afghanistan* adopted by the PRT Executive Steering Committee in 27 January 2005. According to that document, PRTs were formed to assist the Afghan government 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.^{xv} PRTs were not mandated to operate proactively in creating secure environment, but they were expected to play supportive roles through assisting the Afghan government’s security forces to fulfill such a task.

Initially, PRTs were operating under the Coalition forces, but in October 2003 the UN Security Council authorized the expansion of the NATO/ISAF mission beyond Kabul and PRTs were beginning to operate under the ISAF command.^{xvi} When ISAF completed its nation-wide expansion in 5 October 2006, all PRTs were put under the ISAF command. As of 10 June 2008, 26 PRTs are functioning, 12 of which are operated by the U.S. and deployed mainly in the east, and the remaining 14 are led by Canada, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and they are mostly located in the south, north and west of Afghanistan.^{xvii}

The concept of PRT was introduced by the United States in November 2002, as coalition commanders began to prepare the transition of OEF from its war-fighting phase to its stabilization and reconstruction phases.^{xviii} The concept was conceived to meet the contradictory requirements. There was an urgent need to expand the legitimacy of a newly installed central government to the provinces, and enhance the security situation outside of Kabul so that reconstruction could take place in all parts of Afghanistan, and the Afghan people could appreciate peace dividends. It was recognized that a secure environment would offer opportunities for greater development and in turn increased development could improve the security environment. At the same time, however, the United States could not afford to deploy a robust peacekeeping force throughout the country as its forces were bogged into the operation in Iraq. In addition, U.S. officials convinced that a large presence of foreign military troops would be counter-effective in achieving public security and public support in Afghanistan.^{xix}

Under such circumstances, the concept of PRT was developed essentially as a tool for transition assistance. It was intended to be a ‘hand-off’ strategy through which the capacity of the new Afghan government to govern themselves, the Afghan security sector to provide and maintain stability and security in the country, and the Afghan institutions to lead long-term sustainable development would be enhanced so that the involvement of the United States could become no longer necessary. In short, PRTs were sought to address concurrently the three key dimensions of peace-building, i.e., governance, security and development. PRTs were designed to generate synergistic effects of three important agencies on the ground, i.e., Diplomacy, Defense and Development (often called as ‘3D’). PRTs adopt an interagency 3D approach to tackle with three-dimensional challenges of peace-building.^{xx} Indeed, the concept of PRT provided a way to facilitate the integration of three essential agencies for peace-building and presented a model to institutionalize such an interagency 3D approach.

III. Civil-Military Gap in Afghanistan

The U.S. government published an interagency assessment of PRTs entitled *Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: An Interagency Assessment* (hereafter, *Assessment*), which identified three criteria for measuring the effectiveness of PRTs, which included civil-military coordination.^{xxi} According to the *Assessment*, U.S.-led PRTs had the following shortcomings with regard to their performance in civil-military

coordination:

- The lack of explicit guidance led to confusion about civilian and military roles in the U.S.-led PRT.
- The military commander of the U.S.-led PRT needed to proactively incorporate non-Department of Defense (DOD) representative into PRT leadership decisions or the goals of the PRT suffered.
- A shortage of staff, limited technical and managerial support from Kabul, and inadequate mechanisms for project implementation undermined effectiveness of the U.S.-led PRTs.
- As the operational center of gravity for reconstruction and governance shifted to the provinces, U.S. Government supporting programs did not keep pace.
- Combined team training for military and civilian staff proved essential.

This *Assessment* is based on an assumption that the lack of close cooperation undermined the effectiveness of PRTs, and it advocates for a close civil-military cooperation. Such a view, however, ignores the current debate on civil-military relationships and fails to address the problems of ‘humanitarian dilemma.’ The humanitarian community in general has serious concern over the problem of blurring the fundamental distinction between the military and non-military activities. Nonetheless, as humanitarian agencies began to face with increasing operational challenges as well as greater risks and threats for their workers in the field, such a reality on the ground has gradually necessitated various forms of civil-military cooperation for humanitarian operations.^{xxii} While this *Assessment* focused on the interagency relationship within the U.S. Government, the real challenge existed not so much within a PRT but rather between PRTs and a wider aid community. One of the major sources of tension between PRTs and the humanitarian community has been the recognition of the humanitarian community that the concept of PRT violates the principles of humanitarian assistance.

1. Civil-Military Tensions

At the early stages of PRT evolution, the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), a NGO umbrella organization operating in Afghanistan, made a series of relevant, constructive and realistic comments and recommendations to the performance of PRTs. For example, ACBAR once argued that:

“We recommend the development and rapid implementation of plans that will anchor all PRTs exclusively in the area of Security Sector Reform. Specifically PRTs should focus on supporting the DDR [Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration] process and the training of the Afghan National Army and police. We recommend ending PRT involvement in humanitarian assistance-type projects and a shift to selecting projects that focus on practical measures to strengthen the government’s authority provincially, such as the rebuilding of police stations, customs houses and local administrative offices. To this end, we call for a change to the PRT mandate which should be clearly and precisely defined. The name of PRTs should be changed to Provincial Stability Teams for greater clarification.”^{xxiii}

This list of recommendations indicates that the concerns of the humanitarian community with PRT revolved around the fact that PRT is a joint civil-military endeavor that involves military, political and development actors, and that some PRTs have undertaken the delivery of relief aids and Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) to the local population. While most of the recommendations were implemented by PRTs, various forms of civil-military tensions such as PRTs’ orientation towards ‘hearts and minds’ operations, and humanitarians’ concern for the loss of humanitarian space, remained between PRTs and the humanitarian community in Afghanistan. In fact, PRTs’ involvement in relief delivery and QIPs has been the major point of contention as it blurs the lines between the humanitarian and the military.

2. The Gap between the Civil-Military Guidelines and the PRT Guiding Principles

These civil-military tensions existed in Afghanistan were caused by some noticeable differences in operating principles of the humanitarian agencies and the military organizations. The existing guidelines advocated the separation of the humanitarian and the military domains, and admitted joint civil-military operations only as a last resort. For example, the section on ‘Joint Civil-Military Relief Operations’ in the *Civil-Military Relationships in Complex Emergencies* (IASC Reference Paper) stated that:^{xxiv}

- Any operations undertaken jointly by humanitarian agencies and military forces may have a negative impact on the perception of the humanitarian agencies’ impartiality and neutrality and hence affect their ability to operate effectively throughout a complex emergency. Therefore, any joint civil-military cooperation should be determined by a thorough assessment of the actual needs on the ground and a review of civilian humanitarian capacities to respond to them in a timely manner. To the extent that joint operations with the military cannot be avoided,

they may be employed only as a means of last resort, and must adhere to the principles provided in the *Guidelines on The Use of Military and Civil Defense Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies* (MCDA Guidelines).

- One must be aware that the military have different objectives, interests, schedules and priorities from the humanitarian community. Relief operations rendered by military forces could be conditional and could cease when the mission of the military forces changes, the unit moves or if the assisted population becomes uncooperative. Such action by the military can also be conducted primarily based on the needs and goals of the force and its mission, rather than the needs of the local population.

On the other hand, the PRT Guiding Principles, which advocate civil-military integration to generate unity of effort among various actors on the ground, violate the existing civil-military guidelines. The PRT Guiding Principles have six components: (1) focus upon improving stability; (2) operate as an integrated military-civilian organization; (3) work to a common purpose or end-state with unity of effort; (4) ensure that projects do not duplicate the work of others; (5) lay the foundations for long-term sustainable changes; and (6) be aware of and respect, civil military sensitivities. The second principle in PRT Guiding Principles does not seem to match with the NATO CIMIC doctrine, although all PRTs now operate under NATO/ISAF command and NATO acknowledges that its efforts should avoid adverse impact on the work of the humanitarian organizations, and their neutrality and impartiality. While most of the items in the PRT Guiding Principles remain within the parameter of the existing guidelines for civil-military relationships, the fundamental approach of civil-military ‘integration’ in the PRT concept contradicts with the core argument of ‘separation’ in existing guidelines.

3. Filling the Civil-Military Gap

This gap in fundamental civil-military relationships between the humanitarian’s ‘separation’ and PRTs’ ‘integration’ can be represented by the debate over the ‘humanitarian space’ or the effectiveness of adherence to the humanitarian principles in establishing and maintaining the access to the people in need of humanitarian assistance.

In general, it is important to preserve the ‘humanitarian space,’ which has been critical for humanitarian agencies to operate effectively in non-permissive

environment. Thus, the concern of humanitarian community over the loss of ‘humanitarian space’ needs to be address adequately if PRTs are to be effective in filling the Civil-Military Gap. At the same time, however, one must also recognize the fact that PRTs were created to meet specific needs and challenges apparent in the peace-building process in Afghanistan, one of which can be the security-development gap. In other words, it is important to find out a happy combination of civil-military interactions in which both issues of ‘humanitarian space’ and the security-development gap can be addressed adequately.

A key to find such a combination and answer to the civil-military debate over ‘humanitarian space’ exists in a local-centered approach, which was advocated by Jane Barry: “the civil-military debate needs to be realigned to centre first and foremost on the people in need in a humanitarian response.”^{xxv} The humanitarian community has been adherent to the humanitarian principles because it believes that such an approach allows it to maintain its ability to operate effectively throughout a complex emergency. The local-centered approach remind us that the most important rule for the humanitarian community is that it can maintain the access to the vulnerable people so that it can save and help them. It is clear, however, that strict adherence to the humanitarian principles does not always guarantee humanitarian space to humanitarian agencies in Afghanistan. In order to establish and maintain humanitarian space effectively on the ground, it is important to understand what would constitute the foundations for humanitarian space in each case as they can vary in each circumstance. Is political impartiality of humanitarian agencies essential factors in creating ‘humanitarian space’? Is blurring the line between the humanitarian agencies and a certain military organization operating in the scene detrimental to the preservation of all ‘humanitarian space’ in the area? If the answer to these questions is yes, then the PRTs may have to maintain a clear distinction between them and the humanitarian agencies.^{xxvi}

On the other hand, if the strict adherence to the humanitarian principle of neutrality and impartiality does not guarantee the safe passage to the vulnerable people in need of assistance, then there is a room for considering civil-military cooperation and/or even civil-military joint operations. If aid effectiveness and efficiency are keys to the creation of humanitarian space, and if cooperation with the military enhances the ability of humanitarian agencies to deliver, then civil-military cooperation is a way

forward and PRTs can fill in the Civil-Military Gap. If indiscriminate attacks like suicide bombing and IED (Improvised Explosive Device) by terrorist groups and the deliberate targeting of aid workers by the criminal elements are the causes of the loss of humanitarian space, armed escort can be an alternative to ‘voluntary’ humanitarian space for humanitarian agencies. However, it is not certain whether PRTs can serve as an effective vehicle for forceful reopen of humanitarian space.

The *Assessment* points out that PRTs can be an effective tool for filling the civil (humanitarian)-military gap in the situation where humanitarian agencies are unable to operate due to the loss of humanitarian space.^{xxvii} While some PRTs, to a certain extent, have proven to be successful in this endeavor, a lack of sufficient civilian capacity and resources within PRTs together with poor relationship between PRTs and the humanitarian community prohibited PRTs to exercise their full potential as a gap-filling mechanism. This point was also acknowledged by the *Assessment*: PRTs lacked needed resources (civilian expertise and funding), suffered a shortage of staff, limited technical and managerial support from Kabul (i.e., PRTs lacked ‘reach-back’ capability), and put us with inadequate mechanism for project implementation.^{xxviii}

PRTs can also be a valuable tool for filling the civil (humanitarian)-military gap even in the situation where humanitarian agencies are operating effectively, by performing the complementary roles such as facilitating SSR/DDR and supporting large-scale infrastructure projects, which serve, in the long run, as catalysts for sustainable development. Indeed, this complementary effect of PRTs can also work to fill in the security-development gap, which will be reviewed in the next section. Nevertheless, PRTs lacked sufficient communication and coordination with external civilian actors operating outside of their compound but acting in the same area such as UNAMA, bilateral donor agencies and NGOs, which, in effect, undermined the complementary effect of PRTs. This point was highlighted in the *Assessment* stating that many national level programs that existed in the provinces were poorly coordinated with PRTs.^{xxix}

IV. Security-Development Gap in Afghanistan

1. Security Threats

Threats to security and stability of Afghanistan can be divided into two. First,

Afghanistan faces threats from the rivalry between tribes and warlords, and from criminal elements including drug dealers. Against such threats, building and strengthening the capacity of the Afghan state apparatus to deal with internal public security problems is a way forward. Capacity development of the Afghan security forces—Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP)—has been initiated under G8's SSR framework, in which the U.S. takes the lead in the ANA training, and Germany undertakes the ANP reform. At the same time, it is also important to weaken the strength of warlords and criminal groups through the DDR of combatants, and the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG).

The other source of threats comes from anti-government insurgency forces and terrorist organizations. Against this sort of threats, the SSR has proven to be a useful step as the most effective counter-insurgency strategy is the creation of an environment in which local people feel secured and protected by the state. Indeed, the local people need to have confidence in the current regime that the Taliban or other anti-government insurgency forces will not overthrow the regime. Thus, it is vital that the international community maintains its firm commitment to support the incumbent government, if we agree that keeping the current political framework is the best option available for the peace-building process in Afghanistan.

Another effective way to counter the threats from the anti-government forces would be to increase the legitimacy of the Afghan government as well as its effectiveness to deliver services to the people. Increased local support to the central government can create government's strongholds that will work against the anti-government insurgency. Nevertheless, the peace-building process in Afghanistan faced a major challenge: in order to provide development assistance, security must be provided, but to improve security, development assistance must improve living conditions of the people.

2. The Security-Development Gap

The security-development gap emerged as a result of security and development vacuum that surfaced in the post-Taliban Afghanistan. First, the U.S.-led attacks on Taliban forces created a power vacuum in Afghanistan. The Afghan interim government did not have sufficient capacity to fill in such a vacuum. Instead, warlords soon filled the

vacuum and started controlling the provinces. The international community created ISAF to assist the Afghan government in maintaining security, but initially ISAF's area of responsibility was limited to Kabul and its surrounding area (UNSCR 1386, 20/12/01). Off course, DDR and SSR (ANF and ANP reform) were carried out to tackle this challenge, but the influence of the central government remained limited within the vicinity of Kabul and the security situation in the provinces (especially in the south and east) remained volatile.

This power vacuum was exacerbated further by indiscriminate attacks such as IED or the deliberate targeting of aid workers by the Al-Qaeda, insurgency forces and criminal elements, which resulted in the loss of 'humanitarian space' in many parts of Afghanistan. The lack of security and the loss of humanitarian space undermined the work of civilian aid agencies. Increasing threats from the Taliban forces prevented civilian aid agencies to work in the south and southeast provinces where humanitarian and development aids were most needed not only from the perspective humanitarian needs but also from the perspective of solving security-development dilemma. People must feel 'peace dividends' otherwise the incumbent government will lose their support, which can create a room for insurgency forces such as Taliban to maneuver, and undermine the government effort to improve security.

3. Filling the Security-Development Gap

Although the security planners at the Pentagon seemed to have realized that military victory at the battlefield must be followed by vigorous developmental efforts to fill in the security-development gap and to win the peace in Afghanistan. They knew very well that the military victory is not the end. The U.S. Government needed to win the peace in Afghanistan. To such an end, the U.S. must win the 'hearts and minds' of the Afghan people by delivering peace dividends to the Afghan people through relief aids and development projects.^{xxx} This is the main motive for the creation of PRTs. PRTs were invented to bridge the gap between military-led stability operations and civilian-led reconstruction activities.^{xxxii} PRTs are expected to resolve the Security-Development Dilemma by combining stability activities of the military with reconstruction activities of the civilian aid agencies.

PRTs are transitional measures designed to create humanitarian access to

people living in high-risk areas where civilian aid agencies are unable or unwilling to enter due to safety concerns. PRTs can fill this security-development gap by delivering peace dividends in a non-permissive environment. As a gap-filling agent, PRTs fulfilled three roles: (1) on-the-ground funding agencies for local implementing partners; (2) on-site program managers for national-level development projects; and (3) QIP implementers. PRTs' civilian component, as an on-site program manager, can undertake or facilitate bigger and longer-term development projects, which require few years before they can bring visible peace dividends to the population. PRTs' first and third roles can fill in such a gap by funding local contractors to deliver 'peace dividends' through QIPs and development projects and/or implementing these projects by themselves.

While the third role often received harsh criticism from the humanitarian community as QIPs delivered by PRTs could undermine the work of civilian agencies by blurring the line between them and the PRTs, it can be argued that delivering peace dividends to people in remote areas through PRT's QIPs have proven to be a useful channel to fill in the security-development gap when there is no alternative civilian capacity available in the area.^{xxxii} Indeed, the *Assessment* underlined this point stating that PRT delivered reconstruction and humanitarian assistance in remote, violent areas where no other development actors have been able or willing to operate.^{xxxiii} The *Handbook* also pointed out that PRTs have the ability to quickly and directly implement projects in remote communities.^{xxxiv}

Having said this, QIPs cannot be a substitute for sustainable long-term development projects. The security and development dilemma cannot be resolved by QIPs alone. QIPs are merely stopgap measures that can help to maintain the momentum for peace-building among the local population and may keep their confidence in the process for a while. Likewise, PRTs should not be a replacement for effective local security forces. Hence, it is extremely important that the security-development gap be filled or bridged from the security side also. In this context, the vigorous effort by PRTs to facilitate SSR, especially training of the ANP, is a meaningful step towards preparing for the handover of the security tasks to the local authority. Many PRTs have police trainers and/or police mentors in their civilian component and provide training to the ANP. Some PRTs even conducted joint patrolling with the ANP.

PRTs also have assisted the DDR program and the Heavy Weapons Cantonment,^{xxxv} and maintained their commitment to assist the DIAG program. The *Assessment* also recognized that PRT made significant contribution to security through their presence, and through support to the ANP and ANA, DDR program and DIAG program.^{xxxvi} In short, PRTs have contributed positively to the creation of a more stable environment in which civilian agencies including NGOs can work without severe safety restrictions, especially in the north and east of the country.

However, one should not confuse PRTs' primary mandate with the task of security provider. PRTs are not security providers. PRTs alone cannot provide security in the area. In fact, PRTs are most appropriate in a mid-range of violence where instability still precludes heavy NGO involvement, but where violence is not so acute that combat operations predominate.^{xxxvii} The peace-building process in Afghanistan still lacks an effective security guarantor and the local capacity to provide human security to all. In order to fill up in the security-development gap, the Afghan people must be convinced that the Taliban will not return after international assistance has been withdrawn, and that their lives will be better under the current government than during the era of the Taliban regime. PRTs can be an effective transitional measure to meet with some pieces of these requirements, but PRTs are not the panacea. In order to win the peace in Afghanistan, we need more fully-fledged PRTs and perhaps something more than PRTs.

V. Conclusion

The paper aims to evaluate the performance of PRTs by addressing the following research question: Have PRTs been effective in filling the Civil-Military Gap, and the Security-Development Gap in peace-building process in Afghanistan?

1. Civil-Military Gap

The civil-military gap was recapitulated by the debate over the 'humanitarian space' or the effectiveness of adherence to the humanitarian principles in establishing and maintaining the access to the people in need of humanitarian assistance. In this paper, it was argued that some noticeable differences in operating principles of the humanitarian agencies and the military organizations caused a major civil-military tension in

Afghanistan.

Although the existing guidelines of civil-military relationships emphasize the separation of humanitarian assistance from the military operations, the *PRT Guiding Principles*, in essence, advocate civil-military integration to generate unity of effort among various actors on the ground. While most of the items in the PRT Guiding Principles remain within the parameter of the existing guidelines for civil-military relationships, the fundamental approach of civil-military ‘integration’ in the PRT concept contradicts with the core argument of ‘separation’ in existing guidelines. This paper explored why humanitarian agencies have been cautious about blurring the line between them and the military organizations.

This paper underscored the importance of preserving the ‘humanitarian space’, and argued that PRTs could be an effective tool for filling the civil (humanitarian)-military gap in the situation where humanitarian agencies are unable to operate due to the loss of humanitarian space. Moreover, PRTs can be a valuable tool even in the situation where humanitarian agencies are operating effectively, by performing the complementary roles such as facilitating SSR/DDR and supporting large-scale infrastructure projects. The paper concluded, however, that a lack of sufficient civilian capacity and resources within PRTs together with poor relationship between PRTs and the humanitarian community prohibited PRTs to exercise their full potential as a gap-filling mechanism.

2. Security-Development Gap

This paper argued that the concept of PRT, which can be characterized as civil-military integration, was invented to cope with the security-development gap that emerged in the post-Taliban Afghanistan. It can be concluded that PRTs began to fill in such a gap by engaging themselves in stopgap activities such as promoting SSR/DDR, delivering ‘peace dividends’ through QIPs and development projects. As a gap-filling agent, PRTs fulfilled three roles: (1) on-the-ground funding agencies for local implementing partners; (2) on-site program managers for national-level development projects; and (3) QIP implementers. PRTs have proven to be a useful channel to fill in the security-development gap when there is no alternative civilian capacity available in the area.

After all, QIPs are merely stopgap measures that can help to maintain the momentum for peace-building among the local population and may keep their confidence in the process for a while. However, QIPs cannot be a substitute for sustainable long-term development projects. The security and development dilemma cannot be resolved by QIPs alone. Likewise, PRTs should not be a replacement for effective local security forces. Hence, the vigorous effort by PRTs to facilitate SSR, especially training of the ANP, is a meaningful step towards preparing for the handover of the security tasks to the local authority.

3. Governance is a Key

Unlike the humanitarian agencies whose primary goals are focused on avoiding humanitarian crisis and alleviating human suffering, the scope of peace-building is much wider and more comprehensive. The nature of the complexity in peace-building in which PRTs are designed to operate calls for a more comprehensive and integrated approach to generate desired effects and produce unity of effort among various initiatives.

Although PRTs have been at least trying to address or in some cases able to fill the civil-military gap and the security-development gap in the peace-building process in Afghanistan, PRTs have not addressed the pressing need for addressing the governance problem in Afghanistan. The original concept of PRT stipulated that the PRT model sought the integration of the three fundamental aspects of peace-building: security, development and governance. At the same time, PRTs are stability operations not capable of assuming wider peace-building tasks such as good governance, rule of law, public administration and so on. It is true that some PRTs helped extend the authority of the central government by providing technical and organizational support to governors and provincial ministries as indicated in the *PRT Assessment*,^{xxxviii} but PRTs did not have an effective means to develop local capacity to govern.

Clearly, one of the most critical missing pieces in the Afghan peace-building process, which has been identified repeatedly, is the presence of effective local governments, both at the national level and the provincial level. The lack of local capacity to undertake the whole set of governance tasks and to become responsible stakeholders in the area of governance undermined the work of PRTs. This is not a new

problem that is unique to the peace-building process in Afghanistan. Indeed, international community has experienced similar problems in other peace-building processes such as in Timor-Leste, Sierra Leone, Liberia and other places. The problem is particularly acute and more difficult in Afghanistan, though, as civilian ‘governance’ experts have been unable to enter remote provinces due to the security situation on the ground.

The international community is beginning to address this problem by trying to include civilian experts in the field of good governance, rule of law and public administration in PRTs, but the international community has not been able to come up with a magic formula for recruiting needed civilian experts at home. The UN Country Team in Afghanistan, particularly UNDP, should have appropriate civilian capacity to deal with the difficult task of developing local capacity for good governance. PRTs need to improve their relationship with UNMA and the UN Country Team in this respect. The challenge is that PRTs adopt the lead-nation approach in which civilian activities of each PRT are led by a lead-nation on bilateral bases and there has been no mechanism within PRTs that would allow UN staff to assume critical civilian roles with or within a PRT although ISAF is a UN-mandated peace operation established by the UN Security Council Resolution.

The last seven years of bitter experience in Afghanistan proved that it requires more than the delivery of peace dividends through development project to win the peace in Afghanistan. PRTs cannot win the hearts and minds of local people or the local acceptance by simply delivering QIPs and other types of development projects. Development projects alone cannot generate confidence of local people in the current administration. The current administration, both at the national level and the provincial level, need to prove that they are legitimate and effective, and thus the current peace-building process will lead to stability and the better future. To win the peace in Afghanistan, the current peace-building process must be regarded as trustworthy and the current government as legitimate by the Afghan people. Indeed, development without governance is meaningless, and governance without development is unachievable. But governance without security is unachievable, and security without governance is meaningless. So far, the international community created PRTs to fill in the civil-military gap and the security-development gap, but it has not been able to address

this security-governance gap, or the local capacity gap. In fact, local capacity development is a key to successful handover of peace-building responsibility to local authority and thus an effective transition strategy for PRTs, but nobody is out there in the remote provinces except for poorly equipped PRTs.

Notes

ⁱ Polli Keller, “Condi Rice stands up first PRT in Iraq,” *Army News Service*, November 14, 2005.

ⁱⁱ The White House, *Fact Sheet: The New Way Forward in Iraq*, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070110-3.html>>, accessed on July 14, 2008.

ⁱⁱⁱ For a critical review, see for example, Save the Children, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Humanitarian-Military Relations in Afghanistan* (2004), and Barbara J. Stapleton, *The Provincial Reconstruction Team Plan in Afghanistan: A New Direction?*, Bonn, May 2003. For a positive account, see for example, Michael J. McNerney, “Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model or a Muddle?”, *Parameters*, Winter 2005-06, pp. 32-46; Peter Viggo Jakobsen, *PRTs in Afghanistan: Successful but not Sufficient*, DIID Report 2005:6; and Dylan Hendrickson, Michael Bhatia, Mark Knight and Annabel Taylor, *A Review of DFID Involvement in Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan*, Department for International Development (DFID), London, 8 July 2005.

^{iv} Barbara J. Stapleton, *Presentation on Afghanistan*, Copenhagen Seminar on Concerted Planning and Action of Civil and Military Activities in International Operations (20-21 June 2005).

^v Robert M. Perito, “The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan, Lessons Identified,” *United States Institute of Peace Special Report 152* (October 2005).

^{vi} Yuji Uesugi, “Civil-Military Coordination and Cooperation in Humanitarian Assistance and Peace Operations—its Possibilities and Challenges” in WAVOC ed., *Peacebuilding* (Tokyo: WAVOC, 2005) pp. 11-19. See also, Yuji Uesugi, *The United Nations Peacekeeping and the Nexus between Conflict Settlement and Conflict Resolution – A Comparative Case Study of UN Peacekeeping in Cyprus and Cambodia*, a Doctorate Thesis submitted to the University of Kent at Canterbury, August 2003.

^{vii} Michael J. McNerney, “Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model or a Muddle?”, *Parameters*, Winter 2005-06, p. 39.

^{viii} *PRT Handbook, Edition 2, 31 October 06*, p. 5, para. 12.

^{ix} *Ibid.*, p. 5, para. 13.

^x Afghanistan’s MDG Report, 2005.

^{xi} *Ibid.*, p. 5, para. 14.

^{xii} *Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: An Interagency Assessment*, 5 April 2006, p. 23.

^{xiii} House of Committee on International Relations, *Testimony of Secretary of State Colin Powell*

before the Committee on International Relations United States House of Representatives, 24 October 2001; and James Rupert, "UN Rejects U.S. Postwar Plan", *Newsday*, 18 October 2001, p. A33, cited in Peter Viggo Jakobsen, *PRTs in Afghanistan: Successful but not Sufficient*, DIID Report 2005:6, p. 8. UNAMA's mandate includes promoting national reconciliation; fulfilling the tasks and responsibilities entrusted to the United Nations in the Bonn Agreement, including those related to human rights, the rule of law and gender issues, and managing all UN humanitarian, relief, recovery and reconstruction activities in Afghanistan <<http://unama-afg.org/about/overview.htm>>.

^{xiv} NATO took on the command of ISAF in August 2003, and with the UN Security Council Resolution 1510 (13 October 2003) ISAF began to assume a wider role in support of the Afghan government beyond Kabul. In December 2005, ISAF numbers about 9,200 troops from 35 countries (*NATO in Afghanistan —Press factsheet* <<http://nato.int/issue/afghanistan/050816-factsheet.htm>>. As of 2 January 2007, ISAF numbers increased to 33,460 troops from 37 countries.

^{xv} The TORs can be found in Appendix I of Barnett R. Rubin, Humayun Hamidzada and Abby Stoddard, *Afghanistan 2005 and Beyond: Prospect for Improved Stability Reference Document*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, April 2005.

^{xvi} As for the Coalition PRTs, there was no specific legal foundation or international authorization for such endeavors; whereas, those could be found for the NATO/ISAF PRTs. The UN Security Council Resolution 1510 (2003) authorized, under Chapter VII of the Charter of the UN, expansion of the mandate of ISAF to support the Afghan Transitional Authority in the maintenance of security in areas of Afghanistan outside of Kabul. In other words, NATO or ISAF-led PRTs, which are part of ISAF, are indeed UN-authorized Chapter VII operations.

^{xvii} *ISAF Key Fact and Figures Placemat*, <http://www.nato.int/ISAF/docu/epub/pdf/isaf_placemat.pdf>, accessed on 14 July 2008.

^{xviii} Jakobsen, p. 11.

^{xix} McNerney, p. 32 and p. 43.

^{xx} By the way, this 3D approach of PRTs would match accidentally with the Japanese government's strategy for reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan—the three pillars of "Consolidation of Peace" approach: Peace Process (Diplomacy), National Security (Defense), and Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (Development).

^{xxi} *Assessment*, p. 12.

^{xxii} *Civil-Military Relationships in Complex Emergencies—An IASC Reference Paper—*, 28 June 2004, para 1.

^{xxiii} ACBAR, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams and the Security Situation in Afghanistan," *ACBAR Policy Brief*, (24 July 2003)

^{xxiv} *IASC Reference Paper*, pp. 41-42.

^{xxv} Jane Barry with Anna Jefferys, *A bridge too far: aid agencies and the military in humanitarian response*, HPN Paper 37, p. 15.

^{xxvi} The difficult question on this issue would be that how we should respond to the situation in which relief operations by or with support of the military might actually save more lives and alleviate suffering more effectively than humanitarian operations conducted solely by humanitarian agencies. Who should be authorized to make such a tough call, and who should be accountable for the deaths and sufferings that could have been avoided if the military was allowed to violate the humanitarian principles and join the live-saving activities by the

humanitarian agencies? This leads you to a value judgment: which should be more stressed, effectiveness in saving lives in the current crisis by violating the principles, or effectiveness in saving lives in other crisis by observing the principles this time. In other words, one must find a good balance between the short-term needs of saving lives in an emergency situation and the long-term requirement of preserving the effectiveness of the humanitarian regime.

^{xxvii} *Assessment*, p. 6.

^{xxviii} *Assessment*, p. 14.

^{xxix} *Assessment*, p. 12

^{xxx} The military community likes to use the term ‘winning the hearts and minds,’ but this term is associated closely with military’s psychological operations and often invites allergic reactions from the humanitarian community. PRTs should avoid using this terminology and use other terms such as winning the local acceptance and achieving the human security for local people, instead.

^{xxxi} McNerney, p. 34

^{xxxii} The challenging questions on this issue would be that how we should treat PRT’s QIPs that are conducted partly for the force protection purpose, and how we should judge the appropriateness of PRT’s QIPs in a gray zone, that is, some civilian agencies are operating in the area despite the fact that the security situation on the ground is not permissive and most of the civilian agencies have decided to withdraw from the area due to security concerns.

^{xxxiii} *Assessment*, p. 11.

^{xxxiv} *Handbook*, p. 15-2.

^{xxxv} Yuji Uesugi, *The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and their contribution to the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process in Afghanistan*, HIPEC Research Report Series No. 3 (March 2006).

^{xxxvi} *Assessment*, p. 11.

^{xxxvii} *Assessment*, p. 6.

^{xxxviii} *Assessment*, p. 11.