

Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Recovery in Afghanistan:
Ongoing Debate on Best Instruments from Czech Perspective

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Introduction

Afghanistan has been in a state of protracted crisis for more than 30 years and has become over these decades a synonym of a breeding ground to Taliban Jihad armed warriors as well as endless efforts of especially western armed forces to fight the war on terrorism. Ten successive international conferences¹ have been held on almost annual basis since 2001. At each of them, the international community confirmed its commitment to provide both financial and material resources for reconstruction and development in Afghanistan.

The challenges facing the international community while delivering aid to the local population are multiple: weak and corrupt central and local governmental systems, infrastructures in ruins and low capacity to recover from natural disasters such as seasonal droughts followed by spring flash floods. The multiplicity and complexity of intertwined ethnic groups such as Hazaras, Uzbeks, Tajiks and Pashtuns present yet another challenge from the cross-cultural viewpoint while dealing with the local communities. Last but not least, inter-regional tensions in Baluchistan, Jamu-Kashmir and Swat Valley render the operations further complicated. Nevertheless, the most important challenge remains the high level of security risk caused by insurgent terrorist attacks throughout the country and especially in the southern provinces, e.g. Kandahar or Helmand. The recent attacks held in Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif against the Shiite community on the holy day of Ashura added yet another feature to the existing types of violence. In the latest report of the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (ANSO²), one can read: "The year [2011] was remarkable for being the one in which the US/NATO leadership finally acknowledged the unwinnable nature of its war with the Taliban and started to take concrete measures to disengage (both

¹ They were held in Bonn in 2001, in Tokyo in 2002, in Brussels in 2003, in Berlin in 2004, in London in 2006, in Rome in 2007, in Moscow and the Hague in 2009, in London in 2010 and in Bonn in 2011, The latest 10th anniversary follow-up conference held in Bonn gathered representatives of 85 states, 15 international organizations and the United Nations.

² For the Incident map Q4 2011 provided by ANSO, please see the Annex 1

psychologically and physically) under the narrative of 'transition' – the first real change in the structure of the conflict since it began.”

We shall attempt to contribute to the debate on whether the military and humanitarian-civilian operations should become clearly split. We shall first broadly compare humanitarian assistance and disaster recovery operatory modes and strategies of NGOs and American, British and German models of PRTs in Afghanistan. Based on this preliminary analysis, we shall then focus on operatory modes developed by the Czech led PRT located near the town of Pul-i-Alam, in Lógar province, south of Kabul. We shall in the end present the most important Czech non-governmental, non-profit organization People in need (PIN) and identify their specificities.

This paper is largely based on published recent sources, i.e. research papers, government or NGOs annual reports. In addition, the author has conducted series of semi-directed interviews and formal exchange of written communication with the PIN field team members deployed in Afghanistan as well as the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff.

Separation or intertwined military and humanitarian interventions?

Civil-military cooperation means in the NATO understanding "the coordination and cooperation, in support of the mission, between the NATO Commander and civil actors, including national population and local authorities, as well as international, national and non-governmental organizations and agencies."

In the local populations' understanding however, the borders between military and humanitarian interventions have become blurred as Afghanistan remains the theater of the direct intervention by ISAF³ armed troops. The second Bush administration's rhetoric in the aftermath of 9/11 referred to non-governmental not-for-profit organizations (NGO) as a "force multiplier" for the US army (Powell, 2001). Since the end of 2002, there have existed different ISAF member states' Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT), composed of mixed civil-military units "designed to improve security, extend the reach of the Afghan government and facilitate reconstruction in priority provinces" (US Department of State,

³ The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is a NATO-led security mission in Afghanistan. The first Bonn Agreement led to the Resolution 1386 voted by the United Nations Security Council on 20 December 2001.

2006). Majority of international NGOs⁴ didn't wish to get their actions coordinated by various PRTs yet have readily accepted to become PRTs' "implementing partners" in exchange for funds. As a matter of fact, fourteen ISAF member states participate in twenty-seven PRTs, out of which thirteen are led by the United States. The coalition PRTs other than American are all civilian-led while their US counterparts are, apart from one exception, military-led.

Generally speaking, there are significant gaps in the data on funds channeled to reconstruction in Afghanistan via military actors. The NATO-managed Afghan National Army (ANA) Trust Fund reportedly received donor contributions of US\$224.7 million between January 2007 and April 2010. NATO also manages Post-Operations Emergency Relief Fund (POERF) which received US\$3.5 million in donor contributions during the same period yet there are discrepancies in figures published by various official military sources and NGO agencies.

The above ISAF's efforts to get local populations to perceive the armed troops as humanitarian aid and use it to "win hearts and minds" caused a lack of distinction between military and humanitarian teams and operations. It led to further deterioration of NGOs' image of neutrality and impartiality. One of the most dramatic consequences of the above was the assassination of five aid workers of the major French NGO Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in Badghis province located in northwestern part of the country in June 2004. It was followed by the dramatic withdrawal of MSF from Afghanistan during summer 2004. Marine Buissonnière, Secretary General of MSF was forced to admit that "independent humanitarian action, which involved unarmed aid workers going into areas of conflict to provide aid, had become impossible in Afghanistan" (Buissonnière, 2004).

The perception of human development efficiency of undertaken actions from the recipient viewpoint is largely influenced by their delivery modes. The diversity of approaches combining or separating military and civilian aid, results from national features of each of the organizations involved as well as from their inherent visions and missions. Due to the diffuse, changing theaters of operations, the efficacy and efficiency of the above innovative civil-military or strictly civilian humanitarian assistance and disaster recovery is constantly debated.

⁴ We generally differentiate **Inter-Governmental Organizations** (IGOs), e.g. UN, EU, OSCE agencies and **International NGOs** (INGOs), e.g. Médecins sans frontières, Oxfam, Save the Children, CARE, ICRC.

Models of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)

According to Cassidy (2006), PRTs have had their precursors in conflict resolutions in Algeria (SAS: Sections Administratives Spécialisées created by the French administration) and in Vietnam (CORDS: Civil Operations and Rural Development Support established by the US military administration). Like PRT staff, their above mentioned SAS and CORDS predecessors intervened and supported local representatives and population in governance, justice, infrastructure and agriculture and were supposed to win hearts and minds "...by pacifying and securing the population." In case of Afghanistan, the rhetoric on rebuilding the country and civilian expert component involved in PRTs targeted ISAF member states media and population, in order to have them better accept military actions and spending.

NATO CIMIC interacts with all parties within a conflict situation. The governing principle behind all of those interactions is to reach the defined and commonly desired end state, for the good of the local population, the civil actors and the Alliance Forces.

The majority of PRTs have a strong mandate in training and supporting local police and national security forces. However, Afghan opinions and ideas about future evolution of PRTs' mission are not audible and even, from the strictly academic viewpoint, not researched (Eronen, 2008). This lack of interest in the local opinion was recognized already in 2005 at the NATO conference on PRTs and CIMIC. Domestic speakers are usually included in PRT seminars and training courses, but hold only a minor role.

Jakobsen (2010) considers that the recent decision of NATO commandment has been right to adopt a joint Comprehensive Approach (CA) involving the international community in crisis response operations; yet that it has been wrong to consider CA as a sine qua non for success in Afghanistan. Jakobsen considers that CA will have failed there because of a lack of consensus on how the CA should be implemented, slow institutionalization of CA doctrine in effective collaboration with international NGOs, and failure to establish cooperation with local actors.

Hereunder are presented the major differences of the three major national commandments of PRTs with a focus on military-civilian collaborative models of leadership applied.

American model

The American PRT teams are composed of forty to hundred and twenty staff members, including three to five civilians. The commandment is always military. They are not multicultural; the teams are composed uniquely of American citizens. The only exception to this unique nationality rule is direct liaison functions held by colonel-level Afghani officers since 2004.

The American PRTs are involved in Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), e.g. building schools and hospitals or dwelling wells. They are also strongly involved in projects aimed at winning the local populations' "hearts and minds". The above militarization and politization of humanitarian aid has however been often critiqued by various NGO representatives since it provides a fertile ground for confusion between the non-military NGO field reconstruction work and QIP carried out by the military. This confusion can be illustrated by the involvement of USAID⁵ in nineteen American PRTs across the country. The mission of USAID workers is to deliver services in less secure or underserved areas of Afghanistan as well as to "engage key government, military, tribal, village, and religious leaders in the provinces, regarding local development priorities and USAID programs."

Lately the conflicts between the American PRTs and NGOs eased down as the former are generally geographically situated in dangerous areas nearby the Pakistani border where there are very few if any NGOs present. That way, there is no confusion of the two in the local population.

British model

Eronen (2008) suggests to replace the denomination of British model by British-Nordic model as the originally British led PRTs based in the northern part of Afghanistan, have been joint first by Norwegian and Swedish, followed by Finish, Danish, Latvian and Estonian troops. The collaborative, mitigative British style of PRT leadership was originally based on decisions taken unanimously by the representatives of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defense, and the Department for International Development. Later on, the Nordic nations have even further reinforced this cooperative managerial aspect which was as of 2007 coined by ISAF as integrated command group (ICG) and promoted best practice. The British opted for the discreet presence and patrolling (also called "showing the flag") which has led to a quite high acceptance from the local populations as well as the INGOs. Low scores of masculinity and uncertainty avoidance indexes according to Geert Hofstede's 5-D model further comfort the cultural foundation of the British-Nordic model of commandment. Michael J. McNerney (2005) in spite of his rather negative appraisal of an overall PRTs' efficiency in Afghanistan, considered the British-Nordic model of civil-military integration as "...the best on a tactical level in

⁵ The U.S. Agency for International Development provides the largest bilateral civilian assistance program to Afghanistan (15 Billion US dollars spent between 2002 and 2011).

Afghanistan". He considers institutionalization of coordinated planning and leadership one of the capital success factors.

German model

German Zivil-Militärische Zusammenarbeit (ZMZ) governs the principles of foreign deployment as part of military and humanitarian missions. The ZMZ operatory mode is based on dual military and strong civilian commandment. The ZMZ commanders take collegial decisions concerning communications vis-à-vis local population and officials. The German military undertake since 2005 long patrolling missions in areas where they are commissioned by ISAF. The German civilian staff is commissioned by the German Federal Foreign Office, Federal Ministry of the Interior and Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development to undertake tasks linked with governance, reconstruction and development assistance. The above multiplicity of ministries involved, causes mixed and contradictory messages. It slows down the operations and causes cleavages among civilian staff. Furthermore, the German military troops rotate on a four-month basis which is a rather short period and further complicates establishment of trustworthy relationship between the troops and the locals.

Involvement of the Czech Republic in Afghanistan: is there anything like a Czech model?

The Czech Republic has been supportive of the NATO military actions ever since it has become its member in 1999. The Czech military troops took active part in operations in Iraq with the support of the prominent political figures⁶ in the country and to a lesser extent from the population. In Afghanistan, The Czech personnel first participated in the international PRT (together with Danes and Germans) located in Badakshan province from March 2005 to November 2007. The Czechs are nowadays deployed under allies' commandment in Kabul⁷ and under independent command, they operate the 601st special forced unit in Nangarhar province, the 8th Armored Cavalry Regiment Unit and the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) in the Wardak Province where is also a Training Unit of the Czech Military Police. The Czech Military Police plan to finish their mission by 2014 like the other ISAF forces.

⁶ The late President of the Czech Republic, Václav Havel, stated in 2002 that "Saddam Hussein's regime poses a major threat to many nations and to his own people ... there should be international intervention."

⁷ Chemical and Biological Protection Unit, Air Mentoring Team, 3rd Field Surgical Team, Peace maintenance at Kabul and Bagram headquarters.

Since March 2008, the Czech Provincial Reconstruction Team is based at the Shank Base in the south-eastern province of Lógar. It has a “double-headed” civilian and military managerial structure. The civilian team is in charge of identification, proposal write-up and realization of all development projects. The military contingent that largely outnumbers the civilian team assures the security of the above civilian team, trains the Afghani national security troops and gets involved in any ISAF actions that may be take place. The civilian team reports to the Czech Ministry of Foreign affairs. The military are commanded by the Czech Ministry of Defense. As of December 2011, there have been 720 Czech soldiers were deployed in Afghanistan. The Czech military rotate on a six-month basis while the civilian experts’ contracts are concluded for twelve month periods with the possibility of a three-month extension, hence maximum fifteen months. After four years of deployment in Lógar, the Czech military transfer efficiently knowledge between departing and coming troops. Therefore, as they are in charge of security and don’t participate in reconstruction projects, the short six-month rotation rule does not seem to negatively influence the sustainability of the projects carried in Lógar area.

Between March 2008 and December 2011, the Czech PRT has accomplished a total of a hundred and one reconstruction and development projects as well as ninety-one so-called Quick Impact Projects (QIP). Among NGOs present in Lógar, the Czech-led PRT collaborates with French-Afghani Medical Refresher Courses for Afghans (MRCA). MRCA operations are financed from the European Union Delegation (DEA) grant. It coordinates the healthcare system at the provincial level. The amount allocated by DEA is fixed and granted for 24 months ahead of time. In case of exceptional and unforeseeable conditions, such as terrorist attacks, humanitarian emergencies or sharp increase in supplies’ price, MRCA may lack financial resources. In such cases, the Czech PRT provides MRCA with the missing funds necessary for realization of projects but MRCA does not openly acknowledge it mainly to assure the security of its staff. The Czech PRT collaborates as well with several minor American charities. The Czech led PRT is viewed, like the other PRTs in other Afghani regions, as a kind of permanent charity and job provider by the locals. Some of the Czech civilian experts in charge of reconstruction projects are former NGO workers deployed in Afghanistan in the past; hence they know very well the problems that are encountered by the INGO in the field. In December 2008, the U.S. Ambassador Richard Graber to the Czech Republic visited Czech troops in Kabul. He claimed that “...the Czech PRT in Lógar province was unique and provided a model that other PRTs should consider following”.

The Czechs, knowing that their presence will end in 2014 understand that from now on, they'll have to assure the sustainability of the accomplished projects. They deem important to focus their efforts on training Afghan armed forces and on transfer of know-how to achieve the smoothest interplay with the

local authorities. In this aspect they do not differ from the other nation-led PRTs. What may differ is the level of pragmatism of the Czech commanders who accept the presence of moderate local Power Brokers such as Rabbani, Dostum or Ata in the local political dialogue. Also, the Czech PRT is skilled in identification of reconstruction projects that couldn't be carried out by NGOs, especially when heavy machinery or specific engineering skills are required. The Czech PRT leadership understands that it can solely contribute to institution building in Afghanistan if they manage to enable local decision makers to act loyally in favor of the population and it gives top importance to the local ownership. In such a way, the Czech PRT will be gradually capable to diminish its direct managerial role and give way to Afghan PRT-administration.

People in Need (PIN) permanent mission to Afghanistan

PIN is an active partner in Alliance 2015, the Czech Forum for Development Cooperation (FoRS), the European Union Monitoring Center (EUMC), Eurostep and with Concord. PIN is also an implementing partner with ECHO, UNHCR, UNICEF and registered with USAID as an international private voluntary organization.

PIN's permanent mission in Afghanistan was founded in December 2001. The PIN's central office is in Kabul and five other offices are based in the northern provinces of Balkh, Samangan, Paktya, Nangahar and Baghlan. There is over 150 of local staff and 7 international staff members. The average period of stay of the international staff is 18 months. It allows them to build close relationship with local authorities and identify specific structural needs that PIN can provide their know-how for. Among the areas of intervention of PIN's mission in Afghanistan are education / vocational training, livelihood & rural development, WASH (Water, Sanitation & Hygiene) and local governance (a program to empower communities to lead their own development through the elections of Community Development Councils). Among the above activities, PIN is most appraised in Afghanistan both by the fellow INGOs and local authorities for its expertise in providing sustainable vocational training and education in agricultural field. Their national program covers 30 provinces (out of the total number of 34) and involves creation of curricula for agricultural high-schools adapted to the local economic, social and climate conditions. Its large geographical coverage allows for building the country-wide sustainable and transferable content, and ad hoc teaching methods. Furthermore, the long-term span of this program allows for an efficient transfer of know-how in close co-operation with Afghan Ministry of Education. In two pilot districts, PIN has also delivered a practical training in farming techniques and distributed certified seeds to the local

farmers. The Czech NGO has also financed and built a network of community grain reserves and district level silos, with the goal to increase food security. In the National Solidarity Program, PIN is a facilitating partner since 2005 in 4 provinces covering over 700 Community Development Councils (CDCs). This program has been designed to empower communities to lead their own development through democratically and freely CDCs and counter the power of so-called Power Brokers.

PIN does not collaborate in any way with the Czech military actors or any other armed forces in Afghanistan. Like other major INGOs, PIN refuses to accept any kind of military protection. The misbalance in financial and material resources between ISAF and PIN reinforces regularly the latter's perception of military-civilian cooperation being driven and dictated by military concerns. Despite the efforts that PRTs deploy in order to be perceived as "builders" and "friends", the local population perceives ISAF forces as invaders and external occupational forces.

PIN have strict security rules and there exist processes to follow, starting with not leaving the compound and ending with evacuation to a safe predefined place in case of emergency. PIN is, like many other INGOs, reluctant to engage in cooperation with local PRTs that can be seen as legitimizing ISAF's strong involvement in humanitarian and development activities. The recent decision of ISAF to stop using white vehicles for the PRTs military-civilian teams has been welcomed by PIN. It is considered as a sort of first step towards separation of military and humanitarian organizations in Afghanistan. As the mission's CFO puts it bluntly: "One can't excel at everything. The military are good in peacekeeping and counter-insurgency, while we know how to provide locals with sheep and goats or build grain reserves and district level silos. When the province is stable, we can work."

So to sum the PINs specificity up, it is recognized for its expertise in community development and agri-business with specialized technical assistance allowing for using locally-accessible resources with respect to the specifics of the local climate and terrain and reduction of the critical lack of drinking water and improvement of water sanitation. A long-term goal is to develop curricula focused on practical work in agricultural sector in order to modernize it as the bulk of the country's GDP is created in this sector. PIN claims to work "in close cooperation with local residents and the emerging institutions of state administration". PIN considers "relevant stakeholders" other NGOs and CBOs taking part in the relief response as well as the UN agencies, international organizations and the local authorities. Interviews with staff members of PIN permanent mission in Afghanistan reveal that they consider unrealistic to be able to create the culture of cooperation and the joint planning, execution and evaluation of operational activities between ISAF and INGOs that effective comprehensive cooperation approach calls for.

Discussion on how to terminate the counterproductive battle between PRTs and NGOs

Twenty-nine aid organizations working in Afghanistan addressed to the NATO heads during the government summit held in Lisbon, Portugal in November 2010 a joint paper in which they asked that "...the lead nations of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) would establish and implement a plan to gradually phase out PRT-provided assistance and other militarized forms of aid. This transition strategy should prioritize an increase in funding and support for national and international civilian organizations."

As already discussed above, Afghanistan is not only a battlefield confronting ISAF troops and Taliban insurgent forces but also ISAF, PRTs and NGOs. Despite a complete lack of research conducted among local populations on their perception of differences between missions conducted by ISAF military and NGO workers, the latter consider, based on field experience that armed actions against them by the Taliban are often caused by blurred perceptions of military and humanitarian organizations by the locals. Moravec (2010) claims NGOs are disregarded by ISAF because they extensively collaborate with local authorities. By doing so, they undermine the central government authority and weaken the main mission of ISAF which is fighting insurgency in Afghanistan. Furthermore, some NGOs⁸ unlike NATO military forces provide their help without necessarily requiring the respect of human rights and freedoms, applying the principles of humanitarian accountability⁹. That way the local populations are not cut away from the humanitarian aid.

On the contrary, ISAF commandment considers that in some areas, especially in the southern part of the country the only aid provided to the local civilians is provided by PRTs staff as the INGOs opt out because of insecurity. In other words, both actors accuse each other of lack of goodwill and "stepping on the toes of the other".

The participants at the Chiefs of Transformation Conference held in December 2009 in Norfolk, Virginia concluded that "...in order for a CA to succeed, non-governmental organisations must be comfortable in working with NATO..." by "...developing an exchange program between NGOs and military". The

⁸ E.g. the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) or the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA).

⁹ *HAP International - Humanitarian Accountability*

HAP International, along with other Quality and Accountability Initiatives, has been key in defining the concept of "Humanitarian Accountability", which has been much debated by the international humanitarian community. There is a focus on two principles and mechanisms: those by which individuals, organizations and States account for their actions and are held responsible for them, and those by which they may safely and legitimately report concerns, complaints and get redress where appropriate. The simple definition of accountability in a general sense is the responsible use of power, while "accountability in humanitarian situations means that the power to help in situations of conflict and disaster is exercised responsibly. When implemented, it means that survivors of war or disaster are able to influence decisions about the help they receive and can complain if they feel the "helping power" was not exercised well." For more, see www.hapinternational.org

question remains however what's meant by the above exchange program and whether ISAF should not rather focus on the provision of military security and counterinsurgency (COIN). The government emphasis must be on counter-guerrilla campaigns, which are small unit operations, sustained and aggressive patrols and ambushes in guerrilla infested zones, forward basing, intelligence-led operations and strict coordination of all agencies involved.

Conclusion

The PRTs staff being dependent on the national politics and observing rather short rotation periods (four to six months) cannot develop the same quality of long-term relationships as the NGOs on the local basis. They should therefore stop duplicating the missions undertaken by the INGOs.

INGOs will largely benefit from the restoration of their image of neutrality and impartiality as well as of their full legitimacy. They own capacities, tools and know-how that are necessary for development of appropriate ad hoc infrastructures and building of solid civil society.

We have argued that the ISAF and the PRTs comprehensive approach strategies should emphasise military goals rather than to continue to overspread its capacities in attempting to build democratic society or to continue to be involved in the direct reconstruction in Afghanistan. The military actions should continue to include training of Afghani security forces and cutting the insurgency forces' resources stemming from grey economy and trace the narcotics network back to its ringleaders. They should establish and implement a plan to gradually phase out PRT-provided and other militarized forms of aid, enabling military institutions to return to a focus on security and security sector reform. The funding structures should forward gradually their grants to national and international civilian organizations instead of continuing doing so through PRTs or other military-dominated structures.

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Written comments concerning the civil section of the Czech-led PRT based in Lógar

Ms. Ester Lauferova, Special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

Mr. Daniel Volf, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

Interviews

Mr. Zdenek Ralik, People in Need

Mr. Tomas Kocian, Former Head of the Permanent Mission of People in Need in Afghanistan

Annex 1: ADG

e: ANSO)

ANSO: ADG attack's
Please note this is an isolated
threat map and a lack of incidents
reported to the table, particularly

