

# Civil-Military Relations in Afghanistan

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### **How has increasing interaction between NGOs and the military affected humanitarian operations in complex emergencies?**

Introduction

#### **I) Background and rationale for the paper**

The security situation for humanitarian workers has come to the front line of debate in recent months. Globally, the number of attacks in which aid workers were killed, kidnapped or injured has risen sharply from 29 separate incidents in 2001 to 165 incidents in 2009. [1] Afghanistan is now the most dangerous country for aid workers in the world and the recent death of 10 aid workers including the British female doctor Karen Woo in 'the worst attack on humanitarian workers in 30 years,' [2] has sparked new debate in the aid worker community about how best to conduct their operations, as well as bringing the issue into the public consciousness.

The humanitarian community has attributed the increasing danger for air workers in part to their relationship with the military in Afghanistan and other conflict zones. In the last ten years, NGOs have been voicing concerns that the military have intruded into their domain by conducting short term aid work and long term 'hearts and minds' projects that have blurred the lines between aid workers and military troops, which has had worrying consequences for humanitarianism. In response to this, there has been an emerging consensus in the aid worker community over the last few years that the distinction between NGOs and the military must be reclaimed.

At the same time, Western governments have been trumpeting the 'comprehensive approach' to peacekeeping in which militaries, aid workers, politicians and civilians all work together to provide 'complex solutions to complex emergencies.' Donor funding is increasingly being transferred from NGO development to military aid work, and Obama's recent civilian surge to Afghanistan has confirmed the incoming International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Commander General Petraeus' belief in 'the importance of the civil-military partnership that is essential in the conduct of a comprehensive approach.' [3]

#### **II) Content and structure**

It is in this context of international relations that this paper explores some of the difficulties between the increasing liaisons between the military and NGOs in today's complex emergencies. It examines how the military and humanitarian domains have begun to overlap, and what consequences this has brought for aid workers. It is argued that the militarization of aid has blurred the distinction between aid workers and military troops, which has reduced the ability of aid workers to conduct humanitarian work as well as putting their lives in greater danger. Assuming that the nature of conflict in the near future will mean that humanitarian and military actors will continue to interact in the future, a framework is necessary for civil/military co-ordination. The paper proposes that *aid workers and the military should be partners apart, in a well planned and clearly defined relationship that rests on a much clearer definition of roles in order that both institutions have a better understanding of each other's sphere of influence.* This conclusion broadly supports the most recent and comprehensive set of guidelines on civil/military relations published in 2008 by the Afghanistan Civil-Military Working Group

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To place the debate on civil/military relations in the context of current international relations, Chapter 1 offers an analysis of the current security landscape in which military and NGO actors have come to work together in peacekeeping missions. Chapter 2 outlines the respective roles of the military and NGOs in complex emergencies, explains the existing guidelines for civil/military co-ordination and offers the existing perspectives of the actors involved in the debate. Chapter 3 analyses how increasing liaisons between the military and NGOs in Afghanistan have had both ideological and practical consequences for humanitarian work by blurring the lines between the two domains, which has been exacerbated by the PRT model. Chapter 4 argues that these tensions signify that it is imperative that the military and NGOs return to clearly defined roles, whilst improving co-operation via joint planning processes and pre-deployment training. The essay concludes with a recommendation that the 2008 guidelines offered by the Afghanistan Civil-Military working group should be adhered to.

## **III) Methodology**

This essay uses a variety of sources to provide a well balanced and timely representation of civil/military relations. A wide range of NGO reports and press releases have been studied in order to present a sound representation of the humanitarian perspective. These documents also provided most of the first hand reports of individuals in the field, as well as Afghan perceptions of civil/military relations. British and US military doctrine provides the majority of the evidence to support the military perspective, and academic articles have been used to add further commentary to the issues raised throughout the paper. In order to provide evidence for the consequences for the militarization of aid, examples have been found from NGO resources as well as the war logs published by Wikileaks.

The paper analyses the relationship between NGOs and the military through the experience of Afghanistan. This complex emergency was chosen as a case study because it represents a new phase of interaction between the two spheres. This has been institutionalised in the form of the Provincial Reconstruction Team, which is looked at in detail. It would be almost impossible not to look at the Afghanistan experience to study the contemporary relationship between Western militaries and NGOs, given that it is on this stage that the two currently act.

### **Chapter One**

#### **The New Security Landscape.**

The increasingly close relationship between military and humanitarian actors can be understood as reflecting two new developments in international relations since the 1990s. The first is a change in the way that conflict is now fought; from traditional, inter-state, large scale military wars to 'complex emergencies.' The second is an increasing willingness of Western governments and their militaries to intervene in these 'new wars,' which reflects a new understanding of the security framework in which humanitarian emergencies are understood to be a threat to the vulnerable west. The Western led international community has identified a need to respond to these complex emergencies with a 'comprehensive' approach that aims to bring together NGO and civilian actors in a unified response. This chapter explains how the two developments in international relations combined with the West's response to complex emergencies have led to a situation in which military forces and NGO actors have found themselves working in the same domain, and why civil-military co-ordination is such an important issue in contemporary international relations.

#### **I) The changing nature of war**

Conflict before the Cold War could be generally characterized as war between two or more militaries of host governments, fighting for territory using 'second' or 'third generation' warfare strategies that aimed to defeat the opponent by having bigger and more powerful militaries. [4] The end of the Cold War marked a change in the way war was fought and saw more complicated forms of conflict. As the US and Soviet Union withdrew their support that they had given to dictators in geo-strategically convenient states, humanitarian emergencies resulted from the power vacuums left by the withdrawal of support, and many states began to fragment and rival factions fought over conflicts of resources and power.[5]

In these post-Cold War conflicts, often termed 'complex emergencies,' conflict is no longer between two or more

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similarly sized militaries but between 'asymmetric' opponents. Insurgents have used a variety of tactics including terrorism and suicide bombing and have blurred the lines between combatants and non-combatants, civilians and soldiers. In these conflicts, mass humanitarian disasters can occur as civilians get caught up in the politics of these new wars and constitute legitimate targets for insurgents as well as being potential sources of recruitment for militias or terrorist groups. Battle is no longer between two or more defined militaries but instead is characterized by a 'maelstrom of actors.' [6] Conflict today sees local citizens, insurgents and militaries in the same space as international peacekeeping forces, international militaries and hundreds of NGOs and IAGOs all together in a complex battle for the hearts and minds of local populations. These conflicts cannot be won in the traditional sense, where one military surrenders and the occupying country declares victory, but can often be what Duffield and Kaldor have termed as being 'unending' in character, because they are not clearly defined in geographical space and often result in displaced persons and refugees that spread the conflict into new areas. [7]

There is perhaps no better example of a complex emergency than the war in Afghanistan. Warfare is conducted in complicated terrain, both in civilian areas and in wasteland. The Taliban use fourth generation tactics of suicide bombing and improvised explosive devices in order to defeat Western forces 'by the back door' rather than confronting them in full scale battle. Their strategy is the same as that of Western forces; win over the local population in order to turn them against the enemy and drive them out. The politics of the war in Afghanistan also contains multiple states and actors. For example, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence has recently been linked to top Taliban commanders and has been implicated in a range of plots including assassination attempts on President Hamid Karzai. [8]

In Afghanistan there are a multitude of actors present including 17 international organisations, 129 foreign NGOs [9] and 65 Afghan local NGOs [10] as well as two international peacekeeping forces, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The distinction between military and civilian targets has all but disappeared – The Taliban continues to recruit civilians dressed in ordinary clothes into their force, which includes women and children. The Western occupying forces are similarly guilty of ignoring the distinction between military and civilian targets. The war logs leaked in July 2010 that consist of 92,000 records of actions of the US military in Afghanistan show a disturbing image of the fog of war, in which there have been 150 incidents in which coalition forces (including UK troops) have killed or injured civilians, [11] most of which were never reported. The conflict is being fought across borders, with a large proportion of violence has occurred in the border-region between Pakistan and Afghanistan, which Obama recently called 'the most dangerous place in the world.' [12]

Afghanistan, like many conflicts since the Cold war, reflect the complex humanitarian, political, economic, ethnic and military factors that cause them and any response to them, it is argued, must be similarly multi-faceted. [13] It is in this context that militaries have found themselves working more closely with NGOs, as Western governments have attempted to address both the civilian and military dimensions that characterize the new complex emergencies.

## II) Increasing Western military involvement in international peacekeeping.

The second development in international relations that has led to increasing ties between the military and NGOs is that the West has been increasingly willing to respond actively to many of these conflicts where NGOs were also present. In the last twenty years, Western forces have intervened both unilaterally and multilaterally using their militaries in states including Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, East Timor, the Congo, Iraq, Kosovo and Afghanistan. These interventions differed from pre-Cold War military conflicts in that they were not in response to an obvious and direct declaration of war, but were interventions to prevent indirect threats to Western security, and in some cases 'humanitarian' interventions designed to stop large scale humanitarian emergencies.

In several of these instances, military intervention was not given permission by the UN Security Council and was taken by unilateral actors, particularly the US. In some cases, the notable example being Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, intervention was seen to have violated international law and was condemned by the international community. Why then did decision-makers feel the need to call for large scale military peacekeeping missions when it was outside their traditional foreign policy domain? For individual Western governments, humanitarian intervention was seen as a new legitimate form of foreign policy, justified by a moral narrative. In each foreign military intervention

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since 1990, there was some form of 'humanitarian' justification. For the intervention in Kosovo for example, Blair argued that 'war is an imperfect instrument of righting humanitarian distress, but armed force is sometimes the only means of dealing with dictators.' [14]

Although there were several examples of unilateral intervention given justification from individual leaders, there were also multilateral military interventions sanctioned by the UN, notably in Afghanistan. This reflects a willingness of the 'international community' to intervene in areas of 'humanitarian emergencies' that can be seen in a statement by the former General-Secretary of the UN, Kofi Annan, who described a current world where the West is 'less willing than in the past to tolerate suffering in its midst, and more willing to do something about it.' [15]

The eagerness of Western governments to intervene in 'humanitarian emergencies' is not easily explained. Philip Hammond understands this new moral imperative as the West searching for a new purpose in a fragmented 'world without meaning.' [16] Faced with the prospect of 'the end of history' [17] in which the ideological conflict is won by the neo-liberal West, the new 'humanitarian' ventures into the developing world by Western governments are a chance for Western militaries to justify their continued existence, and for foreign policy makers to find a place in the world for their governments. This understanding of the foreign policy of Western governments since the early 1990s can be seen in the narrative used by policy-makers, for example in George W Bush's farewell address in 2009, when he stated that "If America does not lead the cause of freedom, that cause will not be led. ... America must maintain our moral clarity. ... Good and evil are present in this world, and between the two there can be no compromise." [18]

Western 'humanitarian intervention,' is highly linked to security concerns as well as a search for a new foreign policy. There is a new paradigm in the Western understanding of security that largely explains the increasing practise of the military performing humanitarian activities. In the same speech, Bush argued that 'In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, security and prosperity at home depend on the expansion of liberty abroad.' [19] Underdeveloped states are seen as a threat to international peace and security for two main reasons. First, conflict can result in a rise in internationally displaced people and destabilising refugee flows. Second, they are seen as a haven for terrorist breeding grounds. In the post 9/11 context, this has been the main justification for intervention in both Iraq and Afghanistan by the US in particular. In his analysis of the new complex emergencies, Mark Duffield argues that the West's increasing willingness to pursue intervention on humanitarian grounds reflects their fear of underdeveloped states. In order for a vulnerable West to secure themselves, The West must spread neo-liberal peace and democracy to conflict zones. In operational terms, this translates into integrating relief and development assistance into a broader political agenda. [20] In this analysis, development and security merge together in a new security framework where political violence, weak governments and civil war destroy the potential for development, which in turn breeds further conflict. [21] As such, humanitarian aid is seen as a key component in conflict resolution strategy and Western militaries have become increasingly involved in the delivery and provision of relief and supplies.

### III) The Western response – the 'comprehensive approach.'

In this new Western security framework, the international community sought to establish a conflict resolution strategy that reflected the multi-faceted nature of complex emergencies. Based on the premise that the new wars required complex responses, [22] the perceived demand for multidimensional peacekeeping was the major feature of international relations in the 1990s. Interventions including a wide range of political, civil, military, governmental and non-governmental organisations were common, and aimed to create 'a fusion of tasks designed to create space in which peace processes can take root.' [23] This integrated approach to conflict resolution was reflected in the *Report of the Panel of United Nations Peace Operations – the Brahimi Report*.' In a series of recommended sweeping changes, the report called for a greater coherence of response to complex emergencies, with realistic and clear peacekeeping mandates. It suggested that political, humanitarian and military instruments should come under a unified leadership in order to act on Security Council Resolutions evoked under the UN Charter. [24] The report was criticised by many in the NGO community, because it 'presents an extreme example of the merging of humanitarian aid and political agendas by suggesting a need for an overarching command and control structure that uses humanitarian aid as simply a tool in the toolbox of conflict management.' [25]

Nevertheless, an integrated response to conflict, understood as being efforts by governments and international

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organisations to 'co-ordinate diplomatic, military, developmental and humanitarian action with the purpose of preventing, reducing or resolving conflict,'[26] was seen by policy makers as the future of conflict resolution in order to provide well thought out, long term solutions that addressed the underlying causes of conflict. British military doctrine for example argues that 'at the operational level, it makes sense to concentrate on where there is genuine overlap rather than conflict.'[27] Since the 1990s therefore there has been an increasing number of forums for dialogue and joint training for military and humanitarian actors to better understand the ways in which they can interact more effectively.

In operational terms, this integrated approach to conflict resolution has translated into the military becoming directly involved in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. This trend began in 1991 with Operation Providing Comfort, where US troops became involved in aid delivery programmes for the Kurds in Iraq[28] and became common practice after 1992, where images of soldiers carrying sacks of grain across the beaches of Mogadishu in Somalia were beamed across the world.[29] Contributing to relief work is useful to militaries because it contributes to the 'hearts and minds' operations that are the defining feature of military counter-insurgency strategy.[30] As Western militaries try to convince local populations to support their intervention, public services are provided to deny support to insurgents.

This strategy is the most crucial element of the current mission in Afghanistan – former commander of Afghanistan forces General Eikenberry famously stated that 'where the roads end, the Taliban begins.'[31] The military strategy adopted by Western governments today is therefore one that aims to improve local perceptions of the military, and use the tactic of providing relief to achieve it, which results in a closer relationship between the military and NGOs already providing relief and humanitarian assistance.

The practice of the military directly giving humanitarian assistance grew virtually unopposed throughout the 1990s until it became apparent that US troops were trying actively to associate themselves with humanitarianism and development activity, by dressing in civilian clothing and using white cars and trucks to capitalise on the humanitarian profile of NGOs and UN agencies. Over the last ten years, concerns have arisen in the NGO community over the blurring of the lines between military hearts and minds work and NGO humanitarian assistance. In Afghanistan, there have been several reports of the military's direct involvement in both short term relief and long term development which has had concerning implications for NGOs who are no longer distinguishable from Western forces in the eyes of local Afghans. The relationship between NGOs and the military in Afghanistan is currently a complex one, made even more confused by the introduction of the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRTs) that aim to fuse together civilian and military components to provide humanitarian relief in the most dangerous areas where NGOs cannot currently operate.

The connection between the military and NGOs in complex emergencies is likely to be of importance in Afghanistan and in future conflicts. US president Obama's 'U.S Government Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan' in August 2009 represents a 'surge' of civilian personnel to Afghanistan and represents a further integration of military and humanitarian assistance. NGOs in Afghanistan and in future conflicts will therefore be indispensable partners alongside the military in peace operations, and therefore closer examination of their relationship therefore becomes imperative. The next chapter explores this relationship in detail by evaluating the differences between the military and NGOs, and how their roles in complex emergencies have evolved.

## Chapter Two

Roles of and co-ordination between NGOs and militaries in complex emergencies.

In order to understand the increasing interaction and tensions between the military and NGOs in complex emergencies it is necessary to outline their spheres of influence and what their respective roles are in conflict resolution and peacekeeping. The expansion of military operations from traditional inter-state war to peace-keeping operations has resulted in 'increased operational juxtapositioning between the military and humanitarian spheres'[32], which highlights the need to outline the definition and guidelines of the two institutions. Relations between the military and NGOs on the ground in complex emergencies are multi-dimensional, and so this chapter attempts to clarify the differences between international military forces and NGOs, and their respective roles in

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peacekeeping operations. First, the structural and ideological differences between the two institutions are explained in order to understand how their principles and culture reflects their operations. This is followed by an analysis of the role of the military and NGOs in today's conflicts. The chapter then goes on to explain how the points of engagement between civil and military actors are defined by international law and informal existing guidelines. A brief summary is then given of the differing perspectives on civil/military co-ordination from those involved in the debate, before Provincial Reconstruction Teams are introduced as a case study in civil/military coordination.

## I) Structural and ideological differences between NGOs and the military

### Structural differences

In order to understand the different functions that the military and NGOs have in peacekeeping operations and why they are suited to these roles, it is important to look at the structural and ideological differences between the two institutions. Allgauer identifies three important structural differences between them. First, the military has a hierarchical structure that is multi-tiered. In this structure, the chain of command must be strictly adhered to as a matter of policy.[33] NGOs on the other hand normally have more organic structures, with power often largely decentralized and high levels of responsibility given to field staff. NGO workers therefore often have the ability to respond quickly to emergency situations with little direction from above, whereas troops must wait to receive orders from their superiors before acting.[34] Second, the military has a vast set of operational doctrine that guides their actions in war generally, and peacekeeping operations in particular. They train constantly for different conflict situations that they may face in order to achieve best practice. NGOs on the other hand tend to operate with very little doctrine, because of their size and nature of their work. Field workers are given great flexibility in how to handle conflict situations so that they can respond quickly to particular problems and are often free to choose how to deal with people, resources and equipment. Third, the military has a significantly larger budget than NGOs (the US military budget is around \$650 billion for 2010)[35], and the cost is rarely the largest factor in deciding the nature of operations. Indeed, military spokespeople and politicians often claim to do 'whatever it takes' in order to accomplish a mission, with the view that any short term financial losses are worth it if it ensures victory. NGOs on the other hand are generally underfunded and forever aware of the cost of their projects. They cannot operate as militaries do by planning operations with little concern for their cost and must maximise the efficiency of their work to minimize overhead costs.[36]

### Ideological differences

As well as structural differences between the military and NGOs, there are also significant ideological differences that stem from their different relationships with government. Western militaries exist to carry out the political will of their governments, as is therefore by its very nature a partisan and political organization.[37] Troops are 'paid and trained to use regulated violence to accomplish objectives set by governments.'[38] Even if the UK military engages in what may seem to be humanitarian and non-political relief work, there is an understanding that it is doing so for political benefit in 'hearts and minds' operations designed to win over local populations. NGOs on the other hand are 'non-governmental' and their existence is traditionally defined by their ability to be neutral in conflicts, giving aid on the basis of need alone. They are conventionally apolitical, and do not receive orders from governments or other political institutions. NGOs must remain independent from the military so they can distance themselves from the politics of conflict, in order for them to carry out their work in complex emergencies. [39] For this reason, NGOs are more suited to a co-operative partnership role with local citizens, working with them to improve their economic and social situation. The military on the other hand is more suited to a security role, by using force or the threat of force to ensure stability in dangerous regions.

This fundamental difference can result in tension between NGO field staff and troops on the ground. For example, if populations turn against militaries because of their connections to foreign governments, NGOs must also reject any connection with troops if they are to retain positive relations with civilians. Weiss found in 1995 that the more closely associated a civilian agency is with an unpopular international military force, the less operational space the NGO had and the more problematic civil-military relations become. [40] These structural and ideological differences between

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the military and NGOs illustrate why they experience operational difficulties on the ground, and why they are suited to their respective roles in peacekeeping operations. The nature of these roles has changed since the Cold War, and is not easily defined in complex emergencies.

## II) The role of the military and NGOs in peacekeeping operations.

Although the military and NGOs have worked together in conflict for many years in dangerous locations and harsh conditions, the two institutions have traditionally avoided direct linkages and have not generally worked together in a collaborative effort, because they both believed their work was 'essentially incompatible.'<sup>[41]</sup> The main factors driving cooperation between the two are not a result of shared long-term goals or cultural compatibility – rather, 'necessity has been the mother of cooperation.'<sup>[42]</sup>

### The role of the military

The military's traditional role in peacekeeping operations was to provide a secure environment for affected civilian populations through the enforcement of peace agreements. Their operations included disarming insurgents or belligerents, restoring public order and securing unstable areas. <sup>[43]</sup> In the last 20 years, this role has been expanded to include a responsibility to support NGOs in providing relief assistance. Although the provision of relief is not new – the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 requires any force occupying another state to ensure the provision of food and medical supplies <sup>[44]</sup> – the *direct* provision of humanitarian assistance by the military is a relatively new development.

Their increasing involvement in this practice is a result of the difficulties NGOs have faced in providing assistance in the exceptional circumstances of war – in Somalia and Sudan for example it was found that 80% of the supplies given by NGOs were lost to belligerents.<sup>[45]</sup> The military can help to ensure that aid reaches affected populations and can secure warehouses.<sup>[46]</sup> They have a wide range of resources that can be useful to the humanitarian community in conflicts, offering logistical support, strategic airlift and sealift capacity, mobile hospitals, field level medical evacuations and engineers.<sup>[47]</sup> Additionally, they can provide security for civilians in situations of conflict by providing short term stability so that NGO workers can provide immediate relief.

The military can also provide security and protection for NGO staff delivering aid in war by offering armed escorts. UN humanitarian convoys used military escorts in seven of the twenty-two complex emergencies where the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was working in 2001.<sup>[48]</sup> However, this has become a contentious practice and is now rejected by the vast majority of NGOs – the Humanitarian Practice Network paper stated that escorting is only permissible as a 'last resort in extreme circumstances, when the decision is made by NGOs and not the military, and based solely on humanitarian criteria.'<sup>[49]</sup>

### The Role of NGOs

The civilian dimension of peacekeeping is firmly placed in the delivery of humanitarian aid, as well as in longer term development work. Over the last two decades, NGOs have expanded their role in peace missions and argue that they are more effective than governments in delivering assistance to people in need – Oxfam states that 'except under extreme circumstances, civilian humanitarian agencies are best placed to provide effective assistance.'<sup>[50]</sup> In general circumstances therefore, i.e. situations where there are enough NGOs operating to address humanitarian needs and where conflict is not so dangerous as to prevent civilian actors working, NGOs should be the sole distributor of humanitarian assistance. Unfortunately, these 'exceptional circumstances' have increasingly become the norm. Recent humanitarian emergencies such as Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan have seen highly dangerous environments in which aid workers have been injured or killed, and therefore the military has become much more involved in the humanitarian sphere of aid delivery. The roles of the military and NGOs today are highly interlinked and interactions between the two have increased markedly. For this reason, there is now a set of formal and informal guidelines that attempts to define the parameters between civil and military co-ordination.

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## III) The existing guidelines on civil/military co-ordination

### International Law, the UN, and NATO.

International humanitarian laws provide a relatively limited legal framework for the areas of contact between the military and NGOs in complex emergencies. There are certain provisions in the Geneva Conventions relating to the way in which humanitarian organisations operate and concerning what constitutes 'humanitarian' action. The UN has published guidelines on civil/military coordination. The Draft Oslo Guidelines published in 2001 by the UN office for the Coordination of Humanitarian affairs specifies that the military will not normally be used in the direct delivery of assistance. When they do, it will be used ideally in a way that doesn't draw attention to their presence and only in circumstances that do not call into question the neutrality or impartiality of humanitarian actors.[51]

The guidelines offer three main operational principles. First, military resources are only to be used as a last resort, and UN agencies won't request them unless they are urgently needed. Second, military assets will be under the supervision and control of the responsible civilian authority. Third, military assets must be provided only with assurance that there will be no cost to the affected population – for instance they must not exploit their assets for intelligence gathering activities.[52] Unofficial statements also point to a reluctance of UN policy-makers to engage the military in humanitarian assistance work – one key UN policy-maker pointed out that 'there is a large humanitarian community out there – why would we ask the military to carry out operations that are the specialisation of others? It doesn't make sense.' [53]

NATO has similar principles of engagement, stating in their military policy that 'in exceptional circumstances, the military may be required to take on tasks normally the responsibility of a mandated civil authority,' and that 'responsibility for civil related tasks will be handed over to the appropriate civil authority... as soon as is practical.' [54] The principles rest on the presumption that civilian actors are the most appropriate institutions to deal with humanitarian emergencies because they best understand the needs of the local populations. Therefore, NATO troops should only be offered to humanitarian situations with a finite plan of what humanitarian work will be done, how long it will last, and with the aim of withdrawing as soon as possible.[55]

### NGO guidelines

Within the humanitarian community itself there is also a growing body of informal voluntary codes that 'define the boundaries and purposes for engagement by humanitarian agencies with military forces.' [56] The Humanitarian Charter as part of the 2004 Sphere Project as well as the Code of Conduct for ICRC and NGOs in Disaster Relief 1994 also consider the interaction between the humanitarian and military spheres of influence. These guidelines have outlined how NGOs should operate with military actors in a way that can preserve their impartiality and neutrality. Additionally, after the Iraq war which saw an unprecedented level of civil/military coordination, many NGOs drafted their own position papers on how they should work together with the military.[57] Save the Children[58], CARE International[59] and Oxfam[60] in particular have published detailed reports on how they view their relationship with militaries, and how they and other NGOs should interact with them.

### Military guidelines

Although all Western militaries have different cultures and political stances, most of their official doctrines concerning civil/military coordination display a historical reluctance to participate in the direct delivery of humanitarian assistance. According to the UK Ministry of Defence Joint Doctrine and Concepts Centre, the first operational principle guiding the UK military's engagement in humanitarian activities is 'only as a last resort would the military get directly involved in aid delivery, namely if the humanitarian assistance process was seen as failing.' [61] However, more recent military doctrine has emphasised the need for a co-ordinated approach between the military and NGOs into what is termed the 'comprehensive approach.' British doctrine reflects a 'situation that recognises that even though military objectives are a "given" by government, they may also share "considerable overlap" with NGO objectives and may not represent statist self interest.' It attempts to reflect the complex nature of contemporary



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emergencies and argues that at the operational level, it makes sense to 'concentrate on where there is genuine overlap rather than conflict.' [62] Military guidelines are therefore increasingly advising a closer working relationship with NGOs.

## **Integrated body guidelines – The Afghanistan Civil-Military Working Group**

In response to the increasing interaction between the military and NGOs in Afghanistan, a new body was established called 'The Afghanistan Civil-Military Working Group' that approved a set of guidelines on 20 May 2008: 'The Guidelines for the Interaction and Coordination of Humanitarian Actors and Military Actors.' The guidelines call for a 'division of responsibilities: government and humanitarian actors have the primary role of providing humanitarian assistance, and the military is primarily responsible for providing security.' [63] This conclusion is based upon the argument that in order for NGOs to operate, there needs to be a clear distinction between the role and function of humanitarian actors from that of the military. The group also offers guidance for the PRT model, emphasizing that the PRT should not focus on humanitarian activities.

These guidelines are the most thorough and comprehensive available for NGO and military actors, and the project is a welcome attempt to clarify the roles and interaction of NGOs and the military in Afghanistan. However, the group has major limitations. Firstly, there has been limited and unenthusiastic participation from both sides – many NGOs lack the staff to participate in a meaningful way. Secondly, the military has often failed to follow up and implement the commitments made either because of the difficulties of doing so or because military personnel have viewed the exercise as an unwelcome distraction. Thirdly, the group's focus has been on improving cultural relations between the two spheres. [64] Whilst this is a necessary first step and definitely a welcome development, it has not yet delivered tangible differences in operations on the ground and runs the risk of being an exercise in rhetoric rather than of meaningful action.

There is then a growing body of literature that attempts to define the roles of the military and NGOs, and to advise how they should interact with each other in complex emergencies. However, there is still considerable debate from all sides on whether increasing liaisons between NGOs and the military is a positive or negative development. Although the military and NGO spheres are far from homogenous and represent a wide range of different views, it is possible to determine some broad generalisations regarding their perspectives on increasing civil/military interaction.

## **IV) Differing perspectives on civil-military co-ordination.**

### **The military view**

Many in military circles have emphasised the 'comprehensive approach' as innovative and pragmatic given the changing nature of conflict. [65] The incoming Commander of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, General David Patraeus, confirmed 'the importance of the civil-military partnership that is essential in the conduct of a comprehensive approach,' and stated that 'we must achieve unity of effort in what is clearly an effort to achieve mutual objectives.' [66] Recent statements by both the US and UK governments point to the necessity of the comprehensive approach and the UK Ministry of Defence green paper published in June 2010 states that 'success will not be secured by military means alone: our strategy therefore combines civilian and military efforts in a comprehensive approach.' [67]

### **The humanitarian view**

In contrast, the comprehensive approach has come under strong criticism from the NGO community who argue that it confuses the respective roles of the military and humanitarian actors. The Save The Children report on civil/military coordination concluded that there has been a 'blurring of the distinction between humanitarian and military personnel and operations,' and argues that 'it is in the interest of both humanitarian and military actors to preserve this distinction.' Medecins Sans Frontiers agree with this view, and argue that the merging of roles of military and humanitarian actors amounts to the 'co-optation of the aid system by the international coalition... to the point where it is difficult to distinguish aid efforts from political and military action.' NGOs such as Action Aid and Save the Children

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have expressed ideological concerns that the militarization of aid compromises their neutrality and impartiality and is partly responsible for the increasingly danger that aid workers find themselves in. Other NGOs including Oxfam have pointed to practical issues of the military becoming involved in direct humanitarian assistance, arguing that 'military delivered aid is frequently more costly and fails to take into account communities' long term needs.' [68] CARE international however argue that as long as the principles and parameters outlined in the existing voluntary codes and international humanitarian law are adhered to, there is no reason why increasing liaisons between the military and NGOs should be fundamentally opposed.[69] Whilst there is then no single view among the NGO community, there is a broad consensus that the humanitarian space needs to be reclaimed.

## Academic perspectives

There are a range of differing views within the academic community on whether increasing civil/military co-ordination is a positive or negative development. Some agree with the military's comprehensive approach, for example Allgauer who argues that it is possible and desirable for military and civilian actors to work together, and that 'there must be a way that NGO and military organizations can more closely work together.'[70] Others on the other hand adopt the humanitarian sector's scepticism of increasing co-ordination, such as Barry and Jeffreys who reject the comprehensive approach in general, because the core aims and principles of NGOs and the military are too different to be easily reconciled, and that 'it is essential that these two roles... are kept separate.'[71] There are some who take a middle ground, and argue for a greater clarification of military and civilian roles that operate within a new comprehensive approach. Damian Lilly's report for example calls for a greater clarity on the distinctions between different military and humanitarian mandates, and suggests a framework for creating a joint understanding between the two institutions that incorporates joint training programmes that some military and humanitarian actors are undertaking. This approach represents a middle ground between the NGO and military perspectives, where both spheres retain their traditional peacekeeping roles but must work more closely together in order to have a better understanding of each others' operations.

The debate on civil/military relations can be better understood in the context of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) established as part of the peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan, that represent a new stage in the increasing co-operation between aid workers, civilian actors and military officers in complex emergencies. The tensions found in civil/military co-ordination in general are clearly apparent in PRTs, which today represent the focal point for many commentators participating in the debate on NGO/military relations.

## V) The new dimension of civil-military relations – Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan.

The clearest example of the trend towards a comprehensive approach are the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) established by coalition forces in Afghanistan in mid 2002. They are integrated civil/military organizations developed to achieve three objectives; to improve security, to extend the reach of Karzai's government, and to facilitate reconstruction in priority provinces.[72] There are currently twenty-seven PRTs in Afghanistan, each commanded by one of the ISAF member-states. They are each comprised of between 50-150 personnel, with the civilian component making up 5-10% of the total number of people. In each PRT there is a military and civilian component that work together as a team to develop strategies to achieve the three primary objectives. Their working principles reflect their structural composition of the PRT, and are designed to allow civilian workers to operate in areas previously considered too dangerous for them to operate. [73]

Beyond the three basic objectives, each PRT is given relative flexibility on their operations in order to allow them to adapt to the province they work in. Each PRT was expected to address the most important issues in its area of responsibility, and many did so with 'remarkable creativity and success.'[74] They engage in humanitarian assistance activities in certain instances, for example in areas where NGOs have little or no presence, the civil affairs component of the PRT may include activities such as the provision of food and water supplies.[75] Where there is an NGO presence in a province, the military component will focus on a 'narrower range of projects.'[76] Although this flexibility has allowed PRTs to adapt to their particular locale, it has also resulted in a lack of a clearly defined role for some PRTs who have struggled to balance their military and civilian components effectively.

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While the concept of a combined civil-military team is not new, PRTs represent a structural commitment to civil/military relations in a broader form than has been seen previously. They are broadly seen as a success by the US and UK governments, who have transferred funding from NGOs to PRTs in the last few years.[77] They have also however become a source of contention for those in the NGO community. It is certainly true that many NGOs found that the UK led PRTs in particular had been successful in mediating and diffusing tension between local commanders once incidents had occurred,[78] and many interviewees within NGOs argued that a larger, better focused PRT military contingent would improve security.[79] However, PRTs have also been criticised by those in the aid community for their lack of clarity regarding their role, and because they appear to focus more on 'hearts and minds' activities than on security. These tensions as well as broader consequences of increased civil/military interaction are examined in detail in the next chapter.

## Chapter Three

Sources of contention between military and NGOs in Afghanistan

### I) The security landscape in Afghanistan.

Since the US launched Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in late 2001, the security situation in Afghanistan has been worsening. There is a widely held view among Afghan citizens, NGOs and key political figures that there has been a 'marked deterioration in the general level of security since early 2003.'[80] Following the leak of the war logs in July 2010, the Guardian declared that 'after nine years of warfare, the chaos threatens to overwhelm.'[81] NGOs have found it difficult to operate – with over 90 aid workers killed since 2003, Afghanistan is currently the most dangerous country for aid workers in the world.[82] NGOs cannot deliver aid to the population, and ongoing massive movements of refugees and internally displaced people generate new problems. In this situation, NGOs have had to work with the military in order to create space to enable them to deliver humanitarian aid and development. In regards to military activity, both the OEF and the UN International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) have made relief and reconstruction a central part of their operations.

It is in this context that a significant degree of civil/military co-ordination takes place in Afghanistan. The co-existence of military and civilian actors in the peace-building mission makes Afghanistan a test case for how neutral humanitarian NGOs and an international military peace enforcement operation can co-exist in the same complex emergency response.[83] This chapter identifies the problems that have become apparent as a result of increasing liaisons between the military and NGOs in Afghanistan. First, issues of principle are examined, followed by a discussion over the practical difficulties associated with the military becoming involved in aid work. The chapter gives evidence to the argument that the difficulties of the militarization of aid stem from a blurring of the roles of military and humanitarian actors in Afghanistan.

### II) Issues of Principle

In Afghanistan the military has been involved in the direct giving of humanitarian assistance to civilians as part of 'quick impact' hearts and minds projects. Military interventions that integrate humanitarian activities with armed force are launched in order to increase local acceptance and win over local populations.[84] US troops in Afghanistan have tried to associate closely with humanitarian activity, for example by using white cars to capitalise on the humanitarian symbol.[85] Shenkenberg for example alleges that US troops dressed as civilians had conducted 'secret operations' while pretending to be assessing humanitarian needs.[86] In some cases, the provision of aid is an 'openly partial and conditional exercise.'[87] For example, in the Zabul province, US troops delivered aid accompanied by leaflets distributed to civilians that called on them to provide intelligence information or to face losing aid altogether.[88] Additionally, the military has cooperated in aid delivery in insecure areas to retain stability. In April 2008 for example, coalition military supervised and at times physically controlled efforts to deliver aid to towns in the South such as Basra.[89] Termed the 'militarization of aid' by NGOs[90], this has had the effect of merging civilian and military operations in Afghanistan.

#### 1. Civilians can't tell aid workers and military personnel apart

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When the military engages in relief activities it reduces the differentiation between humanitarian and military personnel. If the local population see the same people engaging in military activities and giving them aid, it is near impossible for them to distinguish between them. James Jennings, president of Conscience International, argued that the 'international humanitarian aid community is firmly against the idea of armies posing as humanitarians, with break in one hand and a gun in the other.'<sup>[91]</sup> By doing the same work as NGOs, the humanitarian community is concerned that the politically driven identity of the military will be transferred onto aid workers by proxy and therefore compromises their neutrality. As the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) explains, there is a danger that 'too close a relationship between the peacekeeping mission and the humanitarian operation implicates humanitarians in political action to which elements of the local population are opposed.' This is made worse when troops work in civilian clothing and drive in unmarked cars at the same time as carrying weapons, as was the case in Afghanistan until concerted lobbying of the US government by InterAction, who pointed out that this practice was in breach of the Geneva conventions.<sup>[92]</sup>

This blurring of roles has been inflamed by the rhetoric of US policy makers and military commanders, such as former Defense Secretary Colin Powell who described NGOs as 'force multipliers' in the war effort. <sup>[93]</sup> Many NGOs believe that the militarization of aid has compromised Afghan perceptions of humanitarian assistance as politically neutral, and has led them to see NGOs as just another part of foreign military presence.<sup>[94]</sup> Even U.S military personnel interviewed in one study claimed that they believed Afghan locals to see no separation between the military and NGOs.<sup>[95]</sup>

The need for the military and NGOs to remain distinct in the eyes of civilians is paramount to NGOs who work on the basis of 'independence of aid from political and religious standpoints' so that they can deliver aid on the basis of need alone. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Code of Conduct emphasises that 'the need for unimpeded access to affected populations, is of fundamental importance in exercising that responsibility.'<sup>[96]</sup> There are two distinct reasons why NGOs stress the need to remain impartial. First, they need to be perceived to be neutral in a conflict in order to have access to affected populations, and second they risk becoming a target for violence if they are perceived to be working with 'the enemy.'

## **2. Consequences for humanitarian access – the loss of space and dangers of association.**

NGOs stress that 'when we give humanitarian aid it is not a partisan or political act and should not be viewed as such,' so that they can gain access to civilians. If the humanitarian sector becomes too closely associated with Western military interventions, host governments or insurgents can deny them access to civilians. In the build up to the NATO bombing of Kosovo for example, only the ICRC were granted access to civilians by Milošević because the then president Cornelio Sommaruga convinced him of the ICRC's neutral and impartial status.<sup>[97]</sup>

In Afghanistan, the UNHCR had access to only 55% of the country in 2008, and the Southern and South-Eastern regions of Afghanistan are currently inaccessible to humanitarians.<sup>[98]</sup> This lack of access means that NGOs become more distanced from their beneficiary communities and more have been operating from distant offices in Kabul.<sup>[99]</sup> This kind of distance management unavoidably harms the relationship between NGOs and the civilians they aim to help, and diminishes their acceptance among local populations. The Taliban is aware of this problem for NGOs, and have in the last few years attempted to capitalize on it. For example, NGO offices in Ghazni province were raided by insurgents who were looking for proof of links to the international military.<sup>[100]</sup>

The dangers of association between the military and NGOs in Afghanistan are illustrated by Afghan attitudes towards PRTs. When PRT operations constitute anything other than security, and especially when they work closely with NGOs, the very presence of a PRT can reinforce Afghan perceptions that aid workers are nothing more than an extension of Western militaries. In Kandahar for example PRTs were seen to be monitoring the progress of their relief work whilst carrying guns,<sup>[101]</sup> making it impossible for civilians to distinguish between the soldiers who are bombing their villages one day and handing out food parcels the next. Additionally, Afghan civilians involved in PRT work have found both insurgents and civilians unable or unwilling to distinguish between PRT civilian and military components. This has in some cases made their position dangerous. One interviewee in a Care International report in 2009 for example said that his relatives in a distant village in Uruzgan advised him to stay away from their family

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because it was known that he worked as a civilian for the local PRT.[102]

Because they are primarily a military institution and are perceived to be so, NGOs who have staff working for PRTs have found the connection to be problematic. For example in 2007 a Danish NGO was told by community elders in Faryad that their security couldn't be ensured by the people because the Norwegian PRT visited one of their projects, and therefore in the view of the insurgents their impartiality had been compromised.[103] As a result of the dangers of association with PRTs, many NGOs have actively tried to distance themselves from them. One aid worker said 'we try to keep PRTs away from our offices and do not interact with them because it brings threats from insurgents and suspicion from our target communities.'[104] Although some NGOs continue to work closely with PRTs, contributing to the confusion among the general population, there have been calls for a greater clarity regarding the role of PRTs in order to distinguish between military and humanitarian action. During his visit of Kabul in August 2008, the visiting UN emergency relief coordinator John Holmes told a group of NGOs that 'I think it is very important that PRTs do not involve themselves in humanitarian assistance unless there is absolutely no other alternative for security reasons, and that the PRTs do not describe what they are generally doing as humanitarian.'[105]

It is clear that the PRT is viewed by the Taliban as another instrument of counter-insurgency strategy, and therefore civilians working within it are a legitimate target. This is unsurprising, given that the PRT was established with the 'comprehensive approach' in mind and was a deliberate attempt to fuse together military and civilian components of peacekeeping. However, the blurring of lines between military action and humanitarianism has weakened the ability of NGOs to access the people of Afghanistan and has lost them the trust of Afghans who are reluctant to work with NGOs operating from a distance and unable to tell the difference between the military and civilian components of PRTs. This is evident in reports from Afghan citizens who have expressed a reluctance to accept aid because of the dangerous implications. For example the war logs released in July 2010 document one worker's conversation with a village elder, described as a 'very disgruntled man' who didn't want American handouts - 'He doesn't want us to give stuff to his village because of fear from the enemy punishing him.'[106] It is clear then that the closer links between the civil and military spheres of peacekeeping have made it increasingly difficult for NGOs to carry out humanitarian work in Afghanistan. However, a more concerning consequence of the blurring of military and humanitarian roles to the aid community is that as the distinction between NGOs and militaries disappears, aid workers become a legitimate target for insurgents.

### 3. Consequences for aid worker security.

The second major reason that NGOs stress the importance of remaining neutral in conflict is that they risk becoming targets for violence if they are seen to be part of the Western intervention. Insurgents attack aid workers in order to gain them access to economic resources, to make a political statement or sometimes in order to remove any foreign presence from an area in order to gain control over local populations.[107] Aid workers have increasingly become targets for warring parties as they have become more closely associated with Western intervention since the Cold War. For example, in the humanitarian effort in Somalia, the NGO World Vision was attacked because of their perceived connection with the US-led intervention and one large NGO was told by rebel forces in Angola that 'we don't trust you; you're with NATO.'[108] The practice of NGOs using armed forces for protection has the effect of legitimising themselves as a target, and for this reason it has been a controversial operational strategy with many NGOs opting to avoid it where possible. In Afghanistan however, the severity of the security situation has made it an inevitability for most NGOs - every major international humanitarian agency has paid for armed security in at least one operational context.[109]

Globally, the number of attacks in which aid workers were killed, kidnapped or injured has risen sharply from 38 separate incidents of violence in 2001 to 165 incidents in 2009.[110] The Global Civil Society yearbook shows that 'terrorist incidents' targeting NGOs have gone up tenfold from the early 1990s to 2005. [111] Attacks on aid workers in Afghanistan have generally been high since the US-led intervention, and in the last four years have risen steeply. Data from the Aid Worker Security Database shows that in 2008, 260 humanitarian aid workers were killed, kidnapped or seriously injured in violent attacks, and the fatality rate for international aid workers exceeded that of UN peacekeeping troops. [112] In a survey of 52 NGOs across Afghanistan conducted jointly by ANSO and CARE in

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2005, 30% reported an attack on one of their staff members in the last twelve months.[113]

The increasingly dangerous situation for aid workers in Afghanistan was largely ignored until June 2004, when MSF pulled out of Afghanistan following the deaths of five of their workers,[114] drawing international attention to the deteriorating aid worker security situation. There has been a recent spark in media attention following the deaths of ten aid workers in August 2010 working for the Christian NGO International Assistance Mission, including the British doctor Karen Woo.[115] The incident was described by Karhana Faruqi-Stocker of Afghanaid as 'the worst attack on humanitarian workers in 30 years,'[116] and has prompted many NGOs to review their security procedures.

There has also been a change in the source of violence towards aid workers. According to ANSO, a pronounced shift occurred from 2006 where 61% of incidents were attributed to criminals and 39% to political opposition groups, in 2008 65% of incidents were believed to be the work of armed opposition groups[117], which suggests that violence towards aid workers is becoming more politically motivated. It is difficult to determine in many cases the motives for killing aid workers in Afghanistan. The Taliban have been known to murder aid workers for any number of stated reasons – for example Gayle Williams, a British aid worker with SERVE who was falsely accused by the Taliban of spreading Christian propaganda.[118] However, they have on other occasions made clear that their attacks are politically motivated. Abdul Hakim Latifi, a spokesperson for the Taliban who claimed responsibility for the deaths of the MSF workers said that 'we killed them because they worked for the Americans against us using the cover of aid work. We will kill more foreign aid workers.' [119] The Taliban have also explicitly threatened the lives of aid workers, for example In January 2005 in the north-eastern province of Baghlan, foreign female aid workers were advised to stay at home after three women were found hanged in the city centre. The bodies had a letter attached threatening women working for foreign aid organisations.[120]

Overall, evidence suggests that the proportion of incidents that are motivated by political grievances has risen. The Humanitarian Policy Group 2009 report states that 'where we can tell, the analysis reveals that politically motivated incidents rose from 29% of the known total in 2003 to 49% in 2008.'[121] Whereas previously aid workers were killed for economic reasons or where the victim's role as an aid worker was incidental to the violence, now they are attacked because they are seen to be working with the government, a rebel group or a foreign power. This evidence suggests that insurgents increasingly perceive aid workers to be closely linked with Western governments and militaries, and the HPG report concludes that 'aid organisations are being attacked not just because they are perceived to be *cooperating* with Western political actors, but because they are perceived as wholly a part of the Western agenda.'[122] In an environment where Afghan civilians are no longer making distinctions between military and civilian actors, especially in the context of the PRT which further confuses the two spheres, aid workers are now considered a legitimate target by the Taliban.

It is important to note that it is not possible to attribute all aid worker deaths to increasing NGO liaisons with the military – there are many other possible causes of NGO casualties. Aid workers are a soft target and may not have protection or armed security, and are therefore vulnerable to attack. On the other hand the increasing numbers of deaths may be simply due to the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan, because the Taliban are gaining footholds in more areas of the country and spreading their influence. Aid workers might also be increasingly targeted because NGOs are seen to be helping the government and Western intervention simply because they are working to improve people's lives, and the power holders and insurgents benefit from a divided and poor society.[123] Nevertheless, it is not a stretch to draw a connection between the confusion of military and civilian actors by Afghan populations and the Taliban and a deteriorating security situation for aid workers.

For this reason, many NGOs are now making considerable efforts to disassociate themselves from political actors. For example, Oxfam states that 'to do their job effectively and safely, civilian humanitarian agencies need to preserve a distance from military forces.'[124] The ICRC is alone in having taken extensive pains to stake out a neutral space in Afghanistan since the beginning of the US-led intervention. It has put emphasis on its unique mandate as an independent and strictly neutral entity, and has attempted to engage directly with likely sources of threat. Given the Taliban's statements on their reason for attacking aid workers, it is perhaps unsurprising to find that violence towards ICRC members is proportionally much smaller than UN agencies and other NGOs, and has further declined in the past few years. [125] Of the main three categories of humanitarian organisation – UN agencies, the ICRC and NGOs,

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only the ICRC showed a decline in attack rates from 2005-2008,[126] which perhaps serves as a testimony to their rigid adherence to the principle of impartiality and illustrates the dangers of other NGOs association with military actors.

There are then important ideological grounds for NGOs to object to the militarization of aid. The increasing practice of the military becoming directly involved in aid work has blurred the distinction between humanitarian and military actors in Afghanistan to the point where locals no longer recognize the difference between the two. The PRTs have contributed to this problem, because civilians and the military are working together in one institution that performs a variety of roles, both in reconstruction and in security which has resulted in civilian PRT workers becoming legitimate targets. The blurring of roles has made aid workers a legitimate target in the eyes of the Taliban, resulting in increasing levels of violence with evidence suggesting that the attacks are becoming more politically motivated. However, the humanitarian sector does not oppose the military becoming directly involved in aid work just for the ideological necessity of staying impartial to protect their workers, but also because military provision of aid has negative practical implications for humanitarian operations.

### III) Issues of practice

Western governments have increasingly identified military 'hearts and minds' work to be a key strategy in counter-insurgency. According to UK COIN doctrine, increasingly being adopted by the US military, winning 'fourth generation' counter insurgency wars can only be achieved by winning over the local populations. General Stanley McChrystal said in late 2009 that 'the greatest risk we can accept is to lose the support of the people here.' [127] With this aim, the military have been undertaking short term relief and long term development work in order to provide 'Quick Impact Projects.' By building schools, water supplies, hospitals and other infrastructure the military hope to demonstrate to civilians that their intervention is in their best interest. A significant proportion of aid to Afghanistan is being used to achieve military or political objectives via these projects as well as short term relief work. USAID for example makes no excuses for using aid to achieve counterinsurgency objectives and concentrates over 50% of its budget on the four most insecure provinces.[128] Additionally, several major donors including the UK Department for International Development (DFID) have substantially reduced their funding for international and local NGOs in Afghanistan, redirecting the funds to PRTs instead.[129]

#### 1. 'Hearts and minds projects' are ineffective, inappropriate and dangerous

The humanitarian community object to 'hearts and minds projects' for a host of practical reasons. Oxfam concluded in their interagency report examining the effectiveness of PRTs that 'development projects implemented with military money or through military-dominated structures aim to achieve fast results but are often poorly executed, inappropriate and do not have sufficient community involvement to make them sustainable.' NGO concerns with military aid projects can be summarized into four main areas. First, it is argued that military provision of assistance is ineffective, inefficient, and outside the core expertise of the military. Second, the military provision of assistance does not sufficiently involve local Afghan civilians and undermines longer term development. Third, NGOs argue that military aid can be dangerous to local populations, especially when combined with information gathering exercises. Fourth, military provision of assistance weakens the accountability of the Afghan government and of NGOs.

The fundamental concern that NGOs have with military 'hearts and minds' projects is that their core objective is not to alleviate poverty, but to win the loyalty of local Afghans through the provision of aid. [130] Aid is provided not solely on the basis of need, but is defined as a 'nonlethal' weapon that is designed to 'win the hearts and minds of the indigenous population to facilitate defeating the insurgents.'[131] However, the provision of aid is not within the military's core area of expertise. Military forces are designed and trained in the areas of war fighting, peace enforcement and in maintaining security.[132] They are not trained in understanding the complex nuances of relief and development work. For example, there is no military doctrine or training that is concerned with; the effectiveness of aid, the consequences of long term development, the importance of sustainable projects, providing aid on the basis of the needs of populations, ensuring aid doesn't result in dependency and the importance of building local capacities. Relief work is simply not in traditional or even contemporary military culture, and troops are trained to provide medical assistance to a mainly male, adult healthy population, whereas most recipients of aid in crises are

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usually women and children. For this reason, as Pugh argues, 'military personnel are not ideally suited to humanitarian work.'

As a result, military 'hearts and minds' projects can be often poorly executed and inappropriate. The military have historically been inadequate at offering humanitarian relief. For example, the UN mandated Kosovo Force was criticised for providing 8000 hot meals a day to Kosovar Albanians because of its cost ineffectiveness and the consequences to creating dependency.[133] In the height of the Goma crisis, US forces delivered inappropriate water purification equipment for 700,000 refugees because it was designed for keeping small numbers of soldiers in peak condition.[134] There are examples abound of ill-advised military humanitarian programmes in Afghanistan. To name one, in 2001 the US military airdropped food packages to villages containing just one meal of peanut butter and vinaigrette and costing \$7.50 per kilogram. In contrast, the World Food Program parcels cost 20 cents per kilogram and contained the vital supplies that met the needs of local Afghans including wheat, sugar and oil.[135]

Not only have certain military relief programmes in Afghanistan been inappropriate, they have also been described as 'dangerous' by reports. The Save the Children 2008 report documents how the 2001 US airdrops caused civilians to run into dangerous terrain to retrieve them, putting them at risk of landmines and IEDs, which is a real threat in a country as heavily mined as Afghanistan.[136] Additionally, the food parcels were the same colour as cluster bombs, and while no-one was reported to have been injured or killed in this way, it was a real danger. Another practice adopted by the military that is putting Afghans at risk is the exchange of aid for information. US commanders have authorized soldiers to offer rewards to individuals in the form of cash, food, and the use of vehicles or communal amenities in return for information regarding the Taliban. This puts the lives of civilians at risk as they are likely to become the subject of insurgent violence if seen talking to Western forces[137], and offering commodities in exchange for information to locals in a country where over a third of the population is risking poverty both dangerous and unethical. This sentiment is found in local Afghan populations – interviewees in the CARE report of 2009 expressed resentment that local people's dire need was being used to garner intelligence.[138]

## 2. Military aid work undermines the work of local NGOs.

As well as inappropriate or dangerous short term relief programmes, the US and UK military have launched several longer term development 'quick impact projects' (QIPs) that have had negative consequences for local Afghans, because 'militarized spending risks undermining support for and the success of independent humanitarian and development programmes.' [139] Again, the military has a poor historical record with QIPs. In the Rwandan crisis of 1994-6, British forces set up an army field hospital for six weeks, only to demolish it following the withdrawal of British troops despite an outbreak of Shigella. In Afghanistan, one school set up in Kapisa province as a military QIP was found to have dangerous structural integrity and serious design flaws, and another school in the same area was built without a retaining wall to prevent rockslides, presenting an unsafe environment.[140] There have also been problems with staffing the schools, and many Afghan parents have been reluctant to send their children to the schools for fear of their being targeted by Taliban attacks due to their connection with Western forces.[141]

These projects are developed with the short term aim of creating a good image for Western militaries, pay inadequate attention to the needs of local Afghans and do not take into consideration their long term development needs. As one tribal leader in Paktia said, 'we really do not need somebody to distribute biscuits to us and we do not need construction projects that fall down after a year.'[142] Too often, the consequences of military aid projects are not considered. For example, one PRT in December 2008 set up a three day health camp and the opening was promoted by feared members of local militias, with the effect of intimidating local Afghans in need of medical assistance. Patients interviewed afterwards 'expressed a disappointment' with the level of care, saying that they experienced inappropriate behaviour from military health workers.[143]

QIP's are counter-productive not simply because of the quality of the infrastructure, but also because they often do not have any local involvement. Afghan communities place a huge emphasis on the importance of transparent, accountable and locally-appropriate development that is based on local ownership[144] and the military have not understood this to be a priority. The projects are often developed in isolation – for example PRTs have not coordinated their programmes with the Afghan National Development Strategy. This can have the effect of



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undermining local efforts at development. In Afghanistan's Badghis province, one of CARE's local Afghan partners had developed a sustainable micro loan business with interest rates of around 10% as part of a long term community project. The local PRT however came in and set up a short term 0% interest project, which attracted hoards of locals to the less sustainable option.[145] NGOs have argued that the military should involve the local community at the earliest possible opportunity, and that PRTs should offer contracts to local rather than international contractors in order to provide a more sustainable solution with long term benefits to local Afghans.

When military development projects do not involve local populations or consult regional development institutions, it raises issues of accountability. As they offload responsibilities to outside contractors or NGOs, the Afghan central government becomes less accountable to the Afghan people, slowing the process of strengthening the government. [146] This problem becomes more acute when core military activities are contracted out to private agencies, because it is unclear as to whom these companies are accountable.[147] Additionally, local NGOs who have taken on long term responsibility for the development of Afghanistan by creating lasting relationships lose their accountability to the people they aim to represent as funding is transferred from NGO long term development projects to short term military QIPs.

### 3. The PRT focus on 'hearts and minds' work is counter-productive.

The PRT model has exacerbated the practical issues of the military's involvement in humanitarian work. Western government development bodies such as the UK Department for International Development (DFID) have transferred funding from local NGOs to PRTs. This has meant that PRTs have become increasingly involved in aid work. Their role was initially perceived to be to secure an area that NGOs are unable to access because of the security situation, and if it remained too dangerous for aid workers to operate then the civil dimension of the PRT could step in and carry out humanitarian work. Instead, PRTs have focused on hearts and minds work. An examination of news releases issued by the US Central Command shows that of the 30 mentions of PRTs released between January and May 2004, half were concerned with the 'hearts and minds work' undertaken by US PRTs.[148] The UK in particular has increased their funding to PRTs[149] with the aim of increasing PRT hearts and minds work in place of NGO long term development work.

PRTs have come under criticism for being short-termist, and failing to have the skill and knowledge that builds on local understandings of what is appropriate. This stems in part from the steady rotation of personnel in PRTs which results in a 'lack of institutional memory,' [150] preventing PRTs from creating meaningful relationships with local Afghans and understanding their needs. As one tribal elder said, 'Our PRT commanders have usually come to understand something about local politics at about five months and three weeks. Unfortunately, they are only deployed for six months.'[151] The short term rotations of staff can mean that PRT work can overlap and even undermine longer-term NGO work, as was the case with the UK PRT in Mazar-I-Sharif, where the PRT mainly undertook hearts and minds activities that 'served to undermine existing coordination mechanisms that had been put in place by the UN and NGOs with local authorities and populations.'[152]

Given that on average military personnel currently make up 90% of the total PRT staff, it is inappropriate that their focus should be relief and development work instead of security. The causal analysis undertaken by Save the Children to identify links between PRT activities and their effect on humanitarian security clearly highlights that broadly, the positive effects of PRT activities come from security related work, whereas the negative effects follow from PRT relief and "hearts and minds" projects.[153] CARE International has also reported that in the view of Afghan locals they interviewed, they welcomed the PRTs which had been active in providing area security, and argued that small infrastructure projects by PRTs shouldn't substitute for an incoherent political strategy.[154] Recently, there has been recognition of the importance of PRTs remaining a security related institution, and many ISAF PRTs are now adopting an approach that limits their military focus to security sector issues, and are taking care to avoid replicating NGO efforts.[155] These changes to the PRT model are welcome, and show awareness of the need to concentrate on security related activities. However, the flexibility of the structure of PRTs in different provinces means that there is no consensus on their role, and many continue to have hearts and minds work as their focus.

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The tensions within the PRTs and the humanitarian sector are broadly representative of the overarching practical concerns that NGOs have with the militarization of aid. They argue that the military has a history of inappropriate and even dangerous aid projects which undermine local authorities and NGOs and sacrifice the long term needs of civilians in order to achieve quick impact 'hearts and minds' projects as part of a broader counter-insurgency strategy. These problems are compounded by the difficulties of principle that NGOs have found with working more closely with the military and the negative effects of the military becoming involved in aid work in terms of the ability of NGOs to operate in Afghanistan and of aid worker security. Given these operational difficulties, how then should NGOs and the military work together, if at all, in Afghanistan and other complex emergencies? The next chapter argues that closer liaisons between the military and NGOs are inevitable given the nature of complex emergencies. If they are to work in the same sphere, there must be a clarification of roles and better operational guidelines of interaction between them in a proactive, pragmatic yet principled engagement.

## Chapter Four

Partners Apart: working towards a framework for NGO/military relations

### I) The importance of a framework for civil-military co-ordination

Unless the nature of today's peacekeeping operations changes dramatically in the short term, there is an increasing need to develop a framework for civil/military coordination. Contemporary complex emergencies such as Afghanistan have required a response that sees military and humanitarian actors acting together on the ground in mixed operations. The expansion of the military's role to peacekeeping operations has meant that the humanitarian sphere traditionally dominated by NGOs is now shared. Moreover, it is likely that the military will be working with NGOs more frequently in the future given that the complex nature of today's conflicts is unlikely to change, and because the West continues to express a desire to conduct foreign peacekeeping missions involving the military. As conclude then, the military 'maintaining independence from NGOs is no longer a reasonable course of action, nor simply even possible.' In both spheres there has been recognition of this conclusion, and NGOs and the military perceive a need to clarify their operational policies to adjust to this reality.

Given that NGOs and the military are likely to be working in the same field in the future, and that there are evident difficulties that have arisen over their interaction in Afghanistan and other peacekeeping operations, there must be a greater definition and guidelines on the terms of interaction between them. How are military and NGOs to interact in the peacekeeping domain in a manner that avoids the current tensions that arise from that interaction? The preceding analysis gives evidence to the argument that the distinction between the military and NGO spheres must be reclaimed so that aid agencies can perform their role effectively. However, this is not to reject civil/military co-operation entirely – in fact, if the military are to have more distinct roles, they must learn to work together from their respective positions. There is a need for NGOs and the military to better co-ordinate their efforts in complex emergencies, which can be helped by pre-deployment training, integrated planning processes and a cultural exchange between the two institutions. Therefore, this chapter argues that the military and NGOs should be partners apart, in a proactive, principled and outlined co-operation that rests on a clear distinction of roles.

### II) Working apart – Preserving the boundaries between humanitarian and military identities.

The most important lesson that must be learnt from the experience of the military becoming involved in humanitarian work in Afghanistan is that the distinction between NGOs and Western militaries needs to be reclaimed. By undertaking humanitarian relief and development work, often in civilian clothing, the military has blurred the distinctions between impartial NGO aid and politically motivated 'hearts and minds' work. There has been recognition of this in Afghanistan – military troops no longer hand out humanitarian relief in civilian clothing and have almost ceased to participate in the direct delivery of aid in most areas. [156] However, evidence suggests that the damage has already been done. The Afghan locals are no longer able to make the distinction between aid workers and armed forces, and so have begun to reject NGO assistance. Furthermore, the Taliban have increasingly been targeting aid workers as they are perceived as 'force multipliers' of the Western war effort.

#### 1. The role of the military and NGOs in short and long term humanitarian work.

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To avoid the blurring of roles in future complex emergencies, the military must respect the international guidelines laid down by international law, military doctrine and NGO policy and participate in direct relief assistance only when absolutely necessary, i.e. where there is no possibility of NGO presence. Because NGOs typically deliver the most effective and appropriate humanitarian response to crisis, when there is enough humanitarian agencies operating to address humanitarian needs, civilian agencies under UN leadership should take over operations as soon as conditions allow.[157] This requires no new guidelines or clarification; only that the military adheres to existing rules. Additionally, the 'exceptional circumstances' that would entail military involvement in direct relief assistance suggested in military doctrine needs to be clarified[158] so that both NGOs and military understand when military aid work is necessary and appropriate. This clarification would ensure that the military is used only as a stop-gap measure rather than a long term substitute for civilian assistance.[159]

In terms of longer term development, there must be a better effort to draw the distinction between political 'hearts and minds' projects and humanitarian development aid. There is a fundamental ideological difference between humanitarian development that aims to provide long term benefit to the people who they are mandated to serve based solely on their needs, and military aid based on political motivations that can never be truly impartial.[160] Because of this, there needs to be an understanding that the two activities are distinctly separate, and that it is important that local Afghans should view them as so. Moreover, the goal of achieving quick impact projects has led to a prominence of short term projects that have served to undermine more sustainable NGO efforts that aim to build local capacities. For the last five years at least, NGOs have been voicing concerns about the threat 'hearts and minds' activities pose to humanitarian agencies.[161] To avoid this, military 'quick impact projects' should be subject to a cost-benefit analysis that takes into account the long term consequences and ideally involves local contractors so that it contributes to the capacity building of Afghan institutions and society. This argument also applies to PRT development activity. It is crucial that PRTs make more of an effort to engage with local NGOs and Afghan civil society to come to agreement about what their development component should be, if it is to exist at all. [162]

## **2. A return to a security-related role for the military.**

If the military and NGOs are to operate under distinct roles, what then should these roles be? The NGO role in peacekeeping operations has always been clear – to provide impartial humanitarian assistance to people based solely on need. The military's role in complex emergencies has become unfocused, and the majority of reports concerning civil/military co-ordination in Afghanistan have argued that the military needs to return to a focus on security and security sector reform. The interagency report published by a range of NGOs in January 2010 argues that the military should refrain from non-security related work such as development, and should cease 'damaging' hearts and minds operations altogether. They make the case that if the military cannot prove that the benefits of 'hearts and minds' operations outweigh the security risks posed by the blurring of roles of military and humanitarian actors, as well as proving that they are changing the attitudes of Afghan citizens in a positive way, they should consider dropping them from their counter-insurgency strategy altogether.[163]

## **3. Clarifying the role of the PRT**

The need for the military to return to security related activity is highlighted in the experience of the PRT model. It has been argued by USAID that from a logistics point of view, PRTs are the only way that humanitarian assistance can be provided to those in need in 'exceptional circumstances.' This may be so, and in these environments, as in the 'exceptional circumstances' where the military should undertake aid activity, humanitarian work is both necessary and desirable. However, in situations where NGOs are operating in relative safety, PRTs should refrain from 'hearts and minds' work. PRTs have conducted activities that have gone well beyond their original mandate, such as engaging in long term development work and in some cases using their influence to intervene in local political affairs, which has attracted 'considerable local resentment.' [164]

The PRT experiment in Afghanistan is at the crux of the debate between civil and military relations. On one hand, some NGOs have argued that PRTs must have a larger civilian capacity and that operations and strategy should be led by civilian rather than military actors, so that the PRT has a better informed development policy – this was the consensus reached by the Wilton Park conference in 2008 that brought together NGOs working in Afghanistan to

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discuss civil/military coordination.[165] However, given that the PRTs have eroded the distinction between civil and military actors and has led to extremely concerning consequences in this aspect, some commentators are now arguing that PRTs should remain a security maintaining body wherever possible, in order that they do not compromise or duplicate NGO activity. These concerns have been voiced by NGOs and felt by US policy-makers, and many PRT commanders have recognised that there needs to be a greater clarification of the PRT's role, so that Afghan locals do not confuse PRTs with NGOs. If the PRT model is to be replicated in future peacekeeping operations then, what should its role be?

The analysis provided here suggests that if the PRT model is to be replicated elsewhere, then the clarification of roles between the military and civilian actors is paramount. In order for this to remain so, the role of the PRT should mimic that of the military in peacekeeping operations; that is, *to remain a security related body first, and provide humanitarian assistance only in exceptional circumstances*. Unfortunately, the confusion surrounding the role of the PRT has continued over the last year. On one hand, recent US military statements that plan to extend ISAF through PRTs indicate that PRTs are going to remain largely a military based body.[166] If this happens and the military proportion of PRT personnel remains around 90%, PRTs should perform a security based function.

However, a large proportion of Obama's 'civilian surge' has gone into strengthening the civilian capacity of PRTs[167], and Western international development funding has transferred from NGOs to PRTs. Both developments imply a larger role for PRTs in humanitarian work. This is concerning for NGOs who are calling for PRTs to return to security related activity, and the evidence provided in this paper suggests that this would be an unfortunate development, given that it would further confuse the perceived role of the PRT to Afghan locals. In this eventuality however it is crucial that civilian NGO and military actors work more closely together to deliver effective and appropriate assistance to local Afghans based on their needs.

### III) Working as partners – improving co-operation between military and NGO actors.

If the military is to return largely to a security role, leaving the space open for NGOs to undertake short and long term humanitarian work wherever possible, there must be better co-ordination between the two actors so that they can effectively co-operate on the ground and use each others' resources where it is in their interests. There are situations in which co-ordination is beneficial to both NGOs who can use military resources and logistics, and the military that can use NGO local expertise and connections. If they are to work in the same domain in complex emergencies, improved co-ordination and communication should help avoid some of the operational problems that have characterized civil/military co-ordination in Afghanistan.

There are two main ways in which the military and NGOs can better co-ordinate their activity in a positive way. Firstly, pre-deployment training is important so that military personnel better understand the work of civilian actors. If they are to work together on the ground and especially in the same institution, NGO aid workers and troops should be appropriately trained for their missions and to understand how they will be working with each other. This pre-deployment training should involve both types of actors coming together to share perspectives on the nature of humanitarian assistance,[168] and should include the consequences and potential problems of the militarization of aid, so that lessons are learnt from past experience. This type of preparation should stretch much further back in military and NGO training, for example at Staff College and force level, so that they become familiar with each others' operations and culture at the earliest level.[169]

This pre-deployment training is slowly becoming institutionalized in what is the second aspect that can improve civil-military co-ordination – integrated planning processes between Western military defence departments and NGOs. The military has sought to improve its relationship with NGOs through the evolution of Civil/Military Co-operation Centres (CMOCs) and liaison officers have been attached to the leading NGOs in the field.[170] There has been a focus on military CMOC staff putting themselves in the shoes of NGO staff when dealing with them, as an attempt to contribute to a better understanding of each others' situations. Although the CMOCs have had a mixed record in improving civil/military relations, they have made interaction between the various actors a much easier process and have helped to build personal relationships.[171] In Afghanistan, the Operational Training and Advisory Groups (OPTAG) is responsible for overseeing the pre-deployment training of military units and includes multiple sessions on

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NGOs. [172] The UK Ministry of Defence in particular has shown a commitment to integrated planning processes, and has established the Joint Doctrine and Concepts Centre that is attempting to develop a more integrated approach to training for peace operations that involves civilians right from the start.

Pre-deployment training and integrated planning process both work to improve relations between NGOs and the military. Jakobsen argues that in order for there to be an improvement in operations, there must be 'the creation of an effective partnership with civilian agencies and NGOs based on mutual respect and coordination by consensus and not command.' In order that the military and NGOs are able to perform distinct roles from separate spheres, but continue to work together and cooperate, the most important thing that the military and NGOs can do is to better understand each others' cultures. [173] Their respective structures, working methods, ideology and their relationship with government are so different that real efforts must be made to work together to iron out the difficulties that arise from this incompatibility.

To this end, efforts have been made to foster a better understanding of each other's cultures. As well as the efforts made by the military, the NGO community has shown a willingness to contribute to better co-operation, despite their misgivings about co-ordinating with the military. The Humanitarian Co-ordination Information Centre set up in Kosovo for the aim of information sharing is one example of an attempt to improve communication between the two groups. The aid agency initiative the NGO Military Contact Group has implemented several initiatives aimed at facilitating a wider dialogue between military and humanitarian actors including NGO participation in military-led conferences.

## IV) Evidence of improvements in civil/military co-ordination

There is increasing evidence that there have been improvements in the relationship between NGOs and military actors in civil/military coordination, and that aspects of improved civilian and military co-ordination have had positive results. One example of a particularly strong civil/military coordination attempt is the Danish Concerted Action Plan, where Danish troops work alongside civilians and NGOs to support reconstruction work. Troops are given pre-deployment training, partly facilitated by NGOs, and aims to work with local partners to create local jobs. Reports show that Danish NGOs 'have not felt pulled into closer association with the military than they have wanted, but have developed trust with their military counterparts.' [174] The importance of pre-deployment training and integrated planning processes has also been seen in the development of individual PRTs. The USAID report of the success record of PRTs in Afghanistan points to a correlation between the effectiveness of a PRT and the extent of civil and military co-operation within that PRT. For example, the UK led Helmand Executive Group has conducted extensive pre-deployment training and preparation on the ground, and there are weekly meetings between the military commander and the civilian head of the PRT. This ensures that no military decisions are taken without civilian input and vice versa, and assessments are regularly made on how military operations conducted by the PRT will affect local Afghans. [175]

Early evidence from the experience of Afghanistan suggests then that improved co-operation between NGO staff and military personnel can positively affect the results that both institutions achieve on the ground. It is important therefore that both sides continue to attempt to positively engage with each other, and therefore there is scope for a framework for civil/military co-operation. However, it is equally imperative that they work from their separate spheres, by maintaining distinct roles in peacekeeping operations. The sometimes painful lessons learnt from Afghanistan in terms of civil/military co-ordination have taught NGOs that military intrusion into the humanitarian sphere has damaging consequences for both the aid community and more importantly, the recipients of that aid; local Afghans. Therefore, in order for there to be a framework in which NGOs and the military can co-operate, there is a greater need for military and NGO actors to define and stick to their areas of expertise whilst working together to overcome any tensions where their operations come into contact.

## Conclusion

The relationship between the humanitarian and military worlds in Afghanistan is not a match made in heaven. In a conflict that merges civilians and soldiers, and where everyone is a target, it is unsurprising that the distinction between aid workers and military troops has been confused. Somewhere in this fog of war, aid workers are finding

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their job increasingly difficult and dangerous, as was tragically highlighted with the murder of 10 International Assistance Mission workers in August 2010. This paper has provided a contemporary analysis of this relationship.

Aid workers and military troops have found themselves working in the same domain because of a number of developments in international relations. Since the end of the Cold War, Western governments have been increasingly eager to intervene in humanitarian affairs as a response to the perceived threat of failed states and to provide a moral narrative for a new foreign policy. To respond to humanitarian emergencies, Western militaries have become involved in large scale international peacekeeping operations that attempt to bring together different actors in a multi-faceted 'comprehensive approach.' As a result, the military has been conducting humanitarian work as part of their peacekeeping missions in order to win the hearts and minds of local populations, and have therefore been working in the domain traditionally occupied by humanitarians.

The experience of Afghanistan has seen an unprecedented level of civil-military interaction. Since 2001, NGOs and the military have worked alongside each other in an uneasy relationship that has been institutionalised in the form of the PRT which seen civilian and military personnel working together. The effect of the increasing liaisons between them has had several damaging consequences. Local Afghans no longer distinguish between aid workers and troops, and along with the Taliban, view them as simply an extension of Western military intervention. As a result, aid workers have become increasingly targeted and have been unable to reach the people they are mandated to serve. Aid work conducted by the military has been inappropriate and dangerous, and has undermined both the work of NGOs and local capacities. The tensions in civil-military relations found in Afghanistan in general are evident in PRTs in particular, where the institutionalisation of the 'comprehensive approach' has further confused the roles of civilian and military actors.

In order to avoid these problems in Afghanistan and other conflicts, it is imperative that the line between military and humanitarian actors is redrawn. The military must remain primarily a security related institution and should conduct aid work only when required by the Geneva conventions. They should not confuse 'hearts and minds' work with long term NGO development projects. Both the military and NGOs need to co-operate from their separate and distinct roles via pre-deployment training and integrated planning processes in order to ensure that they fully understand each other's operations. Although steps have been taken towards this, they represent more a lukewarm rhetorical agreement rather than a meaningful on the ground commitment.

The evidence and analysis provided in this paper broadly confirm the 2008 guidelines published by the Afghanistan Civil-Military Working Group. These guiding principles offer good advice to NGOs and the military based on a sound understanding of the issues that arise from closer working relations between NGOs and militaries. There needs to be more work done to persuade both the humanitarian community and those in the military to take these guidelines seriously and to use them in future operational planning. If humanitarian operations are to improve, lessons must be learnt from the experience in Afghanistan. The challenge is to convince NGOs and the military that it is in both their interests to meaningfully act on these guidelines, and that their two spheres are in fact fundamentally compatible.

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