



DIIS REPORT
THE CIVIL-MILITARY AGENDA



DIIS REPORT

**RECENT EXPERIENCE WITH
COMPREHENSIVE CIVIL AND
MILITARY APPROACHES
IN INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS**

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Executive Summary

Reviewing the large number of lessons from recent peace support missions reinforces the observation that the determining factor for the character of relations between civil and military actors is the security situation on the ground. This influences both the nature of the stabilisation (and relief) task and the nature of the entities that are able to meet it. In benign environments, there is a consensus and general practice that civil actors should take the lead in all tasks other than those relating to security. In less permissive environments, the pendulum swings towards the use of military forces (and in particular the employment of specialised reconstruction teams) with the required expertise and capacity. There is, however, also likely to be a grey area in between these extremes where a mix of capacities and therefore cooperative arrangements will be required. One key question concerns how these pendulum swings are managed so that the coherence that is at the heart of comprehensive civil and military approaches is maintained.

Various facilitating factors can be identified, including the available platforms for cooperation and the degree of openness for civil and military actors to interact at the strategic and field levels on the basis of comparative advantage, the capacities and resources available, and increasingly experience. Two issues can strain the relationship: first, the marked change at the policy level towards military involvement in relief and reconstruction (as a product not only of force protection goals, but also of wider political stabilisation objectives); and secondly, the nature of the security environment in which the policy is being applied (which in Afghanistan and Iraq is volatile). The latter produces a situation in which (military) counter-insurgency operations and (civil) humanitarian relief and recovery/reconstruction tasks sometimes need to be performed concurrently. Many NGOs have deeply held reservations about the implications of this, but there is a need for greater documentation of impact on the ground.

Assuming an overall long-term goal of state-building, improvements in safety and the visible provision of key services by the state that affect people directly will be important objectives for stabilisation efforts. The provision of security remains a critical factor, and security actors have a comparative advantage in this area and in the related fields of police training and security sector reform. In NATO/Coalition operations, the development of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) with appropriate civilian competences and leadership is widely seen as a means to fill a capacity gap when

independent civil actors are not available. From a stabilisation perspective, the most successful models appear to be those that reflect a coherent national governmental perspective, which respect contextual factors, and which are able to mobilise appropriate specialist resources able to work with a longer term perspective.

The attachment of civilian political and development specialists is widely regarded as being a major step forward from previous operations, for example, in the Balkans, which needed to rely upon the skills brought by CIMIC reservists. Their impact appears to be dependent upon a large number of variables, and the quality of monitoring and evaluation is widely regarded as inadequate. There is a need to relate PRT goal-setting to an overall strategic framework and to move beyond the monitoring of outputs to outcomes.

List of Abbreviations

3D	Development, Diplomacy, Defense
CANADEM	Canada's Civilian Reserve
CERP	Commander's Emergency Response Program
CIMIC	Civil-Military Cooperation
CITpax	Toledo International Center for Peace
CPA	Concerted Planning and Action
DAC	OECD's Development Assistance Committee
DANBN	The Danish Battalion
DIIS	Danish Institute for International Studies
DR Congo	Democratic Republic of Congo
EU	European Union
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICISS	International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
KFOR	The NATO Kosovo Force
LFA	Logical Framework Analysis
MCDA	Military and Civil Defence Assets
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
QIPs	Quick Impact Projects
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
SIGIR	Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WGA	Whole of Government Approaches

I. Introduction

This report provides a rapid mapping and analysis of existing documentation concerning comprehensive civil and military approaches in international operations.¹ Its main purpose is to extract and review key lessons learnt and dilemmas from recent experience in Afghanistan, Iraq and other international operations where foreign military forces are, or have been, participating in a process of political and security stabilisation. The term 'comprehensive civil and military approach' is used to refer to the efforts of various actors engaged in an international operation to improve their overall coherence, cooperation and coordination.² The report feeds into a larger work stream being managed by the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) on comprehensive civil-military approaches in connection with international operations.

The bulk of the literature on recent developments in civil-military relations focuses on the increased and highly contested role of the military in the delivery of relief and reconstruction in high-risk areas of operation.

A common thread running through the literature that has been reviewed on this subject is the importance that context plays in conditioning the nature of the international response. In the most extreme cases of state failure and collapse, the level of human security for large parts of the population is low, and no single actor or group of actors has an overall monopoly of power or influence. Often the lines between active conflict and relative peace are fluid and blurred, which opens up the possibility (and need) to draw upon a range of different capacities and tools to bring stability and secure peace. Typically, a large number of local and international civil organisations are present in these operations, including UN agencies, other multilateral actors, bilateral donors, international and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and foreign and local military and police forces, as well as non-state armed groups.

At both the policy level and operationally on the ground, there is a widespread assumption that the achievement of sustainable security and of political, humanitarian and economic goals requires interaction and coherence within and between the actors present, but major questions and concerns nonetheless exist about the most

¹ This report has been written by Julian Brett (COWI), with contributions from Peter Viggo Jakobsen (Copenhagen University) and Finn Stepputat (DIIS).

² de Coning 2008.

appropriate way to manage the task. This is particularly the case in contexts where the level of insecurity is such that many civil actors are unable or unwilling to operate and where foreign military forces have stepped in to 'fill the gap' by taking on relief and reconstruction roles in addition to their primary military task. This 'gap filling' is often justified on human security or humanitarian grounds – in other words, foreign military forces have the capacity to protect and enhance the civil population's security and basic well-being, and it can be argued they have a responsibility to do so.³ Equally, these additional roles performed by the military can also serve more strategic political objectives, while the nature of the context affects or conditions the military's ability to fulfil the role in practice.

Proponents of more integrated and cohesive approaches to international operations are developing mechanisms to manage possible contradictions between the different actors involved and to encourage a 'strategic framework' within which they can operate. The emergence of UN Integrated Missions and the on-going work within NATO regarding comprehensive approaches are examples of this. They are supplemented by national efforts, including from Denmark, which has presented its Concerted Planning and Action (CPA) initiative as good practice. They are also informed by increased understanding from experience within the humanitarian and development arena, including with regard to the linkages between relief, early recovery and development (which suggests that some pre- and early recovery activities can also take place during humanitarian relief), Whole of Government Approaches (which emphasise linkages and coherence between government departments), the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness (which emphasises local ownership, alignment, harmonisation, management for results and mutual accountability) and, not least, OECD/DAC guidance on good international engagement in fragile states and situations (which is essentially a set of generalised best practice that is particularly relevant to state-building objectives) all highlight the centrality of context-based, joined up and holistic ways of working.

As the literature shows, however, there continues to be concern from the civil side about a blurring of objectives at the strategic and field levels when the military become involved in relief and reconstruction work. This refers to a belief that the 'securitisation' of relief and reconstruction occurs when the military take on roles that have previously been substantially within the civil domain. While some NGOs are pragmatic (accepting that there are situations in which the military are the only

³ Knight 2008.

means of providing support to the civil population and civil actors), others fear that this support will be determined according to short-term military strategic priorities that can result in humanitarian principles being prioritised downwards. Meanwhile, the military worry about the effects that such additional tasks impose on their capacity to achieve the military mission.⁴ While these dilemmas have yet to be resolved, they appear relatively well documented, and key challenges are highlighted in this report.

Less research appears to have been carried out regarding the needs, interests and perceptions of the supposed beneficiaries in relation to the military's role, although the civilian populations and political authorities in the countries hosting peace-support missions are arguably the most important stakeholder groups for the overall success of the mission, and their voices need to be heard.⁵ This report also highlights relevant points from this work.

In this report, particular attention is given to four themes which appear in the recent literature and relate to particular issues in the terms of reference of the DIIS-commissioned study concerning comprehensive civil and military approaches, namely:

1. The consequences for the security of the civil population
2. Strategic coordination
3. Coherence between security, humanitarian, state-building and other objectives
4. The relationship between military and civil actors
5. The formulation and monitoring of goals and results.

The report draws principally upon experiences from the operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. It begins with a brief summary of what is meant by civil-military cooperation in the context of comprehensive approaches before going on to summarise the main issues arising in each of the four themes in turn.

As already noted, this report draws on a rapid survey of the available literature, including policy-related academic work, analyses, reviews and evaluations. This is all 'open source', and some of it several years old. In the context of the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, which provide two different laboratories in which comprehensive civil and military approaches have developed rapidly, this is still very much

⁴ Wheeler and Harmer 2006; Dalgaard-Nielsen 2007.

⁵ Azarbjani-Moghaddam *et al.* 2008.

‘work in progress’. Indeed, these two operations represent a step change in approaches to the use of military resources for tasks that are not directly linked to the military mission. As such, it seems critical for its further development that recent lessons are captured and fed back into improved practice.

There are already some useful examples of lesson-learning, although often these seem to reflect the background of the individuals engaged in it. Thus, there is a distinct (often highly critical) approach in some of the analysis from a humanitarian perspective which reflects the deep concerns about the involvement of the military within this community. A lot of this material concerns the preservation of ‘humanitarian space’, or the population’s ability to access assistance, which in turn raises issues of aid organisations’ ability to deliver it in an independent, impartial and neutral manner. On the other hand, more operational assessments (of the PRTs, for example) sometimes give the impression that some of the same issues are being skirted around. Typically, these reviews provide limited insights regarding the actual impact of PRT support, i.e. how the activities undertaken support wider political, stabilisation, humanitarian or reconstruction objectives, and the changes that result. Finally, assessments by development actors tend to focus on differences between the way military and civil actors work and – accepting that there will be occasions where the military role extends into relief or reconstruction areas – attempts to provide guidance on how this role might be optimised. This report attempts to pool key elements from these three approaches.

2. Civil-military cooperation

The term civil-military cooperation is often used to refer generally to interaction between civilian and military actors, which can be misleading. Confusion arises between a specific military use of the term – usually abbreviated to CIMIC – which relates it to military objectives, and its more general use which relates to forms of interaction between armed forces and civil entities.⁶ The UN uses the term ‘Civil Military Coordination’, while the ICRC refers to ‘civil-military relations’. In practice, whether one is referring to the narrow or the broad interpretation of the term, the actual activities and ways of working may be similar. Thus, military forces engage in various forms of aid delivery, ranging from relief to small-scale reconstruction projects to capacity-building activities with governmental authorities, depending upon the context. And they may pursue this by working with (or through) NGOs and private companies whom they contract or by implementing activities directly themselves.

NATO doctrine defines civil-military cooperation as ‘the co-ordination and co-operation, in support of the military mission, between the [NATO] commander and civil actors, including national population and local authorities, as well as international, national and non-governmental organisations and agencies.’⁷ The desired effect of this relationship has been described by military personnel as ‘consent-winning’, ‘force protection’, and ‘freedom of movement.’⁸ In other words, the use of CIMIC by military forces relates directly to the objectives of the military mission. Even so, national military commanders enjoy considerable latitude to interpret this, and there is a lack of consistency concerning scale and content.⁹ Typical CIMIC activities are small-scale, short-term reconstruction projects (quick-impact projects, or QIPs), such as the refurbishment of school playgrounds and drinking water supplies, that are designed to meet a local need and ‘win hearts and minds’ among the local population. Clearly, for this to be successful, a direct linkage to the military forces facilitating the work is desirable, which implies that there should be close contact with the local population and (where feasible) political authorities. This also facilitates the achievement of a further military objective for CIMIC which is intelligence-gathering.

⁶ Ankersen 2008.

⁷ NATO 2002.

⁸ Extract from DANBN Iraq CIMIC report from April 2006. In COWI 2006.

⁹ Ankersen 2008.

While in the narrow sense, as described above, CIMIC remains a valid term in describing a specific military task, recent peace-support operations have seen military forces increasingly contributing also to relief, reconstruction and wider state-building goals (i.e. objectives that lie beyond the purely military mission), in which civilian actors normally have the lead. This is perhaps the most marked change in the field of civil-military cooperation in recent years.

There are several assumptions underlying this development. First, it is seen that the military exit from complex operations such as Afghanistan and Iraq depends upon the success of wider stabilisation efforts. Stabilisation refers to the process of reducing levels of violence, increasing protection, promoting positive political development, and preparing for longer term political, economic and social development. Pursuing this approach, the focus of military forces should not just be on defeating or deterring armed opposition. They must also take account of political strategic goals and must conduct their operations in ways that are consistent with these goals, contributing where required to humanitarian, reconstruction and other operations performed by civilian organisations and the host government.¹⁰ This can also mean that military forces need to take on some of these nominally 'civil' tasks. Secondly, it is assumed that the military have suitable skills and resources available for such a role. Thirdly, it is assumed that military forces can contribute to strengthening human security and that they have obligations regarding the responsibility to protect. Both these terms are discussed further in section two below.

In practice, the military are most likely to do this when civilian agencies are unable to operate effectively due to the nature of the crisis concerned, often where freedom of movement is constrained due to security concerns. A current example of such a situation is Helmand Province in southern Afghanistan. However, such extreme security risks are not necessarily constant and may not apply everywhere in a country in crisis. A criticism sometimes made is that the military continue to undertake 'civil' tasks in more permissive environments where NGOs are able to operate and that they lack the depth of expertise necessary to produce sustainable results.¹¹ Thus, a relevant question emerges concerning the conditions for military exit from this role and arrangements for hand-over to civil agencies.

¹⁰ Jakobsen 2008.

¹¹ Jakobsen 2008.

The actual activities undertaken in this wider military role may be similar to those pursued under the CIMIC objective and may also have a force protection benefit where they are successful (and where they are not, the reverse is true). This raises the further question of how the two types of activity are designed and how they are actually perceived by the beneficiaries. But the latter activities can also go far beyond the typical area of interest for traditional CIMIC and include themes that are particularly important for stabilisation (such as early security sector reform that strengthens national military and police forces, and reconstruction that facilitates service delivery and thereby meets needs and strengthens the state).

A form of this wider stabilisation role is seen in Afghanistan and Iraq with the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). In both of these extremely complex operations, PRTs operate as military units with civilian components staffed by people who have political and development backgrounds. This, to some extent, counters the criticism about a lack of appropriate expertise. The size of the PRTs varies (the largest are around 300 strong), as does the ratio of civilian to military personnel, their budgets and their ability to operate in hostile areas. In general terms, they aim to improve security through contacts with local authorities, extend the reach of the government, and facilitate security-sector reform and other reconstruction in priority provinces.¹² As such, they are not designed as combat units (although they can summon up more aggressive military support which can serve to strengthen their bargaining power, and they do provide a degree of security 'by presence').¹³ But generally, the composition and relatively small size of PRTs makes them vulnerable, limits the scope of their security-related activities and keeps their main operating areas relatively close to provincial capitals.¹⁴ Nonetheless, they are seen to present an important tool in support of the stabilisation objective.

PRTs appear most suited to contexts in which the level of insecurity precludes a large-scale NGO operation, but where an absence of major combat allows the lightly protected PRT to operate. In the Inter-agency Assessment of the U.S. PRTs in Afghanistan (2006), it was noted that PRTs have played an important role in infrastructure development and support to the national government. Nonetheless there were tensions exacerbated by a lack of operational guidance clearly delineating missions, roles, responsibilities and authority; a lack of understanding regarding the

¹² Frerks et al. 2006.

¹³ Jakobsen 2008.

¹⁴ Perito, Robert 2005.

importance of including non-defence personnel in decision-making; inadequate team training; and difficulties in providing adequate personnel and resources.¹⁵ The actual experiences with PRTs and their relationship with civil entities have been mixed and are discussed further in the sections that follow.

A third form of civil-military cooperation takes place where the military make their logistic assets (e.g. airlift, medical facilities) available to civil entities. This has been most common when military assets have been made available to disaster-relief efforts, but it is also a feature of integrated UN missions (e.g. in Liberia). This is perhaps the least controversial of the forms of civil-military cooperation, although concerns are sometimes raised about the cost-effectiveness of using military assets unless they are already deployed.

Guidelines exist for the regulation of the use of military assets in natural disasters (the Oslo guidelines, 1994) and complex emergencies (UN's MCDA guidelines 2004). The Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the ICRC and various NGOs have developed more general guidelines for relations between the military and humanitarian agencies, but there is a need for guidelines that regulate the broader range of civil and military actors involved in stabilisation, reconstruction and state-building activities.¹⁶

¹⁵ USAID 2006.

¹⁶ Hilhorst 2008; de Coning 2008.

3. The Security of the Population

Beneficiaries of comprehensive approaches potentially include a wide range of individuals and groups, among them local and national government agencies (often the security forces and the police), local political leaders, the local population, national and international non-governmental organisations and international organisations. Different groups are obviously of importance, depending upon the context and objectives. From a state-building perspective, government actors represent a priority for capacity-building. From a humanitarian perspective, assessing and meeting the needs of the urban and rural population will be prioritised. This is clearly a major stakeholder group whose needs, capabilities and interests need to be taken into account. While the military's chief role is the provision of security, the development of comprehensive approaches in which they take more extensive roles in support of relief and reconstruction objectives can be seen as a reflection of a more general shift towards broad notions of human security and protection. These broader notions of security also appear to be reflected in the views of local people who do not necessarily define security simply in terms a cessation of fighting ('negative peace'), but see it in broader terms of human security ('positive peace').¹⁷

The emergence of the norm of human security in the last decade and the military's role in promoting it (in terms of supporting 'freedom from fear') has distinct ramifications for debates and practice surrounding the role of the military. The broad notion of human security proposed in the UNDP's 1994 Human Development Report moved the discussion of security away from its previously state-centric focus to include also the physical, economic, social, environmental and political well-being of individuals (in terms of 'freedom from want').¹⁸ While the practical value of this interpretation has since been much debated, it has nonetheless shifted attention away from the traditional goal of defence of the state to include also the protection of individuals. As the 2005 Human Security Report puts it, 'human security and national security should be – and often are – mutually reinforcing. But secure states do not automatically mean secure peoples. Protecting citizens from foreign attack may be a necessary condition for the security of individuals, but it is certainly not a sufficient one'. Empirically, this is difficult to dispute. But there are differing views about what threats people should be protected from and how they should be pro-

¹⁷ Donini et al. 2005; Gordon 2006.

¹⁸ UNDP 1994.

tected. The narrow view is that human security concerns physical (i.e. violent) threats to the individual. The broader view (as in the 1994 UNDP report) is that it includes economic threats and threats to human dignity.¹⁹

These observations also featured in the deliberations of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) following the Kosovo crisis in 1999, which is often referred to as a 'humanitarian intervention'. In its 2001 report, 'The Responsibility to Protect' (R2P), the ICISS set out the rationale and guidelines by which states could intervene – coercively if necessarily, and with a UN mandate – against another state in order to protect people at risk. It highlighted three key responsibilities: to prevent (by addressing root and direct causes of conflict and other risks), to react (to situations of compelling human need), and to rebuild (assisting with recovery, reconstruction and reconciliation).

Each of these responsibilities raises important questions about the processes and means which are relevant concerning the possible employment of military forces. The Responsibility to Protect clearly does not rule out the use of military power, but it does provide advice on how it should be employed. For instance, it should include 'incrementalism and gradualism in the application of force, the objective being protection of a population not defeat of a state ... the principle of proportionality ... total adherence to international humanitarian law ... acceptance that force protection cannot become the principle objective ... [and] maximum possible coordination with humanitarian organisations.'²⁰

Among the assumptions of R2P, and also underpinning approaches to stabilisation, is the expectation that multifaceted peace operations incorporate both the narrow and the broad perspectives on human security. In other words, they must strengthen (protect) the physical security of individuals while also ensuring that other essential human needs are met, that individuals are empowered and that national authority (government) is strengthened so that it can meet its responsibilities. It is generally considered that military forces should be capable of contributing to the first of these objectives both directly and indirectly, and they have done so, although civilian casualties also highlight the risks of the opposite occurring. For the military to do more than this, they should also be able to work either alone or with other actors to achieve broader relief, reconstruction and state-building goals.

¹⁹ Human Security Report, 2005.

²⁰ ICISS 2001.

This provides a rationale underpinning narrow CIMIC activities and, more especially, the broader comprehensive civil and military approach. However, both forms bring the military directly into the terrain normally occupied by humanitarian and development professionals, and experience of this has generated considerable controversy. In Afghanistan and Iraq, criticism of PRTs hinges partly on the difficulty that the military have had in extending physical security so that NGOs are able to operate safely. But it is also due to a concern about the blurring of roles and the effect that this may have on the safety of NGO workers and the civil population (who become 'associated' with the military and then targeted), practical constraints (the short military rotation periods weaken institutional memory and result in ad-hoc activities), the skewing of development resources (following military areas of operation rather than overall development priorities), and the cherry-picking of projects and short-termism.²¹ Interestingly, these concerns echo similar criticism heard from the NGO community about CIMIC in the much more permissive environment of Kosovo.²²

With some exceptions, the literature is less comprehensive concerning the civil population, although it has been shown that local communities can have different perceptions of their safety and security than those provided for them by outsiders. Also local NGOs seem more pragmatic and less preoccupied with the risk of blurring civil-military distinctions. One important observation, however, is that it is not necessarily the provider of the assistance that is important but the manner in which it is provided (i.e. with due regard for the recipient's welfare and dignity).²³ This would seem to contradict one of the frequent claims made by humanitarian NGOs that it is that the security of aid workers and beneficiaries is placed in jeopardy through 'association' with military forces when the latter are also pursuing counter-insurgency objectives. Research in Afghanistan and DR Congo also suggests that some local communities are experiencing improvements in certain aspects of security (notably feuding between factions) through the presence of foreign troops.²⁴

A series of case studies of humanitarian aid in complex emergencies concludes that in many cases the coherence agenda is heightening insecurity for humanitarian agencies and local populations.²⁵ The studies show that the security issue has become much

²¹ Jakobsen 2008.

²² Brett 2004.

²³ Wheeler and Harmer 2006; Azarbaijani-Moghaddam 2008.

²⁴ Gordon 2006; Donini et al. 2008.

²⁵ Donini et al. 2008, based on case studies in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, northern Uganda, DR Congo, Liberia, the occupied Palestine territories, Nepal, Burundi and Colombia.

more complex and that former key assumptions regarding humanitarian space do not hold anymore. Unlike conflicts of a more local nature (DR Congo, Nepal, Uganda), conflicts that are linked to the Global War on Terror (Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine) or that are seemingly intractable (Sri Lanka) produce contexts in which there is generally no security guarantee for civilians or humanitarians, even if they 'play by the rules' of principled humanitarian engagement. On the other hand, when the aid organizations apply strict security measures, they become more risk-averse and tend to disengage, which is likely to increase (human) insecurity for the local population. This may be a reason for considering new ways of re-engaging, the report suggests.

In summary, the validity of the military role beyond its primary security function depends upon the context and the quality and motivation of the input made, i.e. its performance. Indeed, it has been argued that the development of broader formats of civil-military cooperation is 'an attempt to add robustness to both the R2P and human security norms.'²⁶ The case appears strongest in hostile environments (e.g. in parts of Afghanistan and Iraq), where civil actors are unable or unwilling to operate due to security threats to their safety, and where the military represent the principal means for securing aid delivery in terms of time and quantity. But it is less clear in more permissive environments such as Kosovo, more peaceful parts of Afghanistan and Iraq and other international operations. In these cases, it is often military logistics capacity that is in demand. The case also hinges upon effectiveness issues: in other words, the ability of the assigned military forces actually to undertake such work in terms of suitable expertise, resources, alignment with local development plans, conflict sensitivity etc., or to deliver better security so that civil actors can gain access.

²⁶ Knight 2008.

4. Strategic Coordination and Cooperation

Calls for improved coordination and cooperation among the many actors involved are part and parcel of the rise of complex peace and state-building operations aimed at creating sustainable peace. It has also been an integral part of the discourse surrounding the rise of a comprehensive approach in the wake of Iraq and Afghanistan. It is the need for improved coordination and cooperation that has driven the efforts to implement an integrated approach within the UN system since the turn of the century;²⁷ the need for enhanced internal coordination and cooperation within the EU that has spurred the development of its Civil-Military Coordination (CMCO) concept;²⁸ and the perceived need to enhance internal coordination as well as coordination and cooperation with other actors involved in the operation in Afghanistan that has driven NATO's efforts to develop its comprehensive approach.²⁹ Similarly, it was the desire to enhance overall coordination among the many actors involved in peace and state-building operations that led to the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission in 2006.

Even though the efforts aimed at enhancing internal as well as inter-organizational coordination and cooperation have been continuous since the end of the Cold War, there is a general consensus that the the degree of success has been limited to date. The EU, NATO, the NGO community and the UN are all facing significant problems with respect to enhancing coordination and cooperation within their own systems, and these difficulties in turn complicate efforts to establish effective cooperation with other organizations. The lack of security has compounded these problems because it has given the military a stronger role in overall coordination and in the provision of civilian tasks that traditionally have fallen to the UN and the NGOs. This has put a strain on the relationship between these organisations and the US and NATO that has yet to be fully overcome.

The emerging consensus from the field is that strategic cooperation and coordination is likely to remain weak and that it is unrealistic to expect international organizations and their member states to reach the level of shared values, principles, goals and objectives that is required for the comprehensive approach to

²⁷ de Coning 2008.

²⁸ Gross 2008.

²⁹ Jakobsen 2008.

work.³⁰ Rather than striving for the level of coordination and cooperation that is required for the comprehensive approach to work in its ideal form, flexible and pragmatic cooperation is called for. While coordination and cooperation remains a sine qua non for success, its form and content should be determined on a case-by-case basis rather than follow a standard format. To be effective, coordination models need to provide room for trade-offs, second-best solutions, compromises and coexistence. It is also important to recognize that there are certain conditions under which a common approach is neither attainable nor desirable.

³⁰ De Coning 2008; Jennings and Kaspersen 2008; Paris 2009.

5. Coherence Between Stabilisation, Humanitarian and other Objectives

As noted earlier, the comprehensive approach assumes that the most effective response to a complex crisis will be one that combines the comparative advantages of different political, security, humanitarian and development actors while minimising possible trade-offs. Coherence implies a logical consistency in policy and strategy. Cohesion, or unity of effort, means that actors pull in the same direction, combining forces where necessary, and at least complementing each other. A comprehensive approach assumes that working in ways that are coherent and cohesive will increase the focus on common goals, increase synergies and reduce unnecessary duplication and wastage. The approach needs to be pursued at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels.

This maximalist position is supported by recent Whole of Government Approaches (WGA) which seek to promote coherent policies and cohesive implementation across government departments towards stabilisation and other key objectives where more than one department is likely to have an interest. Typically, the key departments involved here are foreign affairs (diplomacy), defence and development – frequently abbreviated to ‘3Ds’. The approach is particularly attractive in relation to fragile states and post-conflict situations in which the response needs to tackle the structural causes of conflict (typically a development objective) as well as its proximate causes (suggesting early attention to state-building and service delivery) and the most obvious symptoms (which include violence and human *in*security, suggesting urgent attention be given to security and humanitarian relief). However, it is clear that the context presents a powerful influence on what is possible, and that capacity, appropriateness and institutional culture issues also arise.

At the operational and tactical levels, it is seen that the environment imposes two critical determinants regarding what can be achieved. First, local conflict dynamics (particularly local political factors and physical safety) have an effect on mobility, choice of lead actors and partners and risk. Essentially, this means that the more insecure the environment, the greater the military role. Secondly, the local capacity and resources available (including human and social capital and institutional capacity) have an impact on the choices concerning *what* can be done, *where*, by *whom* and *how*. A critical lesson learned emphasizes the importance of knowing local drivers of peace and violence and of conceiving reconstruction and state-building as localized processes rather than as projects of blanket renewal. In many cases, line ministries,

local administrations and non-state service-providers have continued some form of function, despite the collapse of or lack of relations with central state structures.³¹

As already noted, stabilisation relates to a non-linear process preventing or reducing violence, protecting people and institutions, promoting political progress, and laying the foundations for successful economic and social development. This essentially political process can be seen as being at odds with the impartial and neutral role of humanitarian assistance and the poverty-reduction focus of development assistance. However, it is a term that is being used increasingly in relation to the effort to resolve complex crises because it is seen as focusing on essential preliminaries for subsequent development.

In the UK Government's Stabilisation Tasks Matrix (2008), an attempt is being made to identify critical tasks and lead actors for both permissive and non-permissive environments. It notes that, in the latter cases, the military will be the primary delivery agent, but that they would be expected to keep their involvement in non-military tasks to a minimum. Nonetheless, it is clear that a careful prioritisation is required and that military forces will be expected to take a lead in the implementation, if not the design, of a large range of specialist input areas where civilian capacity is not available. These include relief programming and delivery, rule of law, (re)provision of basic services (including livelihoods), the restoration of essential infrastructure and some aspects of governance. In permissive environments, civilian actors are expected to take the lead, except in areas relating to security. Importantly, what the matrix also describes is a system whereby the overall strategic planning process is a joint process involving both civil and military authorities, and where the senior field team leader, a civilian who could also be the head of the PRT, has responsibility for leading (UK) strategy and ensuring the overall coherence of activity.³²

The focus on security, political and early recovery activities within the stabilisation phase leads eventually to state-building, which is a (perhaps the) central strategic objective for the long-term resolution of violent conflict. As reflected in the OECD/DAC principles for good international engagement in fragile states, 'the long term vision for international engagement in these situations is to support viable sovereign states'. This should be achieved first by supporting their *capability* to deliver core services

³¹ See, for example, Hilhorst 2008.

³² UK Stabilisation Unit. Stabilisation Tasks Matrix. 30 June 2008.

(including security and justice), and secondly by supporting their *legitimacy* and *accountability* by enhancing governance, human rights, democracy and peace-building.³³ It follows that – in contrast to humanitarian relief, which should be independent, impartial and neutral – certain stabilisation activities may be intentionally partial (i.e. offering visible support to the government). One of the critical tasks for stabilisation (and subsequent state-building), therefore, is the need to reach consensus (including among national actors) on the definition and scale of the state-building task and to translate this into an overarching strategic framework.

Meanwhile, research by the World Bank on the timing, sustaining and type and focus of aid in post-conflict environments also indicates the need to focus early on building absorptive capacity within state structures.³⁴ This is likely to involve at a minimum supporting policy-making and administrative capacity and social policy delivery so as to increase the legitimacy of the government. In other words, a range of processes need to be underway simultaneously. Clearly, in unstable contexts this is a delicate balancing act, and some sources have suggested that a more pragmatic set of targets should be pursued than the traditional good governance approach (which requires a wide range of institutional preconditions to be in place). What has been termed ‘good enough governance’ then focuses on the core governance shortcomings that need to be repaired: in other words, the ‘minimal conditions of governance necessary to allow political and economic development to occur’. The starting point for this will be an assessment of the political, economic, infrastructural and social conditions to identify which institutions matter most, their capacity-building needs, and the types of interventions required.³⁵ The application of this approach is evident in the UK’s recent Stabilisation Matrix, already mentioned.

In practice, the context again provides a series of challenges and dilemmas that need to be worked through, and risks can be expected to be higher. One critical lesson appears to be the need for clarity regarding champions of reform as well as potential spoilers. The dangers of a superficial understanding of context coupled with the state-building imperative (to work through government structures where they exist) have been illustrated in Afghanistan and Iraq, where U.S. PRTs have supported political figures whose legitimacy is unclear. The reviews highlight the positive effects, where PRTs support reform-minded officials, but also the pitfalls, where the

³³ OECD/DAC 2006.

³⁴ World Bank 2003: 27.

³⁵ Grindle 2007.

military have become associated with others who seek to distance themselves from central government.³⁶

A standard response to state structures which seriously *lack* legitimacy and capacity is to support community-driven development and increase the role of civil society. In these situations, civil society or other non-state providers may already be acting as an alternative source of service provision and oversight. From a longer term state-building perspective, however, this is untenable because it may do little to repair or improve negative perceptions of the government by strengthening its performance. Indeed, it may do the opposite: there is a risk of perpetuating public-sector capacity-erosion and distorting local economics unless actors, including the military, begin to align their operations with government plans and are seen to be doing so.³⁷ Therefore, in cases of weak government capacity but willingness to reform, a more collaborative arrangement between state institutions and non-state providers is required that maintains the state's responsibility for the quality or delivery of state services but leaves space for non-state providers also to contribute. Such intermediate mechanisms for closing the 'service gap' may comprise NGO service provision, community-driven development funds, and military and private security companies, provided that resources for managing contracts and accountability are available.³⁸ In the best examples, PRTs that successfully combine various forms of civil expertise (e.g. technical specialists and people with an official background) could be seen as having a comparative advantage in supporting such developments.³⁹

³⁶ Perito 2005.

³⁷ Azerbaijani et al. 2007; 2008.

³⁸ Wheeler, Graves and Wesley 2006.

³⁹ Abbaszadeh 2008.

6. Cooperation Between Military and Civil Actors

The comprehensive civil and military approach assumes a need to manage the civil-military interface. Within NATO/Coalition missions, there has been quite marked progress in the development of more holistic working relationships. In Afghanistan and Iraq, the rapid evolution of PRTs is an example of this, and they now include relevant expertise and capacity, even though they continue to operate within what some would consider a securitised policy environment. In a more typical UN context, the integrated mission concept is intended to ensure a coherent, system-wide effort involving political, security, development (and humanitarian actors).

The security situation on the ground determines the nature of the civil-military interface. In a permissive environment like that which was eventually established in Kosovo following the deployment of KFOR, a division of labour can be established in which the military acts in support of the civil actors, the latter being in charge of overall coordination and of providing humanitarian relief and reconstruction. While some military contingents did continue to distribute humanitarian relief and engage in reconstruction after a secure environment had been established, most contingents were happy to let the UN and the NGOs take the lead. In this environment, the key challenge is one of coordination – both civil-civil and civil-military. The extent of this challenge is illustrated by the fact that some 300 international NGOs and 400 local NGOs were working in Kosovo in 2000.⁴⁰

In a non-permissive environment, this civil-military division of labour cannot function because the military is incapable of establishing the level of security required for it to work. As a result, the civilian actors will either have to work under military protection or stay away. In Afghanistan and Iraq, the failure of the military forces to establish security made it impossible for the civilian actors to take the lead in the overall coordination and provision of humanitarian relief and reconstruction. This has had two major implications for civil military cooperation. First, it blurred and strained the relations between the military and civil actors because the latter opposed the increased military involvement in humanitarian and reconstruction activities on both ideological and practical grounds. Secondly, the absence of the civil actors in the mission areas generated a demand for civil relief and for development experts who can be deployed quickly and work in non-permissive environments to assist the mili-

⁴⁰ Scott-Flynn 2000; USAID 2000.

tary in carrying out such activities. In both Afghanistan and Iraq, the lack of civilian advisers who can assist the military in their efforts to provide relief and can support reconstruction, good governance and security-sector reform has emerged as a serious challenge that is hampering efforts to stabilize the two countries and create the more permissive environment that would allow civil actors to operate more independently and effectively. These two challenges will be elaborated upon in turn below.

Blurring and straining civil-military cooperation

NGOs display a variety of responses to the increased military role in relief and reconstruction in non-permissive environments: some are extremely sceptical on the grounds that it is inappropriate, not cost-effective, undertaken by people without the relevant experience and tools, and sometimes dangerous for the supposed beneficiaries. As a result, they limit their interaction. Other basic strategies range from coexistence (including sharing information on populations in need, their location and the type of assistance) to cooperation (including pre-planning joint activities and deploying military assets for security purposes).⁴¹ Experience shows that their concern is likely to be nuanced and dependent upon the context, but it hinges on the worry that the pursuit of wider political and security objectives can threaten the humanitarian imperative to save lives and relieve suffering. This is most acute in situations of violent conflict, but less so where military assets are used to support relief in times of natural or other disaster.

In most cases, however, the ways in which NGOs cooperate with military actors are ad hoc and pragmatic. This seems to be the result of fundamental structural, cultural and capacity differences compared with their military counterparts.⁴² Meanwhile, although coordination arrangements exist, these are reported to encourage a 'stove-pipe approach' in which information is exchanged vertically between organisations rather than horizontally. This appears to constrain cooperation at field level and also in some (but not all) capitals.⁴³

As part of the rationale for comprehensive approaches is increased coherence, it has been suggested that who leads on what should be determined by a number of factors. These include the level of institutional knowledge of the area concerned, the

⁴¹ Wheeler and Harmer 2006.

⁴² Reijnders 2008.

⁴³ Savage 2008.

willingness and ability to act in the required localities, the organisational culture of the actor, the perceptions of local stakeholders, and the cost-effectiveness of the actor related to the activities concerned. There is a widespread view amongst at least European policy-makers that civilian entities should be the first choice for assistance delivery in all areas except for security operations and military training.⁴⁴ As noted by the Head of the UK's Stabilisation Unit, 'this not only reflects relative institutional knowledge but also relative cost effectiveness. For example, the private or NGO sector may be more flexible in their delivery of humanitarian relief in a benign environment than the military, which may be hampered by carrying the extra costs associated with its readiness for more insecure environments.'⁴⁵ It may also be the case that civilian actors are more appropriate assistance deliverers in terms of the implicit messages they provide, although this same logic can be applied to their military counterparts in certain situations. Perhaps the point here is that both the direct capacity and the implicit messages of the actors need to be considered in deciding the most appropriate choice of actor – where, indeed, that choice exists.

Military contributions to stabilisation typically concern activities with relatively short implementation periods and have only a limited capacity-building perspective. This is partly a result of the fact they tend to be located in non-permissive environments where civil entities are not operating. The difficult environment also restricts the possibilities for comprehensive needs analyses and increases reliance upon the more approachable sources of information, such as town councils and tribal leaders. This raises the risk that assistance can benefit groups favoured by councils whose views may be partial.⁴⁶

The risks appear to be exacerbated by the short rotations of troops and their lack of depth on the ground, both points which restrict their ability to become familiar with the local situation. The experiences of CIMIC in Kosovo through to the PRTs in Afghanistan and Iraq all indicate that the regular turnover of troops produces a number of limitations on both relations between civil and military actors, and the ability of military forces to contribute meaningfully to longer-term stabilisation and state-building objectives. The short deployments do not allow the development of sufficient knowledge in depth or institutional memory (compared with NGOs, who may be locally based for long periods of time).

⁴⁴ MCDA Guidelines, March 2003.

⁴⁵ XXX, Collaboration of military and civil agencies in a hostile environment: getting the balance right. Stabilisation Unit, UK Govt.

⁴⁶ COWI 2006, Perito 2005.

In Kosovo, activities supported by KFOR and implemented by NGOs had to be low level and quick in order to get around this problem and were vulnerable to changes at short notice when operational priorities moved.⁴⁷ This observation supports the argument that military inputs are often ad hoc and unconnected to national planning at the local level and that sustainability can be a problem. The fear of making mistakes through a lack of contextual understanding can make military actors risk-averse, causing them to fall back on model solutions rather than tailoring solutions to assessed needs.⁴⁸ However, this trade-off has been partly solved through the attachment to PRTs of civilian advisors who can provide important development expertise, which is a major step forward from previous operations in the Balkans.

Even so, there are markedly differing assessments of the quality of different PRT stabilisation inputs. Reviews of U.S. PRTs have highlighted the fact that pressure from the military and political authorities to demonstrate progress has resulted in hasty reconstruction without reference to their future sustainability.⁴⁹ An example of such a lack of coherence is provided by Iraq, where commander's discretionary (CERP) funds were used to meet a perceived urgent requirement for support to the civil authority in respect of the removal of rubbish and drainage of sewers, thus contradicting the efforts of the PRT civilian members, who had been coaching local officials to assume responsibility for these basic service-delivery functions.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, the relative strengths of government development agencies in the UK and German models are seen as having a positive effect on stabilisation programming, with attention being given to longer term approaches and sustainability. The clear separation of roles in the German PRTs enhances the chance that government agencies can mediate PRT-NGO relations.⁵¹ The UK model, for example, involves close cooperation between the three main government departments responsible for stabilisation, which appears to have had the effect that UK PRTs have established a good reputation for contributing to improved short-term security, as well as longer term peace-building. The 'embedding' of relevant civilian expertise in the PRTs is part of the reason for this, but it also suggests a cohesive approach extending down from the headquarters level.⁵² Joint field-based pre-deployment planning relating to the

⁴⁷ Brett 2004.

⁴⁸ Savage 2008.

⁴⁹ Perito 2005.

⁵⁰ SIGIR 2007.

⁵¹ Abbaszadeh 2008.

⁵² Savage 2008.

UK PRT in Helmand has also resulted in strengthened coherence in planning and operations. This is also seen in the positive results from other PRTs (for example, the Canadians) that have followed the British model.⁵³ Conversely, it has been reported that, where this inter-departmental (Whole of Government) coherence is not in place, poor inter-agency relations in the home capital were relayed down the chain to the operational level, with consequences for civil-military cooperation within the PRT. Cohesion (or a lack of it) relating to sources of funding also appears to follow a similar logic, and the availability of common funding helps in promoting greater unity of effort.⁵⁴ By contrast, U.S. PRTs, in which the bulk of resources derive from the Defense Department, are said to suffer from imbalances in prioritisation.⁵⁵

A further lesson points to the benefits of efforts to counter structural and cultural differences between civil and military actors. In the more permissive environment of Kosovo, it was seen that acquiring a greater familiarity in terms of understanding mandates, objectives, attitudes and approaches had generally positive consequences, in the sense that mutual advantages could be exploited and limitations were exposed. NGOs reported that KFOR had a generally positive impact on the working conditions of NGOs through its security presence (patrols and escorts), as well as through its CIMIC activities, which supported NGOs or took place in the same or related environment. In fact, it appears to have been difficult for NGOs to separate themselves completely from the military because of the latter's overwhelming presence.⁵⁶

In non-permissive environments and in the grey area in which both civil and military actors are working, the concerns of some NGOs about a blurring of roles is partly that they place themselves and the target population at risk and partly that the priorities for assistance can become skewed by military objectives. For many humanitarian organisations, issues of access are paramount so that aid can be delivered, and accessed by, those in need (i.e. the humanitarian imperative). As such, agencies working towards this objective hold that aid must be provided in accordance with the basic humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality and neutrality. There is a quite widespread view (and some evidence following attacks on aid workers) that association with active parties to the conflict undermines the independent, impartial

⁵³ Savage 2008.

⁵⁴ Abbaszadeh et al. 2008.

⁵⁵ Abbaszadeh et al. 2008.

⁵⁶ Brett 2004.

and neutral image that lies at the heart of the acceptance-based model that enables access to the population with a reasonable degree of security.⁵⁷ However, it is likely that the rigorous respect of humanitarian principles shields humanitarian actors 'more in the negative than in the positive in the sense that non-respect of principles increases staff insecurity.'⁵⁸

Once acceptance-based access disappears, civil actors face the choice of either not working in an area, or doing so with the protection of the military, either of which they consider can lead to a distortion of assistance programming. Their unease focuses particularly on the U.S. administration, which has referred to humanitarian actors as 'force multipliers', the implication being that humanitarian relief can be used to support the military strategic goal.⁵⁹

Perceptions from the field regarding military outsourcing to NGOs, however, present a more nuanced picture. In studies of recent peace operations, local NGOs (and also some staff of INGOs) at field level are reported to be open to collaboration and are driven more by decisions based on pragmatism (following funding sources) than by principled discussions to which they have difficulty in relating.⁶⁰

A further observation is that both civil and military actors need to understand the parameters within which their inputs are made. This involves NGO workers understanding the essential military (force-protection) goals that can be involved in the military provision of assistance, which is likely to be short term. In Kosovo, CIMIC officers observed that NGOs did not always appear to grasp the reality that their 'need' could be of secondary importance for the military, and there did not appear to have been adequate understanding (or perhaps communication and transparency) of military decision-making in cases where support was denied or curtailed. This could be a cause of tension between the two where generally the level of interaction between civil and military actors was constructive.⁶¹ The lesson to be learned is that, whatever the relations between armed forces and NGOs, it is important to keep channels of communication open, and for all actors to understand that their actions affect all those with whom they share geographical and humanitarian environments.⁶²

⁵⁷ Hansen 2007; Waldman 2008.

⁵⁸ Donini et al. 2008.

⁵⁹ Cornish 2007.

⁶⁰ Frerks et al 2006. Azarbaijani et al. 2007.

⁶¹ Brett 2004.

⁶² Rana 2008.

A further NGO criticism of enhanced military roles is that the latter lack the necessary expertise and experience to provide sustainable results. This actually presents two scenarios. First, in permissive environments, it supports the general consensus that the military should stick to their primary security role and leave civilian specialists to take the lead. Secondly, in less permissive situations, where the military are now encouraged to be involved in wider stabilisation activities, it suggests that they need to be suitably empowered to do so. Recent evaluations of civil-military cooperation note that soldiers assigned to CIMIC and wider stabilisation tasks need to be capable of reverting to their primary military role. This would seem to imply that a pragmatic balance needs to be struck in terms of their capacity needs. Recommendations include further case study during training, so that personnel become familiar with both the environment and their role, and training in planning and implementing community-based projects in conflict areas, including identification and monitoring tools. The degree of depth required needs to be balanced with the role expected from civilian specialists now in the PRTs, who are regarded as providing the critical link to knowledge and expertise regarding relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction in conflict areas.⁶³ These civilian advisers help to shape the work of the PRT and guide its implementation. It is seen that this has distinct advantages because it makes skills more readily available in the civil sector to the PRTs and enables the latter to soften their military image, which can facilitate improved levels of access. An example of this is provided in Iraq, where there have been instances of local officials being more willing to work with PRT civilians than with their uniformed colleagues.⁶⁴

The lack of civilian capacity

It has proved extremely difficult to find qualified civilian experts who can be deployed in non-permissive environments to advise PRTs, support local capacity-building and help the military carry out the tasks that are undertaken by civil actors in permissive environments. The need for such experts have been acknowledged since NATO proved incapable of filling the law-and-order vacuum that resulted from the withdrawal of Serbian forces and officials from Kosovo in 1999.

However, efforts undertaken by the EU, the UN and individual governments to establish rosters of qualified civilian experts who can be deployed in non-permissive environments at short notice have not been sufficient. While the EU has established

⁶³ COWI 2006.

⁶⁴ SIGIR 2007.

an impressive force register with more than 12,000 civilian personnel, it has proved incapable of deploying and sustaining more than 20% of this force pool on operations.⁶⁵ At the time of writing, it has still not succeeded in deploying 230 police to Afghanistan. The UN is facing similar problems. Internal opposition has forced the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations to abandon an attempt to establish three 120-strong integrated rapid-reaction civilian teams drawn from the UN system,⁶⁶ and year-long efforts triggered by the Brahimi Report (2000) have only produced a capacity to deploy 25 civilian police at short notice.⁶⁷

The picture is the same at the national level. State capacity to deploy relevant civilian experts in non-permissive environments remains very limited.⁶⁸ Canada stands out as the exception to the rule, with its 10,000 personnel CANADEM roster. CANADEM has facilitated the deployment of 150 civilian experts to Afghanistan in the 2001-2007 period, established a 300-strong roster of Afghanistan experts, and been capable of deploying more personnel than the Canadian government has been willing to fund.⁶⁹

This lack of capacity forces the military to engage in more civilian gap-filling than it is capable of and comfortable with, thus reinforcing the problems in relation to civil actors and NGOs discussed above. It is a vicious circle that can only be broken if governments make the investments and reforms required to create the civilian capacity that is needed to assist the military and make civil-military cooperation effective in non-permissive environments.

⁶⁵ Jakobsen 2006.

⁶⁶ Gourlay 2006.

⁶⁷ <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/police/capacity.shtml> (December 9 2008).

⁶⁸ Gourlay 2006; Kelly et al. 2008.

⁶⁹ Jakobsen 2008.

7. Monitoring of Goals and Results

A frequent criticism of military reconstruction activities is that there is no widely used framework for linking strategic goal-setting to specific mission objectives, and that monitoring and assessment of performance are therefore weak. In the case of Afghanistan, NATO goals for PRTs are criticised for being too generalised.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, at the tactical level, projects, particularly Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), tend to focus on outputs or results (i.e. number of schools built, boreholes sunk, police training courses run etc.). While PRT members report positive impacts based on what they observe, it is difficult to uncover outcome-based data (i.e. regarding the change produced by outputs delivered). This is contrary to normal development practice, where a variety of participatory tools are used to design, monitor and measure the effectiveness of interventions.

Determining impact is always difficult, especially in conflict and post-conflict settings, where many of the parameters (national statistics, for example) and tools (stakeholder questionnaires) that could normally be used are unavailable, unreliable or inappropriate. During conflict, populations may flee or move around to avoid danger, and access becomes more difficult. The unstable and shifting security environment means that it is complex to set outcome indicators that are robust enough to survive rapid changes of plan and which can be monitored through standard participatory tools.⁷¹ This highlights three sets of problems: first, it makes it difficult to test the assumptions made in project planning (determining what is anecdotal and what is not); secondly, it makes it difficult to assess performance against objectives; and thirdly, it makes it difficult for actors to feed back lessons and experiences in a systematic way that can improve operational performance.

The absence of approaches that would be natural in less pressurised environments appears to be most acute with regard to Quick Impact Projects that fall below thresholds where more regularised approval processes are required. Among the advantages of QIPs are that they save time and bureaucracy because decision-making is streamlined: PRT commanders can make decisions alone and draw from their own contingency funds. Projects are implemented and reports sent back to the PRT. However, the degree of pre-planning and subsequent monitoring appears to vary, with some PRTs

⁷⁰ Savage 2008.

⁷¹ Abbaszadeh et al. 2008.

paying attention to local capacity-building and conflict sensitivity (which leads in principle to the potential for sustainability and also impact monitoring), while others seem to require more national flag-waving. Measures of effectiveness appear to be more implicit than explicit, and it has been suggested that there is little incentive for PRTs to employ more sophisticated monitoring instruments in situations where time especially is at a premium and where outputs, at least, are evident. The benchmark appears to be: 'If the project is functional and the villagers do not complain about it afterwards, it is deemed effective'.⁷²

The 2006 review of Danish experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq recommended that a stronger linkage be made between strategic policy and the field levels. This would, for example, highlight the local objectives in terms of sectors and geographical areas, and provide for alignment with local authorities and their priorities, as well as between them and agencies capable of providing implementation. In this process, it has been pointed out that the development of practical and reliable information flows between military and civil entities must be reinforced as a pre-condition for coordination.⁷³ These steps would be in line with existing best practice for both humanitarian and development assistance, to which most major troop-contributing countries also subscribe.⁷⁴ Without jeopardising the flexibility needed for operating in the areas concerned, it was suggested that a logical framework (LFA) approach could be developed to provide quick oversight of objectives and outputs, and also to provide the basis for an indicator system.⁷⁵ It has since been shown elsewhere that, even for the difficult conditions in Afghanistan, it is possible to determine a set quantitative and qualitative indicators against which performance can be measured for the main civil-military objectives, namely force protection and support to the civil environment.⁷⁶ Indeed, the presence in the PRTs of development practitioners suggests that suitable expertise should be on hand to assist in maintaining a monitoring and evaluation mechanism designed to produce meaningful data. This is an area in which there is widespread consensus that the military (PRT) performance can be improved.

⁷² Baker 2007.

⁷³ CИTpax 2007.

⁷⁴ COWI 2006.

⁷⁵ COWI 2006.

⁷⁶ Rietjens 2008.

8. Conclusions

The operations in Afghanistan and Iraq represent two extreme contexts for civil-military relations, both characterised by a mixture of counter-insurgency, stabilisation and relief efforts with the ultimate aim of supporting the (re)emergence of functioning states.

What actual practice illustrates is that civil-military cooperation since Kosovo cannot be compartmentalised into neat civil and military boxes. The military role cannot accurately be described as relating only to security concerns, although this is where its core comparative advantage lies. Even from a military perspective, it has extended beyond what can reasonably be regarded as force protection, and current operations in Afghanistan and Iraq are linking it much more closely to wider stabilisation objectives. This reflects an increased understanding that stabilisation requires not just the military defeat of the opposition, but the re-establishment of a functioning state, and that the process to achieve this must be, in some cases, undertaken simultaneously with the military mission and by military actors.

PRTs in Afghanistan and Iraq have been the main vehicle through which the military have become involved. The rationale for them to do this is both strategic (assisting recovery helps ease an early exit) and operational (assisting the local population provides force protection). As is frequently pointed out, the dividing line here is blurred for the beneficiaries, who are unlikely to be aware of the difference.

In some cases, working with the military appears to have been an obvious choice for international organisations and NGOs seeking to optimise the use of available resources. The precise nature of this interaction has depended upon circumstances, chiefly (but not exclusively) the nature of the security threat to civilian workers. And, for the military, working with these partners has been a means to bring in relevant expertise and legitimacy in order to satisfy needs that have been identified and for which local expectations may have arisen. However, the military have shown that they are also able to work independently of NGOs if necessary. In both cases, the 'embedding' of civilian experts in PRTs has been beneficial for the same reasons.

The development of comprehensive civil and military approaches has expanded with the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq for two core reasons: first, the nature and extent of both conflicts has meant that many civil actors do not have the freedom

of access they require because of security concerns; and secondly, that the policy environment has changed in favour of military forces contributing to broader stabilisation activities in areas where access is difficult. Many NGOs have deeply held reservations about the implications of this, and in general there is an acute need for greater documentation of impact on the ground.

That said, there remain a number of trade-offs and dilemmas to which the military are as prone as civil actors. There is a balance to be struck between achieving results in terms of improved services and the capacity-building of local institutions and authorities. With the notable exception of the security services (where the international military and police have an obvious advantage), these aspects of state-building require longer term engagement than the PRTs appear able to commit, as well as a broader range of expertise. A critical lesson is that interventions need to be linked at the local level to broader development plans and outcome-based performance-monitoring needs to be established.

It follows that the substantial issues testing coherence and cohesion will be in less benign and hostile areas, and that it is therefore probably relevant to see a continuum in which NGOs progressively disappear from the scene as the security context deteriorates and military actors increase. At some point along this continuum, however, it can be expected that both civil and military actors will be operating. As the security situation in an area improves the balance will reverse, and civil actors should again assume responsibility for most aspects of relief and recovery.

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