

Leaving the civilians behind: The 'soldier-diplomat' in Afghanistan and Iraq



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The emergence of the 'soldier-diplomat'

The militarisation of aid in conflict zones is now a reality and is likely exponentially to increase in the future. Stability operations are critical to the success of any viable counterinsurgency strategy.¹ Yet in much of Afghanistan and Iraq, civilian officials have proved incapable of successfully distributing and monitoring stabilisation funds alone, requiring close cooperation with the military. Many NATO countries have not adequately addressed deficiencies in models of civil-military cooperation. Meanwhile, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and some government development agencies complain that the delivery of aid by the military can exacerbate the targeting of civilian aid workers.² Highlighting the failure of development agencies to cooperate effectively with the military may provide temporary vindication to sceptics within the NGO community. However, such criticism does not solve the critical dilemma of how effectively to deliver reconstruction and humanitarian assistance to the most violent parts of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Where the targeting of civilian officials and aid workers is a key insurgent tactic there is often no alternative to delivering aid through the military. Consequently, the military has found itself forced to blur conventional distinctions by taking the place of civilian aid agencies. This is to the detriment of humanitarian concepts of neutrality, but vital to the successful prosecution of a counterinsurgency strategy. It is an uncomfortable choice: either permit the military to intrude upon 'humanitarian space', or

uphold this concept and risk total failure. Stuart Bowen, the outspoken Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), in a nod to Clausewitz, has aptly summarised the highly political nature of humanitarian and development assistance during a counterinsurgency campaign: 'If war [...] is an extension of politics by other means, so too is relief and reconstruction an extension of political, economic and military strategy'.³

In highly insecure areas, the protection of civilian officials is overly burdensome and inefficient. The military is therefore better placed to provide reconstruction and humanitarian assistance due to its ability to assume a number of different roles as required. The US Army has observed that 'even though stability operations emphasise non-lethal actions, the ability to engage potential enemies with decisive lethal force remains a sound deterrent and is often a key to success'.⁴ In the UK, the cross-departmental Stabilisation Unit has conceded that the military's 'greater mobility enables them greater access to manage projects implemented by local partners in highly insecure areas'.⁵ During Operation Panchai Palang in Afghanistan in the summer of 2009, the US military reiterated old complaints about the 'near total absence' of civilian experts, but then assembled the largest ever civil affairs (CA or CIMIC) contingent attached to a combat brigade – mostly reservists with backgrounds in local government, business management and policing.⁶ Soldiers occasionally grumble about either the absence or ineffectiveness of diplomats and humanitarian assistance/development officials. But they have essentially moved on, willing to take on tasks conventionally seen as the remit of civilian agencies.

¹ The US military defines 'stability operations' or 'stabilisation' as 'missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the US in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or re-establish a safe and secure environment, provide essential government services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief.' See US military JP 3-0: http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp3_0.pdf

² Stephen Cornish and Marit Glad, 'Civil-military relations: No room for humanitarianism in comprehensive approaches' (Oslo: Norwegian Atlantic Committee, May 2008), p. 18.

³ Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, statement of Stuart Bowen Jr., Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (Washington DC: United States Congress, 2 February 2009), p. 5.

⁴ The United States Army, *US Army Field Manual No. 3-07* (Michigan: University of Michigan, 2009), pp. 2–6.

⁵ Richard Teuten, 'NMCG Conference: Stabilisation and civil-military relations in humanitarian response: Mission integration' (London: Stabilisation Unit, 2009).

⁶ Rajiv Chandrasekaran, 'Marines seek foothold in Helmand', *The Financial Times*, 3 July 2009.

The influential French counterinsurgency expert David Galula astutely observed that during a counterinsurgency campaign 'tasks and responsibilities cannot be neatly divided between the civilian and the soldier, for their operations overlap too much with each other'.⁷ The insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq require such a 'comprehensive approach', utilising the full range of civilian and military capabilities to stabilise both countries. Today, however, we risk overlooking one of the most important tenets of counterinsurgency strategy: maintaining a firm civilian lead. This was emphasised by Galula, who warned that, due to the inherently political nature of counterinsurgency, 'giving the soldier authority over the civilian would thus contradict one of the major characteristics of this type of war'.⁸ This does not mean that the military cannot undertake political/humanitarian tasks where civilian officials are unable to do so. However, strict civilian supervision is required to monitor such activities to ensure that policy is not set by the military.

Although the renaissance in counterinsurgency doctrine is overdue and welcome, the consequences of the re-emergence of a more political military have not yet been properly understood. US Defence Secretary Robert Gates, although an advocate of a more politically aware and engaged officer, has warned against the 'creeping militarisation' of US foreign policy.⁹ The perceived success of the 'surge' in improving security in Iraq has contributed to the emergence of the most political US military since the Truman administration. The repercussions for civilian control of the military are profound.

Training the military to undertake what are conventionally perceived as civilian tasks during stability operations is both necessary and welcome. However, the decision to deploy such skills must be taken by the civil authority alone. The soldier needs to

be accountable to civilian political direction at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. Crucially, civilian leadership helps to dispel the perception of the host population being under military occupation. The image of the soldier being a local arbiter of political power in a region sets a poor example for democratic control of the military.

The civil authority should not however be a rigid, bureaucratic obstacle to a more flexible military approach. It must adapt according to the evolving situation on the ground, listening and responding to military advice, while ensuring that government policies are not compromised by the military for the sake of expediency. To undertake this complex task will require a *civilian* doctrine and an unconventional diplomat.

The political military

The inadequacy of the military's ad hoc approach to stability operations in Iraq was highlighted by a senior Coalition official who, upon visiting Iraq in 2006, discovered 'a naval submariner, an ultrasound technician, and an infantry drill sergeant who were all advising Iraqi provincial governors'.¹⁰ In 2001 and 2003 many senior Coalition military officers were still operating according to the 'no-politics' doctrine of the Cold War, content to leave politics, reconstruction and humanitarian assistance to the civilians.¹¹

This era is gone. The post-invasion trauma of Iraq and the failure to stabilise Afghanistan since 2001 has left a deep institutional scar upon civil-military relations in both the US and the UK. A lack of planning, resources and restrictions on civilian officials' movements was exacerbated by an inadequate military civil affairs capacity to fill the void. The US and its allies have struggled to regain the initiative in Afghanistan and

⁷ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency warfare: Theory and practice* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006 (reprinted)), p. 61.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 63.

⁹ US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 'Defining the military's role towards foreign policy', testimony of Undersecretary of Defence for Policy Eric Edelman, 31 July 2008.

¹⁰ House Committee on Armed Services, 'The role of the department of defense in provincial reconstruction teams', testimony of Ginger Cruz, Deputy Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (Washington DC, 5 September 2007), p. 4.

¹¹ Galula, *op. cit.* p. 66.

Iraq ever since. The experiences of the US and the UK are instructive in assessing the recent evolution of the civil-military contribution to stability operations.

The US military has undergone a radical shift in how it prepares for war. This can be traced back to 2005 when the Department of Defence (DoD) implemented a landmark new directive which unambiguously referred to stability operations as a 'core US military mission that the Department of Defence shall be prepared to conduct and support. They shall be given priority comparable to combat operations [...]'.¹² More recently, Defence Secretary Robert Gates has set about re-orientating the US military's trillion-dollar defence budget towards a focus on counterinsurgency and stability operations.¹³ DoD spending of US Official Development Assistance (ODA) has rapidly proliferated, rising from 3.5 per cent before 2003 to almost 26 per cent in 2008.¹⁴

In response to its experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, in 2008 the US Army produced a Stability Operations Field Manual that effectively offers a coherent set of guidelines on how the military can assume responsibility for all the 3 Ds: defence, diplomacy and development. The introduction to the Field Manual observes that 'expeditionary civilians exist neither in the numbers, nor with the skill sets, required for today's operations' and even if these were to exist, 'there will still be many instances in which it is too dangerous for these civilians to deploy'.¹⁵ The manual goes on to describe potential US military involvement in not only the emergency provision of essential services but also in how to assume a full range of political responsibilities – essentially the functions of government – until authority can be transitioned to a civil authority. It offers a careful set of guidelines on various governance tasks the military may be expected to assume, including the preparation and supervision of

elections. It seeks to learn the lessons of Iraq by foreseeing 'military forces quickly seizing the initiative to improve the civil situation while preventing the situation from deteriorating further'.¹⁶

The Stability Operations Field Manual is a natural extension of counterinsurgency doctrine within the US military. The manual does not however offer guidance on the division of political labour between the military in theatre and the diplomats whose task it is to lead on bilateral relations. It also assumes a capacity within the US military that does not exist. Civil affairs officers (predominantly reservists from administrative or construction professional backgrounds) lack training in political and linguistic skills, as well as an advanced knowledge of their local environment upon deploying to Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁷ The US military is quickly adapting however, and has substantially increased funding for language and cultural training since 2007.¹⁸

The US military has developed a tendency to design and make policy in Iraq without sufficient civilian oversight. The local agreement reached in 2006 and 2007 by the US military to 'turn' significant parts of Sunni insurgency was initially the brainchild of a mid-ranking US officer, Colonel Sean MacFarland, who transformed former insurgent militia into US allies without the consent of the Iraqi government. This decision 'took the United States into the dangerous and complex new territory of supporting an armed group that was opposed to the government in Baghdad that the United States also supported'.¹⁹ The 'surge' strategy bypassed the State Department and the military chain of command. The fact that this policy has been partly vindicated does not lessen the worrying implications such actions have for civil-military relations. More recently, the Obama administration's appointment of

¹⁶ Ibid. pp. 2–4.

¹⁷ Interview with an MNF–I official, Iraq, March 2009.

¹⁸ See for example 'Building language skills and cultural competencies in the military: DoD's challenge in today's educational environment' (Washington DC: House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Armed Services, November 2008).

¹⁹ Thomas Ricks, *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the untold story of the American surge in Iraq, 2006–2008* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), p. 69.

¹² The United States Army, op. cit. pp. 1–3.

¹³ Robert Gates, 'Balanced strategy', *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2009.

¹⁴ US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, testimony of Undersecretary of Defence for Policy Eric Edelman, op. cit.

¹⁵ The United States Army, op. cit. p. xvii.

General Karl Eikenberry as Ambassador to Kabul in early 2009 gives the impression that senior US military officers are better at making policy in Afghanistan than their civilian counterparts.

Although the UK military has been quick to blame the Labour government for not deploying enough personnel or material in either Afghanistan and Iraq, the passing of blame has obscured what one former officer has described as an 'insular, conformist culture' that has sapped its 'capacity for international reflection and rapid change'.²⁰ Despite such criticism, it is obvious that some senior UK officers do wish to learn from the mistakes in Afghanistan and Iraq. UK officers have spoken enviously of the US Foreign Area Officer concept and training which allows US officers to acquire a wide range of skills, whether in international development or languages. The recently retired Chief of the General Staff of the British Army, General Sir Richard Dannatt, has frequently called for more inter-agency coordination to facilitate the wider training of British officers.

The evolution of the UK military has been much less ambitious than that of the US since the beginning of the campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Labour government has not undertaken a Strategic Defence Review in more than a decade. Despite a reduction in defence spending from 4.1 per cent of the GDP in 1990 to under 3 per cent today, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) proposes to spend a large part of this limited budget on a new nuclear deterrent and two new aircraft carriers that many UK defence experts believe to be surplus to requirements. Given the shortage of specialist skills and vital equipment for British troops deployed in Afghanistan, one serving officer bluntly observed that 'the choice we face is "Fortress Britain" versus "intervention" [...] What we really need is to develop armies that can get out into the world, helping to stabilise conflict situations, conducting "war among the people". We're not preparing for that at all'.²¹

²⁰ Patrick Little, 'Lessons learned and unlearned: A former officer's perspective on the British Army at war', *RUSI Journal* 154/3, pp. 10–16.

²¹ James Blitz, 'Testing waters ahead', *The Financial Times*, 20 May 2009.

Following the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the UK Armed Forces were convinced that political reconciliation and development were the sole remit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DFID), complacently referring to the civilians as their 'ticket out'.²² Due to this outmoded approach, the British Army neglected to deploy a strong CIMIC contingent and did not sufficiently draw upon their pool of civilian reservists to fulfil such a role. Until the British withdrawal from Iraq in 2009, civil-military relations in the country were incoherent, lacking an institutional framework to facilitate cooperation, reflecting conflicting views among the six-monthly rotating UK generals on whether the military should 'do' stability operations.²³

The UK Armed Forces in Helmand Province have learned from the experience of Iraq by moving to improve civil-military relations. Military personnel are better placed to gather knowledge on local contractors and monitor projects. The military has also worked to ensure that training and monitoring teams, while maintaining 'the necessary force protection capabilities', operate in a deliberately less overt manner. The UK Armed Forces have established a unit of CIMIC officers, the Military Stabilisation Support Group (MSSG), with a range of stabilisation skills. Senior military personnel have also acknowledged a need to improve training in linguistic and cultural skills, including knowledge of local political structures. In September 2009, the Ministry of Defence moved to address this knowledge deficit by creating a Defence Cultural Specialist Unit (DCSU) to advise commanders on operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Although the UK military has faced the same dilemmas as its US counterpart, it has reacted differently, in part due to a lack of funds with which to undertake stability operations unilaterally. Despite obvious frustrations with their civilian counterparts, senior UK officers have been reluctant to change the political game in the areas under their command in Afghanistan and Iraq.

²² Hilary Synnott, *Bad days in Basra: My turbulent time as Britain's man in Southern Iraq* (London: I.B Tauris, 2008), p. 35.

²³ Interview with a UK official, Basra, March 2009.

Such an enduring preference to 'leave politics to the civilians' has allowed the civilian agencies to improve their performance in Afghanistan and re-assert their political primacy at every level of operations. It has also enabled the emergence of a unique model of civil-military cooperation in Helmand Province. The British Army's Defence Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC) at Shrivenham have drawn upon these experiences to produce a long-awaited Stability Operations doctrine at the end of 2009.

Where are the civilians?

There has been considerable disquiet within the US and UK Armed Forces regarding the failure of their respective governments to deliver a coherent and achievable strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq. The UK military primarily sees its role in Afghanistan as one of 'buying space' for the civilians to provide political solutions, but is deeply frustrated at the lack of a coherent narrative and realistic strategy for success.²⁴ This has led to a worrying trend of the military launching political broadsides at their civilian masters. Prior to his retirement in summer 2009, General Sir Richard Dannatt implicitly criticised the government for failing to implement a political strategy in Afghanistan.²⁵

Afghan former Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani observed that 'NATO has been effective in the military area, but it has not been supplemented from the civilian political side to the same degree of effectiveness [...] This might force NATO to fight battles repeatedly without winning the war'.²⁶ In Iraq, Coalition diplomats never succeeded in brokering resolutions to

key political problems, including the status of disputed areas such as Kirkuk, deadlock over hydrocarbon legislation and the demobilisation of militia.

Diplomats and development officials have reasonably argued that their numbers were always too small to realise the expectations of their governments and of the military. Most NATO member states have failed in Afghanistan to deliver the elusive 'comprehensive approach' of leveraging 'all the instruments of national power – diplomatic, informational, military, and economic – to improve stability'.²⁷

Although Multi-National Force–Iraq (MNF–I) and ISAF officers frequently complain about the shortage of civilian experts in areas worst affected by insurgency, it is debatable whether a significant increase of civilians will deliver the results expected of them unless highly restrictive limitations on movement are reassessed.²⁸ Diplomats and civilian experts' movements are greatly hindered by regulations imposed by their respective ministries – what former British diplomat Hilary Synnott has called 'the dead hand of senior managers'. Excessive 'duty of care' restrictions prevent diplomats and civilian experts from delivering accurate analysis of the political situation and developing/monitoring reconstruction projects.²⁹ ISAF Commander General Stanley McChrystal has described the international presence in Afghanistan as being preoccupied with the protection of its civilian and military personnel, operating in a manner 'that distances us – physically and psychologically – from the people we seek to protect'. According to McChrystal, this has led to a knowledge deficit that contributes to poor decision-making and insufficient oversight of contracts, 'reinforcing the perception of corruption within ISAF and the international community'.³⁰ However, the response to this challenge

²⁴ Ministry of Defence, 'Afghanistan casualties', statement of Chief of Defence Staff Sir Jock Stirrup (London, 10 July 2009).

²⁵ Gen. Sir Richard Dannatt, 'A Perspective on the nature of future conflict' (transcript of meeting at Chatham House, London, 15 May 2009), p. 2.

²⁶ CITPAX, 'Excerpts from the intervention by HE Ashraf Ghani, former Finance Minister of Afghanistan', paper presented at the CITPAX Initiative on Peacebuilding and Governance in Afghanistan, 16–17 October 2007.

²⁷ The United States Army, op. cit. p. F-1.

²⁸ Finn Stepputat, 'Synthesis report: Civil-military relations in international operations – a Danish perspective' (Copenhagen: DIIS, April 2009), p. 8.

²⁹ Synnott, op. cit. p. 261.

³⁰ General Stanley McChrystal (COMISAF), 'Commander's initial assessment' (Kabul: Headquarters International Security Assistance Force, 30 August 2009), pp. 1–2 and 2–10.

is not uniform within ISAF. For example, the UK has increasingly come to see the greater mobility of its civilian personnel in Helmand as necessary, despite obvious security concerns. Consequently, civilian personnel attached to the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Lashkar Gah and stabilisation advisers have a much wider presence in the province than they did in 2007 and early 2008. A senior UK official has concluded that 'we overstated the role of the military and understated what civilians could do even in a hostile environment.'³¹ This contrasts with other ISAF PRT-lead countries who continue to take a more cautious approach.

In some provinces, senior UN officials, who have spent the bulk of the EU's almost €1 billion in aid, have never actually seen the projects they have commissioned. Development agencies such as the UK's DFID have even resorted to attempting to monitor projects through aerial photography.³² In Afghanistan, a 2009 report by the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) observed that an escalation of attacks by insurgents on aid workers has resulted in a 'general retrenchment [of aid workers] to provincial capitals and a shrinking of the overall field presence'.³³ Despite increased restrictions on civilian movements, many ISAF contributors are reluctant to allow the military to monitor contracts.³⁴ This is understandable but overlooks the clear warning from the Taliban-Quetta Shura leadership that any organisation providing aid without their direct permission will be targeted.³⁵ The HPG has concluded that, regardless of whether projects are implemented by international or local staff, '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 part of the

Western agenda.'³⁶ In Afghanistan, clearly distinguishing civilian aid from military operations is not enough to avoid being systematically targeted by insurgents. In an attempt to reduce the waste of funds and the strain on the military, international donors have begun to contract private security companies (PSCs) to oversee projects, with mixed results and insufficient oversight of their often highly political activities.

Prior to the Iraq war, the conventional thinking in the US government was 'to get diplomats out of war zones on the understanding that diplomats had to be protected and preserved for when the fighting was over'.³⁷ In the aftermath of the political chaos that gripped Iraq in late 2003–2004, the US State Department conceded that it had insufficient resources to 'plan, implement or manage stabilisation and reconstruction operations'.³⁸ Exacerbating the weakness of inter-agency coordination in Afghanistan and Iraq is the lack of specialist skills and local knowledge of US diplomats deployed there. Few have experience or sufficient training in working with the military in hostile environments. The reality that diplomacy in conflict situations requires highly specialised skills, that cannot be simply learned 'on the job' by a Foreign Service Officer (FSO) more accustomed to conventional diplomacy, is an important lesson that the State Department has yet to show definitive signs of learning. The culture of the State Department is partly to blame: US diplomats are generally discouraged from cross-agency assignments as these postings are often perceived as detrimental to future career prospects.³⁹ This is the opposite experience to that of the US military, where an ambitious officer is now expected to work in multiple disciplines.

³¹ Interview with a UK official, September 2009.

³² National Audit Office, 'Department for International Development: Operating in Insecure Environments' (London: National Audit Office, Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, 16 October 2008), p. 25.

³³ Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), 'Providing aid in insecure environments: 2009 update' (New York: HPG 2009), p. 6.

³⁴ Interview with a Spanish official, Barcelona, 16 June 2009.

³⁵ 'A book of rules' (Quetta: The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 10 September 2009).

³⁶ Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), op. cit. p. 6.

³⁷ J. Anthony, 'Where are the civilians?', *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2009.

³⁸ Government Accountability Office (GAO), 'Stabilisation and reconstruction: Actions are needed to develop a planning and coordination framework and establish the civilian reserve corps' (Washington DC: GAO, November 2007), p. 1.

³⁹ Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs, testimony of Dr. Gordon Adams, Professor of International Relations, School of International Service (Washington DC: American University, 31 July 2008).

As of January 2009, the Political-Military Bureau at the State Department had 26 foreign policy or political adviser (POLAD) positions attached to the military. Another 17 FSOs were assigned to military education and training institutes. However, in the past such positions have been considered career dead-ends by FSOs, and the military has frequently complained that 'DoS doesn't exactly send its A Team'.⁴⁰ POLADs also do not receive the extensive training necessary to adapt to an advisory role in a military environment, and the State Department has no mechanism in place to track officers who previously held political-military positions at home so that a pool of experienced officers could be maintained for future deployments and consultations.⁴¹

In Iraq, US diplomats rarely venture out of large military bases unless accompanied by a heavy security escort, often provided by PSCs deeply resented by the local populace. In particularly dangerous areas, civilian officials will frequently not leave military compounds for weeks or even months. During this time their only contact with Iraqis will be with local employees who work within the military zone.⁴² Many diplomats are therefore almost completely ignorant of their surroundings and rely heavily upon the military or the intelligence agencies for information on local events. This has a severe effect upon morale: 'Americans don't join the Foreign Service to hunker down in a bomb-proof bunker, cut off [...] from the people and the culture of their host country'.⁴³

The lack of training provided to US diplomats and restrictions on movement have had severe consequences with regard to political dynamics in Afghanistan and Iraq. Vastly inflated contracts stir up resentment by

making a few individuals extremely wealthy. In the case of Iraq, the monopoly on US reconstruction contracts was compounded by the reality that many 'bids' were in fact all sub-contracted to just a few local construction companies, which in turn imported significant quantities of materials from individuals with close contacts with the Iranian government.⁴⁴ In Afghanistan, Iraqi businessmen contracted by the US and other ISAF contributors to undertake reconstruction projects often pay bribes to the Taliban to secure the safe passage of building supplies.⁴⁵ USAID has also recently begun sub-contracting monitoring to international civilian contractors, adding another layer of bureaucracy to an already convoluted landscape of agencies engaged in stability operations.⁴⁶ More pragmatically, USAID has occasionally requested that the military take over monitoring duties of contracts where the perceived threat level to US civilian officials has significantly escalated.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, it appears that some lessons from Iraq are simply not being learned. Stuart Bowen, Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, has noted that his counterpart in Afghanistan, whose office was created in 2008, is encountering the same problems there due to 'very little oversight' of the \$32 billion that has been appropriated.⁴⁸ There is an unquestionable need for a 'comprehensive approach' to reconstruction contracting procedures, including the possible creation of one single civil-military agency to take a clear lead on humanitarian aid and reconstruction in areas worst affected by insurgency.

In the campaign to 'win hearts and minds' in Afghanistan and Iraq, the military has come to expect too much from its civilian counterparts. The culture of the military predisposes it to expect that, where civilian

⁴⁰ Rusty Barber and Sam Parker, 'Evaluating Iraq's provincial reconstruction teams while drawdown looms', USIP Trip Report, December 2008, p. 1.

⁴¹ John Finney and Alphonse La Porta, 'Integrating national security at the operational level: The role of state department political advisers', in Gabriel Marcella (ed.), *Affairs of state: The interagency and national security* (Washington DC: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute), pp. 304–05.

⁴² Interviews, Basra and Dhi Qar Provinces, March and April 2009.

⁴³ Charles Crain, 'Why diplomats won't go to Iraq', *Time*, 2 November 2007.

⁴⁴ Interviews with MNF-I officials, Iraq, March and April 2009.

⁴⁵ Patrick Cockburn, 'Return to Afghanistan', *London Review of Books*, 11 June 2009.

⁴⁶ National Audit Office, op. cit. p. 25.

⁴⁷ US Senate Committee on Appropriations, statement of Stuart Bowen Jr., Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (Washington DC: United States Congress, 11 March 2008), p. 9.

⁴⁸ Committee on Armed Services, statement of Stuart Bowen Jr., Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction' (Washington DC: United States Congress, 25 March 2009).

agencies 'have the lead', they have the resources and know-how to deploy self-sufficiently. However, it is obvious that, in addition to bureaucratic shortcomings, the State Department and USAID do not have sufficient funding from which to recruit and train personnel: it is estimated that only one cent of every dollar the US government spends on national security and foreign affairs is allocated to diplomacy and aid.⁴⁹ There is clearly a chronic shortage of US Foreign Service Officers – key diplomatic posts in the Middle East remain unfilled – with severe consequences for US diplomacy abroad and civilian control of foreign policy.⁵⁰ In 1990, USAID's direct hire personnel numbered 3,500, down from 15,000 during the Vietnam war. This figure has further reduced by another third since the First Gulf War even as USAID's budget has increased from \$5 billion annually to \$13.2 billion today.⁵¹

The US has finally grasped that the State Department and USAID need to prepare for conflict and not just 'post-conflict' engagement. It is envisaged that in 2009 and 2010 150 additional POLAD diplomats will be embedded within military commands, although it remains unclear how POLADs fit into the command structure of US operations.⁵² In 2008, USAID created an Office of Military Affairs (OMA) to facilitate coordination with the military, and is now comparatively far ahead of other NATO government development agencies in acknowledging that they have a significant role to play in contributing to US national security.⁵³ This follows the creation of the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilisation (S/CRS) in 2004 as part of the US government's Civilian Stabilisation Initiative. Remarkably, however, the US Congress refused to pass a State Department

authorisation bill to fund S/CRS.⁵⁴ Admiral Mike Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, intervened to plead S/CRS' case, which was eventually awarded \$200 million from the Defense Department's budget for 2006 and 2007.⁵⁵ The funding of a large share of humanitarian and reconstruction projects from the defence budget is exactly the opposite experience of other NATO countries where the budget has been controlled by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs or a respective development agency. The Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) stabilisation fund for 2008 amounted to approximately half a billion dollars, more than the combined education and health budgets of the Afghan government for that year.⁵⁶ US diplomats and aid officials are increasingly reliant upon the goodwill of the Defense Department and the military to fund their projects in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In 2005, the newly constituted S/CRS developed a draft Planning Framework for Reconstruction, Stabilisation and Conflict Transformation, sending out a first draft for interagency comments. Disputes over the wording continued until 2008 when the S/CRS was forced to abandon the document and published a less detailed document, laying out a Planning Framework, which was finally approved in May 2008.⁵⁷ S/CRS does not have the authority or personnel to lead a 'comprehensive approach'; rather it facilitates agreement between the various parties and manages a reserve of civilian experts. Its influence in Afghanistan and Iraq has been extremely limited.⁵⁸ The complexity of S/CRS' task has been exacerbated by a highly confused and burdensome Congressional Committee system, with over eight committees assuming responsibility for stabilisation and reconstruction activities.

⁴⁹ Anthony, *op. cit.*

⁵⁰ US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, testimony of the Secretary of State before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Washington DC: United States Congress, 20 May 2009).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² John Finney and Alphonse La Porta, 'FS Know-How: Maximising the value of the political adviser function', *Foreign Service Journal*, October 2008.

⁵³ Rand National Defence Research Institute, 'Improving capacity for stabilisation and reconstruction operations' (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2009), p. xxi.

⁵⁴ US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 'Defining the military's role towards foreign policy', statement by Robert Perito, 31 July 2008.

⁵⁵ US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, testimony of Undersecretary of Defence for Policy Eric Edelman, *op. cit.*

⁵⁶ Matt Waldman, 'Caught in the conflict: Civilians and the international security strategy in Afghanistan' (London: Oxfam International, 2009), p. 14.

⁵⁷ Rand National Defence Research Institute, *op. cit.* p. 40.

⁵⁸ Stewart Patrick, 'The US Response to Precarious States: Tentative Progress and Remaining Obstacles to Coherence' in Stefani Weiss, Han-Joachim Spanger, Wim van Meurs (eds.), *Diplomacy, Development and Defense: A paradigm for policy coherence* (Gutersloh: Bertelsmann, 2009), p.66.

In August 2009 the US Ambassador in Kabul, Karl Eikenberry, and General McChrystal agreed to implement an Integrated Civil-Military Campaign Plan (ICMCP) for Afghanistan. This initiative is an innovative attempt by the US civilian and military leadership in Kabul to develop a model for civil-military relations during counterinsurgency and stability operations, and to some extent illustrates the dearth of appropriate structures and guidance emanating from Washington DC. From late 2009 civilian representatives will be appointed to each US Regional Command and at the provincial/district level 'to execute US policy and guidance, serve as the civilian counterpart to the military commander, and integrate and coordinate civ-mil efforts.'⁵⁹ Crucially the new structure provides for a joint decision-making mechanism at every level of operations on issues affecting stability operations and, if properly implemented, will go a long way towards improving civilian oversight of the military and improving US 'unity of effort' in Afghanistan.⁶⁰

In the UK, DFID officials have previously demonstrated a profound dislike of working towards UK security interests, especially if this involved close cooperation with the Ministry of Defence. Such an attitude was evident during 2002 and 2003 when the Secretary for International Development, Clare Short, refused to take any measures to prepare DFID adequately for the contingency of war in Iraq.⁶¹ Senior DFID officials pointed to the wording of the 2002 International Development Act as precluding aid being used to further the UK's immediate political and security interests, objecting to any inclusion of DFID in the UK's Afghanistan counterinsurgency strategy, which it claimed was a military concept that DFID could not support.⁶² Since 2006 however, there has been a significant shift in such thinking, as DFID came

under pressure to contribute to UK national security interests. In 2008, the DFID contribution was an integral part of the UK's projected Afghanistan Strategy – essentially a blueprint for the civil-military effort to counter the Taliban-led insurgency. DFID has also made moves to prioritise spending in other developing countries in which the UK has an important national security interest, including Pakistan and Yemen.

The UK civilian response to filling the governance vacuum that emerged in Iraq's south-east region was chaotic, reflecting a lack of knowledge, resources and a grave incoherence, if not outright hostility, between key government departments. The Foreign Office initially proposed appointing the Governor of Bermuda, Sir John Vereker, as the Civilian Coordinator for the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in the south of Iraq, despite the fact that he had never worked in a country in or emerging from conflict.⁶³ The person eventually selected for the post, Hilary Synnott, was given a mission statement just under half an A4 page in length and was told 'to play it by ear'.⁶⁴ The incoherent selection and training of diplomats sent to Iraq was to be a consistent feature of the UK's deployment through to 2009. The slow and inadequate deployment of FCO and DFID personnel, delays in the release of funds, and the unwillingness of the Army to fill the civilian gap meant that the UK ultimately lost the crucial post-invasion 'window' in which to decisively engage in the south of Iraq. As the insurgency increased in intensity, during 2006 and 2007 the UK-led PRT failed to transform from a primarily civilian entity into one that took a more military approach to stability operations. During this period Basra Palace was being hit daily by up to 40 rocket and mortar attacks, often bringing the PRT's work to a virtual standstill. Reconstruction efforts were also hampered by internal conflicts between senior personnel within the PRT, arising principally from 'a lack of clear guidelines' as to its role and objectives.⁶⁵ The fact that

⁵⁹ General Stanley McChrystal, *op. cit.* p. C-I.

⁶⁰ 'United States Government Integrated Civilian Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan' (Kabul: Embassy of the United States, August 2009), pp. 28–35.

⁶¹ Interview with a former adviser to Robin Cook, Madrid, May 2009.

⁶² House of Commons International Development Committee, 'Reconstructing Afghanistan' (London: House of Commons, Fourth Report of Session 2007–2008, 5 February 2008).

⁶³ Synnott, *op. cit.* p. 4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 4.

⁶⁵ Kasper Hoffmann, 'Civil-Military Relations in Iraq 2003–7' (Copenhagen: DIIS, September 2009), p. 58.

British and Danish civil-military structures in Basra 'ran along parallel tracks and were not integrated' only served to add to the confusion.⁶⁶ Following a major MNF–I/Iraqi operation against insurgents in Basra during March and April 2008, the scope and performance of the PRT's activities increased considerably, with one UK official observing that 'the key objective was to salvage our reputation'.⁶⁷

The lack of capacity to deliver in conflict countries also contributed to a growing crisis in morale within the FCO.⁶⁸ A shortage of personnel and cultural/language training means that the FCO and DFID continue to rely heavily upon local staff in key strategic countries. Only 5 FCO personnel have a basic level of Pashtu, particularly surprising given the UK commitment to Afghanistan since 2001 and the large number of UK citizens of Pakistani and Afghan descent.⁶⁹ DFID has also suffered from a shortage in political and cultural expertise, attributed to insufficient training and short deployments: postings to Afghanistan and Iraq often only last 12 months. The UK's National Audit Office (NAO) has noted that there has been little guidance or a 'lessons learned' approach to DFID's work in insecure environments: 'There is limited research and experience on delivering effective aid in insecure environments, so the information on which DFID is able to base its decisions is weak'. Worryingly, in a survey undertaken by the NAO 40 per cent of DFID personnel found the induction period prior to deployment poor or very poor. In addition to a lack of institutional memory, training and a high personnel turnover, DFID also frequently dispatches personnel with no previous overseas development experience: over 50 per cent of DFID representatives in Afghanistan during 2008 had never been posted abroad before.⁷⁰

The inability to monitor projects due to a shortage of personnel and a highly adverse security situation had

grave consequences for UK stability operations in Afghanistan during 2006 and 2007. A suicide attack in November 2007 on civilian personnel in Helmand Province led to a review of DFID operations, with the effect that by early 2008 'practical reconstruction and development efforts had stalled, as had efforts to improve governance [...]'.⁷¹ The Danish civilian contribution in Helmand was also struggling: 'Due to a lack of priority and personnel', 75 per cent of the planned activities of the stabilisation adviser in Lashkah Gah were cancelled during one month in 2008.⁷² However, unlike post-invasion Iraq this breakdown in the civilian effort led to a review of operations and a redoubling of the civil-military effort with a coherent structure put in place to improve cooperation.

Despite improved civil-military coherence, UK civilian officials in Afghanistan are severely hampered by a lack of air transport, being completely dependent upon the goodwill of the military as their request for a suitable aircraft in Helmand 'had to be cancelled, and the deposit forgone, because HM Treasury had not approved the funds'.⁷³ Due to restrictions on mobility, DFID was subsequently able to disburse only half of its allocated funding for the province. DFID has also been forced to spend large amounts of its budget on PSC contracts: one contract with Control Risks in Afghanistan in 2003–2004 cost £6.8 million including the provision of 68 security guards, and in 2009 the same company received the majority of the £2.9m funding allocated to a local governance project in Basra Province.⁷⁴ The NAO has calculated that placing a UK civilian for a year in Afghanistan has been exorbitantly expensive, costing up to £250,000. Sub-contracting to NGOs has also proved unfeasible in much of Afghanistan and Iraq due to security concerns.⁷⁵ In the case of the Southern Iraq

⁶⁶ Hoffmann, *op. cit.* p. 56

⁶⁷ Interview with a UK official, Basra, March 2009

⁶⁸ Eddie Barnes, 'Foreign Office has "culture of clones"', *Scotland on Sunday*, 22 March 2009.

⁶⁹ Alex Barker, 'Afghan mission lacks language skills', *The Financial Times*, 20 August 2009.

⁷⁰ National Audit Office, *op. cit.* p. 29.

⁷¹ Lt. Col. Phil Sherwood (28 Eng. Regiment), 'Reconstruction and Development in Afghanistan: A Royal Engineer Regiment's Experiences' (London: RUSI, October 2007).

⁷² Stepputat, *op. cit.* p. 41.

⁷³ House of Commons International Development Committee, *op. cit.*

⁷⁴ Interview with a UK official, 14 September 2009, and National Audit Office, *op. cit.* p. 32.

⁷⁵ House of Commons International Development Committee, *op. cit.*

Employment Programme, lack of oversight of the local authorities who received a grant of £4 million meant that fraudulent reporting went unnoticed for over a year, until it was eventually concluded that only £1 million could be accounted for.⁷⁶ Such misspent aid at best contributes to corruption of local officials and at worst can even fund insurgency.

The UK, like the US, has recognised the shortcomings of its civilian engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq and has moved to correct an obvious lack of inter-agency coordination of efforts. The establishment of a Stabilisation Unit led to various UK departments agreeing a Road Map which has brought about significant improvements in Helmand. The original plan for Helmand Province, produced when the UK took the lead there in 2006, did not effectively deal with the integration of the civilian and military efforts.⁷⁷ The Road Map effectively shifted the activities of the PRT in Lashkar Gah away from a post-conflict approach towards that of dealing with a mounting insurgency. In June 2008, the UK announced the creation of the Civil-Military Mission Helmand (CMMH), which has significantly improved the integration of military and civilian efforts into one coherent strategy.

CMMH has emerged as an important model for civilian supervision of stability operations that, because of extremely adverse security conditions, are monitored by the military. It is administered by the lead personnel from the military, FCO and DFID and integrates equivalent representatives from the US, Danish and Estonian contingents. Tasks such as intelligence, political analysis, planning, district level stabilisation, media and communications, which previously were carried out in parallel, are now conducted jointly. The civil-military collaborative effort at headquarters in Lashkar Gah is replicated in other districts of Helmand Province, each with a joint civil-military stabilisation team of approximately 10 staff located within the relevant Battlegroup. Importantly, CMMH clearly

places a UK civilian official at the centre of all decision-making in Helmand Province.⁷⁸

The pragmatic approach offered by CMMH, where stabilisation officers at the district level provide direction to military personnel, means that civilian expertise and military capabilities are pooled towards realising the common objectives of the UK's strategy in Afghanistan. The UK civilian component – approximately 50 experts drawn from various UK government agencies – leads reporting on the overall progress in the province, and a regular joint civil-military report is dispatched to Whitehall by the Ambassador in Kabul who is responsible for oversight of the UK's overall Afghanistan strategy.⁷⁹

UK military officers have reported positively on the effectiveness of stabilisation advisers in coordinating a 'comprehensive approach' at the operational/tactical level. In addition, the deployment of FCO and Stabilisation Unit personnel throughout the province rather than just in Lashkar Gah contrasts very favourably with the experience in Basra Province, where a handful of UK civilian officials were eventually restricted to operating from one location, the Contingency Operating Base (COB) at Basra international airport.⁸⁰ CMMH also offers a means of structuring civilian and military political contacts with a close liaison being established between the civilians and the 'planning' units of the military's Task Force Helmand. Building on this experience, the UK government has the opportunity to put in place a more coherent doctrine on civil-military relations during counterinsurgency operations.⁸¹

⁷⁸ 'Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Defence, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development' (London: House of Commons Defence Committee, 15 May 2009).

⁷⁹ Teuten 2009, op. cit.

⁸⁰ Inter-departmental acrimony over Iraq was never fully diffused from 2003 until the UK military withdrawal in 2009, although the Stabilisation Unit did play an important role in improving the performance of PRT Basra during 2008 and 2009. One UK official observed that 'the unit came into existence too late in Basra to play the role that it is now playing in Helmand'.

Interviews with UK officials in Iraq, March 2009 and London, September 2009. See also Sherwood, op. cit.

⁸¹ Ministry of Defence, 'Civil-military cooperation' (London: MoD, Interim Joint Warfare Publication 3–90, November 2003).

⁷⁶ National Audit Office, op. cit. p. 22.

⁷⁷ Peter Dahl Thruelsen, 'Counterinsurgency and a comprehensive approach: Helmand Province; Afghanistan', *Small Wars Journal*, 2008.

The UK government has introduced a number of important measures to improve civilian oversight and training of the military. The Stabilisation Unit has recently taken practical steps to improve the level of guidance given to the military, and has amended a DFID guidebook aimed at improving best practices for Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) implemented by CIMIC teams. The posting of a military liaison officer in DFID has also improved coherence in both Afghanistan and Iraq. The Stabilisation Unit has played an important role in facilitating the harmonisation of different agencies' views into a more coherent UK government strategy, and has accelerated the deployment of civilian personnel to conflict areas, recently placing UK civilian personnel on the ground in Helmand district centres 'cleared' by the UK military within 24–48 hours. The unit is responsible for updating the 'Stabilisation Task Matrix', which describes a range of tasks germane to stability operations and models of civil-military cooperation. The Matrix is currently being updated to recognise that 'civilians can do more', a testament to the improved performance of the UK civilian engagement in Helmand. The Stabilisation Unit currently operates a number of cross-departmental training courses and is participating, together with the FCO and MoD, in a DFID-led audit of 'conflict skills' in order to gauge the future pre-deployment needs of UK personnel.⁸² In 2007, the UK government announced the creation of a separate Stabilisation Aid Fund (SAF) as an extension of the pre-existing Global Conflict Prevention Pool. The SAF has a budget of £243 million for 2008–2010 that is overseen jointly by the MoD, FCO and DFID according to a 'triple key' system.⁸³

The Stabilisation Unit is an important step towards harmonising UK government activities in working towards national objectives when the UK is at war. However, for all its innovative steps in moving closer to the holy grail of the 'comprehensive approach', the unit lacks a champion in cabinet. It is frequently seen as too

closely aligned with DFID, yet answers to three government ministries (DFID, FCO and MoD). This is not only a consequence of the Unit's offices operating out of DFID, but also because almost all of its operational costs have until now been channelled from the DFID budget, rather than being split three ways.⁸⁴ The Stabilisation Unit's role is limited to mediating between the three departments and operating according to their consent. The task of imposing a solution upon inter-departmental disputes falls to the Cabinet Office, which is perceived as lacking sufficient personnel and expertise.⁸⁵ One means of addressing this authority deficit could be for the Stabilisation Unit to be placed solely under the remit of the Cabinet Office. The UK Conservative Party has proposed creating a new National Security Council where the Stabilisation Unit will have a 'strong voice'. However, it is not clear how such a body will operate vis à vis the Cabinet Office and how it will differ considerably from existing committee structures. The Conservatives have also vaguely proposed that Stabilisation Advisers would 'report to the military chain of command', although again what exactly this means in practice remains to be seen. Alarming it seems to imply military seniority over UK civilian officials in Helmand.⁸⁶

⁸² Richard Teuten, 'Stabilisation and post-conflict reconstruction' (London: Stabilisation Unit, 2008).

⁸³ In 2009 the SAF was joined to the UK's peacekeeping budget, requiring another name change.

⁸⁴ According to a UK government official, this is due to be remedied in 2010 when the FCO, DFID and the MoD will assume responsibility for an equal share of the operational costs of the Stabilisation Unit. Interview, London, 14 September 2009.

⁸⁵ Interviews with UK officials, London, September 2009.

⁸⁶ See 'One World Conservatism: A Conservative Agenda for International Development', Policy Green Paper No. 11, <http://www.conservatives.com>

Provincial Reconstruction Teams

PRTs were originally conceived as a bridging mechanism between military and civilian expertise.⁸⁷ Importantly, a PRT is not designed to carry out offensive military operations, but soldiers attached to the PRT may carry weapons for self-defence. The first PRT operation was established in Gardez in January 2003. PRTs have since become increasingly led and staffed by civilian personnel and in the Afghan case even by representatives of the host government. However, PRTs can vary enormously in size, preponderance of military or civilian personnel and command structures.

US-led PRTs take several forms: the most obvious discrepancy is between the military-led model implemented in Afghanistan and those led by the State Department in Iraq. In Afghanistan, there has been a worrying dearth in civilian oversight over the highly political activities of these military led-PRTs. In Iraq, coordination between PRTs has been improved by the fact that the US has dominated the reconstruction effort there, with only Italy, the Republic of Korea and the UK leading a single PRT each.⁸⁸ However PRTs in Iraq got off to a dreadful start in 2006 when then Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld refused to provide sufficient security for these civilian-led units to operate, paralysing the PRT effort in much of the country until 2007.⁸⁹ The Office of Provincial Affairs (OPA) has also been woefully understaffed, until recently consisting of just 12 employees to facilitate and monitor PRTs' activities.⁹⁰

PRTs in Iraq have moved beyond the 'bricks and mortar' work of reconstruction towards a more

advisory, capacity-building role, including helping provincial governments in budget execution and the capacity to plan, build and sustain infrastructural projects. In trying to transition PRTs in Afghanistan into more civilian entities, US officials have admitted to 'the enormous challenges in locating and deploying qualified professionals to staff the PRTs long enough to make an impact and justify the huge expense of providing for their accommodation, protection and transport'.⁹¹ It remains unclear whether the new civilian reserve managed by the S/CRS will adequately address this deficiency.

In Afghanistan, the plethora of countries with responsibility for individual PRTs has accentuated this incoherent approach, with some receiving large budgets from their home capitals while others have almost no funding of their own.⁹² Rather than carrying out a clearly delineated, centralised plan for Afghanistan, operations are generally left to the discretion of the individual PRT's lead nation, an approach which has been labelled as the 'Balkanisation' of the aid effort due to the lack of any coherent centralised planning to manage the PRTs' collective activities.⁹³ The 'conceptual vagueness' and divergence of policy among ISAF member states operating according to 'national caveats and priorities' has led to pronounced confusion over the role of PRTs and is, quite simply, a recipe for failure.⁹⁴

In Kandahar Province, the Canadian PRT relies overwhelmingly on its military contingent to carry out PRT operations. Of the 335 Canadian personnel attached to PRT Kandahar, 315 are drawn from the Canadian Armed Forces.⁹⁵ Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) personnel are rarely

⁸⁷ The United States Army, op. cit. p. F-1.

⁸⁸ The UK handed over responsibilities for PRT Basra to the US in April 2009.

⁸⁹ Ricks, op. cit. p. 38.

⁹⁰ Barber and Parker, op. cit. p. 1.

⁹¹ Ibid. p.1.

⁹² House of Commons International Development Committee, op. cit.

⁹³ Barbara Stapleton, 'A means to what end? Why PRTs are peripheral to the bigger political challenges in Afghanistan', *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 10/ 1 (autumn 2007), p. 40.

⁹⁴ Gabriel Reyes Leguen, 'Civil society and Provincial Reconstruction Teams: The unavoidable synergy' (Madrid: CITPAX, October 2007), p. 23.

⁹⁵ Government of Canada, op. cit. p. 23.

permitted to leave the military base due to severe restrictions put in place by senior officials in Ottawa.⁹⁶ A senior Canadian panel established to review that country's commitment to reconstruction has criticised the lack of coordination between the Canadian military and civilian agencies, noting that each contributing agency has a separate task force, and has recommended that these should be integrated to avoid competing agencies. Despite serious efforts by the Canadian government to deliver a more effective 'comprehensive approach' under the inter-agency Stabilisation and Reconstruction Task Force (START), there is considerable overlap between START, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and CIDA programmes for the country.⁹⁷

The Spanish government has long argued that its PRT in Badghis should be seen as a model to be emulated by other countries. However, this model remains obscure in that the military and civilian components effectively operate along two separate tracks with no unified command structure within the PRT. The Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) has been accused of over-focusing on the provincial capital, Qala-i-Naw, and development officials are generally absent from the more remote parts of the province where the insurgency is thickest. An upsurge of violence in 2009 has prevented the 15 civilian experts from AECID from effectively monitoring projects in the province. Despite the presence of a CIMIC team from the Spanish Armed Forces, AECID has not requested that this team take over monitoring of its aid projects, claiming that to do so would blur lines between Spain's civilian and military commitments to Afghanistan. Spain has only deployed one diplomat to Badghis Province and local Afghan officials complain that despite requests for more civilian engagement at the political level, it is the most senior Spanish military officer in the province who has the closest

working political relationship with the Provincial Council and local authorities.⁹⁸

Germany's commitment to Afghanistan has been cited as possessing the least harmonious relationship between its military and civilian efforts. Despite the introduction of an action plan on 'Civilian Crisis Prevention, Conflict Resolution, and Post-conflict Peace-building' in 2004, the inter-ministerial steering group charged with its implementation neither coordinates nor directs Germany's PRT commitment.⁹⁹ The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the development agency GTZ have refused to subordinate their development agenda to Germany's strategic and national defence interests. Consequently, 'in practice the civilian head of the PRT has little control over the activities of other government agencies, which have autonomy over their budgetary allocations'. Civilian development agencies' distaste for working under 'comprehensive approach' structures within Germany's two PRTs in Kunduz and Feyzabad in the north of Afghanistan means that they and the German military's CIMIC contingent operate according to separate agendas with little prospect of integration, frequently duplicating political contacts with local authorities.¹⁰⁰ Such confusion not only diminishes civilian oversight of the military, but also is effectively a recipe for chaos.

The Netherlands' 'Integrated Approach' is still more of a concept than a reality. Although government agencies and the military do exchange personnel and share funding, most operations are still largely 'stove-piped'. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently set up a peace-building office for fragile states but other ministries have yet to make a significant contribution.¹⁰¹ The Dutch commitment to

⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 26.

⁹⁷ Nima Abbaszadeh, Mark Crow, Marianne El-Khoury, Jonathan Gandomi, David Kuwayama, Christopher MacPherson, Megan Nutting, Nealin Parker and Taya Weiss, 'Provincial Reconstruction Teams: Lessons and recommendations' (Princeton: Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson School, January 2008), pp.10–11.

⁹⁸ Proceedings and interviews at a Spanish Ministry of Defence Conference, 'La Estrategia de Afganización', Barcelona, 16 June 2009; and Col. Rafael Roel Fernández, 'La contribución del Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) español de Qala e Naw a la reconstrucción de Afganistán' (Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano, 5 February 2008).

⁹⁹ Abbaszadeh *et al.*, op. cit. p. 27.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p.27.

¹⁰¹ Stepputat, op. cit. p. 35.

Afghanistan is focused on Uruzgan Province in the south of the country where approximately 20 diplomats and development officials are based. All significant policy decisions – military, diplomatic, development – are taken by the Commander of the Task Force Uruzgan (TFU) in consultation with the senior Civilian Representative. Due to the civilian-light approach of the Dutch government, the military commander (COMTFU) retained seniority over the Civilian Representative in Uruzgan in directing the activities of the TFU.¹⁰² The Dutch PRT was essentially a military operation until early 2009, when the military lead was replaced by a diplomat from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Although both the PRT team leader and the COMTFU at Kamp Holland in Tarin Kowt have professed to work in close cooperation, the Dutch lack an integrated command structure that prioritises civilian oversight and supervision over stability operations.¹⁰³

Italy's PRT contribution at Herat in western Afghanistan mirrors the civilian-light approach adopted by the Netherlands, with only 10 civilians deployed to the PRT compared to 270 soldiers.¹⁰⁴ Italy also lacks a clear command structure to coordinate the military and civilian stability operations components.¹⁰⁵ The PRT in Herat differs considerably from the more flexible PRT in Dhi Qar, Iraq, facilitated by a more hands-off approach from Rome which allows the PRT team leader to make decisions based on an on the ground evaluation of the political and security situation. Command of PRT Herat frequently rotates, whereas the consistent presence of an Italian diplomat with extensive experience in Iraq as Team Leader of PRT Dhi Qar since 2006 has enabled Italy to gain unique political knowledge, experience of best practice in the province and a consistency of approach. PRT Dhi Qar is civilian-heavy, preferring not to travel

or integrate too closely with the military, agreeing a careful division of labour in order to seize upon the relative security of the south to transfer out of a more military approach. The Italian leadership relies instead upon protection and intelligence provided by the PSC Aegis Defence Services to facilitate its wide-ranging activities 'beyond the fence'. Aegis' 'Project Compass' in Dhi Qar has gained a reputation for a high level of professionalism in winning local support for the Italian PRT.¹⁰⁶ Such a model is worthy of closer inspection, with the caveat that a structure must be put in place to monitor and where necessary restrict PSCs political activities.

It is difficult to refer to the PRT as a structured model; rather it has been designed as a concept of counterinsurgency strategy that takes many shapes.¹⁰⁷ There is a grave need for NATO member states to coordinate doctrine and best practice: scant guidance exists on when and how a PRT should transition from being more or less military.¹⁰⁸ It is not helpful to have military-led PRTs in relatively secure areas: a PRT is not necessary, as civilians are better at undertaking long-term development projects, which is what these areas require. Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) are often unsuitable in more secure areas and can even serve to undermine the writ of the national and provincial government.¹⁰⁹ One EU official has correctly concluded that 'the civil-military approach towards development is increasingly geared towards an expanding insurgency rather than towards the long-term development agendas also being supported by donors [...]'.¹¹⁰ This is to be welcomed; not scorned. PRTs are only necessary in regions where the immediate priority is stabilising an area experiencing insurgency in which civilian agencies cannot operate. They are entirely inappropriate in more secure areas.

¹⁰² Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United States, <http://www.netherlands-embassy.org/files/pdf/AfghanistanFactSheet2.pdf>

¹⁰³ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, 'Diplomat leads military reconstruction team in Uruzgan', <http://www.minbuza.nl/en/news/newsflashes,2009/03/Diplomat-leads-military-reconstruction-team-in-Uru.html>

¹⁰⁴ Interviews, Iraq, March and April 2009.

¹⁰⁵ Abbaszadeh *et al.*, *op. cit.* p. 9.

¹⁰⁶ Interviews, Iraq, March and April 2009.

¹⁰⁷ Stepputat, *op. cit.* p. 28.

¹⁰⁸ RUSI, 'Workshop I: Increasing understanding of differing defence, development and diplomatic priorities' (London: RUSI Project on Civil-Military Relations, 2008).

¹⁰⁹ Daniel Korski, 'Shaping Europe's Afghan surge' (London: ECFR, March 2009), p. 13.

¹¹⁰ Stapleton, *op. cit.* p. 4.

The need for a civilian doctrine

While many critics are horrified at the idea of the military undertaking humanitarian and reconstruction tasks normally carried out by civilians, it is difficult to consider an alternative in certain circumstances. By refusing to acknowledge that civilians are frequently incapable of performing the wide range of stability tasks we expect of them, and simultaneously not training the military to fill that void where required, we are destined to fail repeatedly. Although the prospect of close cooperation with the military has the effect of blurring the distinction between the civilian and military efforts, it is far less desirable for governments to continue to invest heavily in a country such as Afghanistan only to find that due to the level of insecurity, the civilians cannot engage and, due to lack of guidance, the military cannot deliver, or worse, that tensions may be exacerbated by a haphazard delivery of aid.

In Helmand the UK is currently testing a thoughtful and pragmatic merging of the civilian and military efforts, which is worthy of further study. In agreeing mechanisms to integrate military and civilian efforts, Ambassador Eikenberry and General McChrystal have also offered a coherent US vision for improving security in Afghanistan. Both countries are substantially ahead of the curve in Afghanistan in trying to make 'unity of effort' a working reality, and such initiatives give grounds for optimism that the civilian performance in Afghanistan can improve.

In advocating greater political awareness among the officer corps, the military strategist Michael Howard observed that 'military commanders will need exceptional political wisdom as well as military skill; but they should refrain from attempting to shape the political world to their image'.¹¹¹ This is still true

today. Although General David Petraeus has observed that 'State is never going to put an Ambassador under a general, and DoD is never going to put a general under an Ambassador', on political matters soldiers must yield to civilian guidance at all levels.¹¹² This means granting civilians unequivocal authority at every stage of the design and implementation of stability operations, even if such activities are carried out by the military. It does not matter whether the military takes the 'right' political decisions. They are simply not theirs to take. We require stronger political leadership, a clear doctrine enabling civilian officials to lead stability operations and a better cadre of diplomats to right the civil-military equilibrium.

The political leaders of NATO still cannot agree on what the 'comprehensive approach' really means: some member states view it as a means of collaboration in security sector reform, while others argue that it should constitute a closely integrated counterinsurgency strategy.¹¹³ There is also much confusion as to the structure of PRTs and where and how they should operate. Such political weakness severely undermines the coherence of ISAF operations in Afghanistan, where the lack of a clear strategy and guidance on civil-military division of labour is exacerbated by the proliferation of actors cluttering the same space.

Ultimately, it will take a greatly strengthened political will and commitment by NATO governments to unite different agencies to operate under a single strategy with a less ambiguous command structure. Such reform needs to begin at home before it can be implemented abroad or consolidated on a NATO-wide basis. The Armed Forces of the US and the UK have come a long way from the thinking that restricted the military contribution to stability operations during the initial period following the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Such innovation and fresh thinking should not be thwarted but matched by the emergence of a new

¹¹¹ Michael Howard, 'Military power and international order', *International Affairs* 40/3 (July 1964), p. 404.

¹¹² Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, *op. cit.* p. 10.

¹¹³ Stepputat, *op. cit.* p. 28.

type of diplomat with the requisite authority and skills to direct civil-military resources towards realistic objectives. If respective heads of government are serious about a 'whole of government' approach to conflict management, it is incumbent upon them to assume personal responsibility for its implementation,

working directly with interagency organisations such as S/CRS and the Stabilisation Unit and not subsuming them beneath other government departments. Consensus is a luxury rarely achieved in war; therefore leadership and attention to detail at the highest level is required to prosecute it effectively.

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The US and UK Armed Forces have learned the painful lessons of their limited engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq in the aftermath of the invasion of both countries and are now prepared to assume wide-ranging humanitarian and reconstruction tasks. 'Stabilisation' by the military is crucial to the successful prosecution of any counterinsurgency campaign but has led to an inevitable encroachment upon 'civilian' responsibilities, the militarisation of aid and the emergence of a more political military. The repercussions for civil-military relations are profound and poorly understood. Drawing upon field research in Iraq, this FRIDE Working Paper argues that, while the military is often better placed to provide immediate relief in the most insecure environments, civilian supervision over stability operations must be asserted at every level to reverse the 'creeping militarisation' of foreign policy. To undertake this complex task will require the emergence of a civilian doctrine and an unconventional diplomat.

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