



The RUSI Project on Civil-Military Relations

Workshop I: Increasing Understanding of Differing Defence, Development and Diplomatic Priorities

Priorities and Responsibilities

A recent [Rand report](#) details post-conflict nation-building priorities:

- Provide security (including rule of law, security sector reform)
- Humanitarian relief (refugee return; urgent medical, food and shelter)
- Basic government services (electricity, water)
- Economic stability (stable currency, environment for commerce)
- Democratization (civil society, free press, framework for elections)
- Development (schools, hospitals)

Most participants agreed that providing security in a post-conflict environment was the most appropriate focus for the military to best use its resources and comparative advantage – to create the essential environment for civilian actors to undertake the remaining priorities. Most agreed it was not desirable to have military involvement in activities further down the list of priorities, yet there was a difference of opinion with regards to whether the military should do so in situations where civilian alternatives are not present or available. In some situations, even though the military is present and is capable of performing a task, long-term local interests (and national strategy) may not be best served by their doing so.

While there was broad agreement that the military is not best placed or equipped to engage in long-term development projects, the effects of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs)/Commanders' Emergency Response Program (CERP) – aimed at short-term “hearts and minds” gains within a counterinsurgency context to build consent with a local community – served as a lightning rod for criticism of misguided military involvement in development work. QIPs can enable necessary, quick reconstruction/stabilization projects (e.g. rebuild a bridge that was bombed) and serve as a mechanism to engage the local community and develop trust. However, a common theme in the discussions was that without in-depth local knowledge, commanders may work at cross purposes in ways that damage overall development goals.

NGOs maintain a principled objection to military provision of aid and development because it conflicts fundamentally with NGO principles of rights-based access to aid and blurs the distinction between military and civilian actors, thus endangering their personal security and that of their projects. For the NGO community, civil-military engagement is not only about increasing communication and awareness through increased contact and meetings. Humanitarians challenged the justification that the military can deploy more quickly to vulnerable populations, citing considerable mobilization experience within the NGO community. Some NGO participants suggested that more reliance on them may be preferable and more cost effective than building up civilian government expertise.

The use of private contractors – in some cases to protect development projects, or even to engage directly in development work – complicates the situation on the ground for military,

civilian government, and NGO actors with another layer of personnel on the ground that is not coordinating with other actors and further blurring the civil-military distinction and in some cases negatively influencing locals' perceptions of foreigners. Their driving motive – profit maximization – may conflict with stabilization and development goals that the military, civilian government, and NGO actors are trying to achieve. A related issue raised by participants is the uncertain accountability of private contractors authorised to use force.

Mechanisms

Participants described a spectrum of engagement concepts, ranging from awareness without communication, to discussion, to deconfliction, all the way to integrated involvement. NATO's new "comprehensive approach" concept raised some controversy among attendees. The comprehensive approach aims to harmonize military and political planning and produce practical cooperation at all levels with all actors and to bring military support to stabilization operations and reconstruction efforts in all phases of engagement. NGO participants were reluctant to have military concepts imposed upon them or be conceived of as an 'arrow in the quiver'.

Civil-military engagement is complicated by several levels of interaction – within and between governments, and between military, civilian government, and NGO actors at all levels, each with their own goals and priorities. Superimposed on top of civil-military issues on the ground are competing national government structures, priorities and pressures.

While some participants called for an increase in contact between the military and civilian actors during the planning period and day-to-day on the ground interactions, others noted that NGOs have been involved in pre-deployment planning and are participating in various information-sharing mechanisms (both ad hoc and institutionalized). From the NGO perspective, their input is not always taken into account, and their much smaller staffs find it difficult to participate in the various processes – their number, length and perception of inefficiency serve as a deterrent to attendance for short-staffed NGOs.

Participants described the PRT structure as a bridging mechanism between military and civilian control, which could be made more useful with better planning from the beginning towards handing over control to civilian government development employees and the local civilian population. The case of Afghanistan raises the question of when handover is possible, and with a changing security environment, what are the appropriate mechanisms for handing *back over*?

Since the PRT concept has institutionalized military involvement in areas that have traditionally been the purview of civilian government agencies and NGOs, the PRTs, as they currently operate, remain a major obstacle to present and future engagement between the military and NGO communities. If the PRT concept continues to define the roles and operational environment in conflict areas (i.e., if the military continues to engage directly in development work) – as discussed primarily in the Afghan context – this will impede engagement.

Next Steps

- Conduct an **independent review of the PRT operational concept** to determine how future operations can strengthen civilian leadership of post-conflict development work. Options include:

- Placing development work under the leadership of a civilian development agency, allowing military commanders to channel scarce resources towards creating a permissive environment and strengthening the security sector. A number of questions will need to be answered, such as the division of command responsibility and funding streams.
 - Subsuming PRTs under civilian control.
 - Increasing civilian presence outside the PRT construct.
- To decrease the reliance on the military as a humanitarian/development actor, member governments must **build the capacity of development agencies and maintain deployable civilian government crisis response capabilities.**
 - Improve access to qualified civilians with key development skills who are willing to deploy to conflict/post-conflict areas.
 - Improve mechanisms for backfilling positions at home when core staff are fulfilling missions abroad.
 - **Improve measures of assessment** in to monitor the effects of ongoing operations and their impact on defined objectives and strategy. For example, are the use of QIPs and the increasing reliance on private contractors contributing positively to strategic goals?
 - **Maximize the use of guidance and lessons learned** from previous civil-military engagement experience – e.g. OCHA’s Guidelines on the use of Military and Civil Defense Assets
 - Develop a **code of conduct for private contractors** and equip auditors/investigators with the authority and resources to hold contractor employees accountable for their actions abroad.