The RUSI Project on Civil-Military Relations was designed to bring together the relevant stakeholders involved on the ground in Afghanistan and other conflicts to improve understanding and dialogue amongst these actors. A wide variety of individuals participated in the project which was conducted with a non-disclosure rule. The body of this report represents some of the unfiltered views presented during the course of the project. The introduction and conclusion draw upon interviews and the off-the-record sessions held in the UK and US. There is a dedicated website to highlight ongoing research at www.rusi.org/cusps.

The Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI) is the leading professional forum in the United Kingdom for those concerned with national and international defence and security.
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I. Comparative Perspectives on Civil-Military Relations

Kate Clouston

As NATO approaches its sixtieth anniversary, the Alliance finds itself involved in a complex mission in Afghanistan that ranges from peace-enforcement to all out war-fighting. It is a campaign on the ground in Afghanistan, but is part of a much larger strategic battle that plays itself out on television and online. This unfamiliar context has pushed NATO to the limit and the Alliance’s involvement in Afghanistan, while admirable, has not always been as effective as many policy-makers would like. The challenge is to secure both Afghanistan and the future of the Alliance; failure could possibly destroy NATO and leave Afghanistan worse off.

NATO’s recent involvement in Afghanistan began when, for the first time since the organisation’s creation in 1949, the Member States unanimously invoked Article V in support of the United States in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks. The US chose not to accept the Alliance’s offer, but Washington did proceed with armed retaliation for the attacks. After issuing an ultimatum to the Taliban to cooperate in the attempts to apprehend Osama bin Laden, which was ultimately rejected, the US commenced military action ‘against Al-Qa’ida training grounds’ in Afghanistan with Operation Enduring Freedom on 7 October 2001. Two months later, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) authorised the creation of an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) for Afghanistan. For the next couple of years, the ISAF mission was undertaken on a voluntary basis until NATO took over command and co-ordination of all ISAF forces in August 2003, and has since been involved in assisting the government of President Karzai in establishing authority across all the provinces.

According to NATO, ISAF’s role is:

_to assist the Government of Afghanistan and the International Community in maintaining security within its area of operation. ISAF supports the Government of Afghanistan in expanding its authority to the rest of the country, and in providing a safe and secure environment conducive to free and fair elections, the spread of the rule of law, and the reconstruction of the country._

However, the official role the Alliance sees for itself and the role it has actually taken on are not quite the same. NATO, it seems, has taken on more tasks and has reluctantly taken the lead in Afghanistan, simply because nobody else has assumed responsibility for the overall direction of the international efforts. Unfortunately, as a primarily military alliance, NATO is not up to the task. The international community has been looking towards NATO to co-ordinate the multitude of civil-military tasks, while NATO keeps waiting for the individual members to better develop their own capabilities. The civilian and NGO communities are suffering from a major lack of resources, which is compounded by the lack of overall clarity in the NATO mission in terms of strategy and in terms of overall goals. This makes it difficult to streamline and co-ordinate (or at least de-conflict) civil-military relations. The United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) entered with a small footprint and has stayed too small to effectively provide civilian effect to complement the NATO military presence. But since the UN failed to take on the tasks it should, NATO has taken the lead and is encouraging all allies to adopt a more comprehensive approach to foster a new culture of mutual
understanding. This project examines the complex nexus of civil-military co-operation in Afghanistan at the international level. The focus in specifically on NATO, the efforts to improve the Alliance’s work in Afghanistan and the organisation’s relations with other actors involved in the current situation in Afghanistan. This introduction will outline the major overarching issues pertaining to civil-military relations before providing a brief outline of the chapters authored from the various perspectives of key actors on the ground.

The Comprehensive Approach

The Comprehensive Approach first made an appearance in the form of the 2004 NATO Strategic Vision, The Military Challenge, and Effects-Based Approach to Operations (EBAO) proposal. After an initial period of opposition from some of the members, the atmosphere among NATO members has gradually changed to one of cautious acceptance. NATO leaders agreed at the November 2006 Riga Summit that a comprehensive approach was necessary to meet the challenges of operational environments such as Afghanistan.

NATO defines the Comprehensive Approach as ‘a broader, concerted international effort by the whole of the international community’ to sustain the progress in Afghanistan. A common misconception is that it is a single plan – to which everybody must adhere. This is very much incorrect. It is not about the co-ordination of allies, but rather the co-ordination with all the stakeholders involved in Afghanistan. NATO sees itself as a part of the comprehensive approach – not the lead actor.

To help develop thinking within the Alliance on the comprehensive approach, the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI), in partnership with NATO/ACT, NATO HQ and various national governments, organised a series of workshops in London and Washington DC to examine the Comprehensive Approach within the NATO context. The project consisted of five workshops and a conference over the course of 2007, with carefully selected participants from governments around the world, international NGOs, NATO representatives and specialists in the field. This report is the culmination of that project.

It is no longer a controversial statement to say that military operations today, such as those in Afghanistan, must be complemented by a civilian component in order to be successful. Both civil and military components have reached the conclusion that they must work together – the question today is how? In an era when multinational forces operate on multiple levels against a non-state threat in an uncertain environment, an improved culture of understanding is needed. This ‘Post-Post-Cold War’ period is characterised by increasingly blurred boundaries – both in operations and in the jurisdiction of international organisations. Many members of NATO are also members of the UN and/or the EU. Responsibilities to each respective organisation vary and as a result, all Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) operating under the auspices of NATO are national-led and vary accordingly.

While the commitment required of the international community to Afghanistan is a long-term obligation, what needs to be more clearly expressed is the urgency of the situation as it currently stands. Mistakes caused by a lack of pre-planning and miscalculating the ferocity of the insurgency have been scrutinised in great detail, but common agreement on the way
forward have been difficult to reach. There is a small window of opportunity right now for allied operations to address certain issues, foremost among them the co-ordination of civil and military forces. The theory of the Comprehensive Approach is the Alliance’s answer to taking advantage of the current window of opportunity so that real change may take root in Afghanistan; change that will help transform NATO to deal more ably in the future with other crisis states.

The Challenges of Co-ordination

NATO is adamant that it has taken the lead in Afghanistan simply because there is no other actor capable of handling it – ideally, the UN should be taking the overall lead but the light footprint of the UN mission has meant that NATO has had to pick up the slack. The current framework, in which the military has taken on many traditionally civilian-led tasks on an ad-hoc basis, is indeed only temporary. Both civilians and the military agree that civilians are more ideally suited to the tasks in areas of security sector reform, police training, diplomacy and governance and economic reform.

Operations in Afghanistan have been problematic from the outset for a variety of reasons, and have proven extremely difficult to co-ordinate. Complex webs of interaction on the ground become even more tangled when viewed as part of an overall comprehensive approach – note that it is a comprehensive approach rather than the comprehensive approach. Relations between NATO and other international organisations are unclear (given the lack of a formal MoU between NATO and UN, for example). Delving deeper reveals that even within NATO member governments, cross-departmental co-ordination varies wildly from country to country, leading to for the most part plans that are ‘stapled together’ rather than fully integrated.

Within Government

The UK has been at the leading edge of lessons learned with the establishment of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit (as of 12 December 2007, known as the Stabilisation Unit), and the US has acknowledged the necessity of reforming previous arrangements. John Herbst, the Co-ordinator for the Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), gave a statement before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations in October 2007, in which he clarified that the US Government is working on ‘harmonizing civilian and military activities’ and building ‘the civilian capacity to staff these missions’. Directives relating to reconstruction and stabilisation include the National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSPD-44) issued in December 2005 and the Defense Department Directive 3000.05 ‘Military Support to Security, Stabilization, Transition and Reconstruction’ which complements NSPD-44. The implementation of this directive lies with S/CRS, which has been working with more than twenty agencies and bureaus including USAID, and the Defense, Treasury and Justice Departments. The new method of organisation in the US Government consists of three inter-linked elements of the Country Reconstruction and Stabilization Group (CRSG), the Integration Planning Cell (IPC) and the Advance Civilian Team (ACT). Similar initiatives have taken place in the UK to streamline cross-Whitehall initiatives, which has proven invaluable. However, this still leaves open the vexing question of international co-operation. All international partners have acknowledged that even within their own governments
better co-ordination needs to occur – this problem is multiplied by a factor of twenty-six when the member nations of NATO are attempting to reach agreement.

Between NATO allies

Problems at the national level are amplified at the Alliance level. But while it is very difficult to reach unanimous agreement, it is not impossible. For example, the initial reaction to the Effects-Based Approach to Operations proposal has recently started to relax into a gradual adoption of the overall Comprehensive Approach, demonstrating that ideas can be transformed into accepted rhetoric through a culture of gradual change. The problem remains, however, that each lead PRT country approaches the mission with a different emphasis and style. In some cases this is necessary, as each region of Afghanistan is different and the approach cannot be uniform. At the same time there is a very clear ‘Balkanisation’ of the NATO efforts in Afghanistan which hinders the overall effectiveness of the mission.

Between NATO and the wider international community

At the beginning of operations in Afghanistan, there were 4,000 different organisations registered as NGOs, but many were in fact private contractors. Following the implementation of the code of conduct, that number then dropped to approximately 800 registered NGOs (and could be up to 1,500 – including non-registered NGOs). Therefore, with so many actors to coordinate on the civilian side, civilian government assets along with NGOs should agree on a set of guidelines to present to military assets for operations on the ground. Such guidelines have been developed, including the 1994 Oslo Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief (updated in 2006), as well as the 2003 UN Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Complex Emergencies. Relations with other international organisations are also problematic. Currently, UN-NATO relations in Afghanistan are not formalised through any official memos, and NATO-EU cooperation is hindered with particular reference to the EU Police Mission, which NATO cannot formally support due to Turkey’s veto. National governments, civilian assets and international institutions could embrace NATO’s Comprehensive Approach as a bridge for dialogue and better co-ordination between international actors and institutions.

Blurring the Lines: The Civil-Military Divide?

Currently, co-operation occurs in mostly ad hoc arrangements, without formalised methods of co-ordination. The current security environment in Afghanistan has presented a challenge to both civil and military components, in which the military has taken on many of the traditionally civilian-led reconstruction and development projects. Both civilians and military view this situation as a temporary solution until the security environment is such that civilians can undertake their work without the need for military protection. Securing the peace is the first priority for all actors involved but the subsequent steps are difficult to prioritise. As the lines between civil and military projects become increasingly blurred, the focus moves on from basic security towards reconstruction and development projects involving diplomacy, governance and economic reform. It is generally accepted that the complete process of development must occur from within – external actors are only there to
facilitate the process, not to provide it.

Further complexities result as clarification is still badly needed on both the military and civilian side of operations. It is unclear where the military operations cease and the humanitarian and development activities begin. Nation-building is a political process, and one with which humanitarian organisations do not necessarily want to be associated. More often than not, the military is carrying out traditionally ‘civilian-led’ tasks such as reconstruction and development not because it wants to extend its remit but because the complementary civilian structures are not in place or do not have sufficient capabilities.

Civilian Capabilities

Indeed, the overriding problem confronting all of the NATO allies today is a near complete lack of deployable civilian capability. Unlike the military, civilians can only be deployed with consent, whereas the military can be ordered to go to a certain location. Civilians that are deployed are still incredibly constrained due to duty of care issues. Civilians deployed to Afghanistan do not receive the same coverage as a military counterpart and if a real deployable civilian capability is to be developed this problem must be rectified at the national level. This ultimately affects mission effectiveness and must be addressed on a case by case basis within each NATO ally. As a result, civilian billets in dangerous areas remain unfulfilled. Last year, the US had close to 600 civilian posts in Iraq that the State Department would not fill. The Department of Defense therefore had to use military resources to fill these positions. NATO allies should develop a deployable civilian capacity to act across a broad range of issues (rule of law, economic reform, development processes, etc). Some initiatives are underway already. The UK has a Deployable Civilian Expert database and the US has started a Civilian Reserve Corps, but both are a long way from filling the gap in civilian capabilities. The UK has around 1,000 experts on call, but considering the duration of the effort that number will be depleted rather quickly, especially considering this is the overall number to service UK involvement around the world, not just the efforts in Afghanistan.

At the supranational level, there are 350 national civilian experts with security clearance in the NATO system. These experts are trained every two years in the doctrine of NATO and how to co-ordinate well with military operations. They can be contacted at their places of work and/or brought out to NATO HQ to work there and provide briefings for the North Atlantic Council. The Rapid Reaction Team Concept is in development, in which a team of civilians would be rapidly deployed to support a military commander by making recommendations and staying in safe posts for short terms. This has already been implemented to a certain degree.

NATO is also exploring the option of appointing a Civilian Action Advisor position, to be called CivAd. The CivAd would be a person who has extensive experience in the field working with NGOs and institutions and would work at a high level to help keep NATO military operations in their own lane and to have better civil-military co-ordination in general. There is also the possibility of keeping a continuous roster of individuals identified as suitable for the position. The general feeling is that this would be welcomed by the civilian and NGO community.

Military Capabilities

The priority for the military is to distinguish between a permissive and a non-permissive
environment, ensuring that the population and area are secured before the civilian actors can operate. Afghanistan is a prime example of the mistakes made when trying to fight the war and win the peace at the same time. Indeed, there are unintended consequences of the military acting as a development actor. For example, schools have been built without teachers available to teach in them, or are built in a location that is so far away no students can actually reach them. These structures are then occupied by the Taliban insurgency, and consequently destroyed by the very coalition that built them in the first place. This problem has already been rectified and it shows that the allies are learning, but such mistakes should ideally be avoided in the first place. It would be logical that military assets should first be used to secure the area, then utilised to facilitate longer-term development in conjunction with civilian development experts. Military leadership should not determine the development patterns themselves. But, to have this pattern of engagement, a stronger deployable civilian component is required as discussed above.

Military assets need also to ensure that their work does not directly contradict the humanitarian work being done – short-term quick impact projects (QIPS) can sometimes have a counter-productive effect on longer term humanitarian projects designed to build up local capacity in a sustainable manner, as often short and long term projects will not employ the same strategy. The access map for NGOs in Afghanistan is shrinking even compared to just three years ago – in fact many civilian actors and NGOs were forced to leave Kandahar completely after ISAF forces began operating there. However, the military can be a major asset to civilian-led projects. For example, military engineers can help oversee the construction of a civilian infrastructure which allows the local population access to schools and hospitals.

The strong points that the military can leverage for civilian work are in the planning process and logistical support. The military should make its planning processes available at the outset to civilian actors wherever possible, particularly as civilians do not have access to planning capabilities, even those within the government. These planning capabilities and skill-sets are as great an asset as platforms and equipment, and are much envied by NGOs. It would also be helpful to try and build trust between these two spheres of operation – even people with the same levels of security clearance are hesitant to co-operate if they are unaccustomed to doing so. Additionally, these relationships need to be institutionalised at the most senior level for real benefit to filter through the system. Co-operation, co-ordination and the development of a culture of mutual understanding between civil and military assets are all key components to successful operations in Afghanistan.

In This Volume

This volume addresses the various challenges facing civil-military co-operation today from a variety of perspectives, offering clarification of the key issues from the different perspectives and putting forth suggestions to improve co-operation.

In the first chapter, Sir Michael Aaronson tackles the key issues of civil-military co-operation, after having visited Afghanistan in his capacity as a Senior Concept Developer for NATO/ACT. Sir Michael also spent sixteen years in the British Diplomatic Service. Subsequently, he was International Director and then from 1995 to 2005 Chief Executive of Save the Children. He thereby
offers a unique perspective that can comprehend both the NATO and the NGO sides of the issue. The chapter investigates three broad areas: an assessment of the overall co-ordination structures for the international effort in Afghanistan, NGO and other civilian perceptions of ISAF’s role and how the civilian side can contribute to a more comprehensive approach. The chapter proposes suggestions and recommendations on how to improve channels of co-ordination, including the need for greater coherence within and between PRTs, a more focused and restricted role for ISAF, a key role for development and civilian actor advisers and more honesty and mutual understanding about security.

Daniel Korski more specifically addresses the challenges of ‘hot stabilisation’ in chapter two, commenting on the changing nature of stabilisation and the challenges of multilateral peacebuilding after unilateral intervention. Formerly Deputy Head of the PCRU, Korski headed the UK-led Basra Provincial Reconstruction Team and is a Senior Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. Korski proposes an heuristic device in which one can view stabilisation in five distinct categories: after the First World War; after the Second World War; the Cold-War period up to the mid-1990s; the period stretching from the 1999 Kosovo campaign through to onset of the Iraq War in 2003; and the current category, dating from 2004 onwards. With a succinct discussion on shifting narratives and the defining components of hot stabilization, Korski concludes with suggestions on the necessary ‘software’, such as improving information-gathering and a pan-government planning process, and ‘hardware’, including flexible resource system and a civilian expeditionary capacity.

The first from the military perspective, chapter three offers insights from the UK Joint CIMIC Group (JCG) on contemporary civil-military co-operation in operations. The JCG distinguishes between the ‘tactical’ and ‘operational’ levels of civil-military co-operation (referred to as CIMIC), defining the military’s application of CIMIC as ‘supporting the commander in the widest sense of his mission; co-ordination and cooperating with civilian actors and working alongside the local population and Afghan institutions’. It also provides insights into the UK Joint CIMIC Group, created in 1997 when, in light of operations in the Balkans, the Army formed the Civil Affairs Group. Moving on to the practical application of operational and tactical CIMIC, the JCG highlights the importance of liaison, planning and providing informed direction to tactical commanders as well as interaction with other government civilian structures. Three main themes are identified in the concluding remarks, including supporting longer term objectives, preventing dependency and adhering to the principle of ‘do no harm’.

The strategic communications gap is covered in chapter four by Mark Beaumont. This chapter focuses on the importance of public perception in modern military operations. Beaumont asserts that public perceptions have a decisive influence on the long-term success of military deployments, and that the modern technology available today has fundamentally changed the nature of that relationship. He cautions that a lack of public support reduces the government’s tolerance for unpopular decisions, and increases the pressure on military commanders to align campaign decision to electoral rather than strategic military timescales. A discussion of the repositioning of the strategic debate follows, highlighting
the interconnectedness of today’s world and the ineffectiveness of assessing national and foreign policy independently of each other. The second half of the chapter proposes new education and training priorities, communicating real messages effectively to the public, accepting a lack of clarity in the mission and working with coalition partners, emphasising the fact that current military commitments require new, forward-thinking decisions on long-term objectives in order to succeed.

Chapter five offers a European Union perspective from Lt Col Joachim Bruns, a Strategic Planner for the EU Military Staff Civil-Military Cell. Bruns asserts three components are necessary for effective missions, including a timely reaction, tailoring to requirements and enhancing effectiveness through better co-ordination of civil and military crisis management instruments. He navigates the often confusing web of legislation and decision-making in the EU, explaining the European Security Strategy, the Petersburg Tasks, the Civilian Crisis Management Headline Goal, civilian elements of the ESDP capabilities and the role of the European Commission. Bruns discusses the challenges of civil-military co-ordination and emphasises the importance of comprehensive and coherent planning, as well as the necessity of more robust arrangements at the operational level. He concludes optimistically by stating that although the EU, like other international organisations, faces many challenges in capability shortfalls, its unique instruments and operations give it great potential to face these challenges successfully in the future.

In chapter six Howard Mollett, from CARE International, provides insight on the NGO/multi-mandate point of view. Mollett discusses the challenges which confront humanitarian agencies today in the realm of civil-military relations (referred to here as CIVMIL). The first section of the chapter outlines the central importance of humanitarian principles for NGO engagement in civil-military relations, followed by a review of the current NGO approaches. He assesses strengths and weaknesses and identifies capabilities gaps. The final section of the chapter outlines the key policy and operational trends which impact on civil-military debates, and the ability of NGOs to deliver aid safely and effectively. Finally, Mollett concludes with some pertinent and pragmatic recommendations both for civilians in NGOs and policy-makers.

Chapter seven moves towards an exploration of a single-mandate humanitarian organisation as Tørres Jøger, head of the International Law Unit at the Norwegian Red Cross, offers up perspectives on the role of humanitarian actors in places such as Afghanistan. After clarifying the Red Cross perspective, which aims to promote understanding, acceptance and respect for a specific Red Cross/Red Crescent role within armed conflicts and the concept of humanitarian space, Jøger provides helpful distinctions between diverse civilian actors, from humanitarian, development and state-building actors. Humanitarian actors are exclusively concerned with providing assistance and protection, whereas development assistance aims to facilitate and contribute to building sustainable structures and systems. Finally, state-building aims to facilitate and contribute to building sustainable state structures such as law enforcement. He discusses the problems arising when the military is perceived by the local populations to be conducting humanitarian operations, and the dimension of efficiency and competence, concluding by encouraging
dialogue between and among all stakeholders through a more comprehensive approach.

Finally, Dr Michael Williams concludes by offering pragmatic suggestions to help resolve these difficulties. The conclusion will draw out the issues identified by the individual chapters and aims to provide some food for thought on how NATO can proceed. Although this report and the conclusion are at the ‘NATO level’, the conclusion notes that change within NATO can only occur if the Allies change their practices and organisations. NATO is the member states and the members states are NATO. It is therefore difficult to separate the two and the conclusion recognises this.

Notes

1 Article V: The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.
2 A second project undertaken by the Institute will focus solely on the Afghan perspective.
3 Speech by NATO Secretary General at the Microsoft-BBC-NATO-Defence Leaders forum, Noordwijk aan zee, the Netherlands, 23 April 2007.
An Outsider’s View on the Civil-Military Nexus in Afghanistan*

Michael Aaronson

NATO has taken on a massively complex task in Afghanistan, of which winning the war against the Taliban is only one element. Recognition of this has led to a push for an ‘integrated’ approach involving relief, reconstruction, and development, as well as military activity. This is not as easy as it sounds. Development can only take place where the rule of law is respected and people have confidence in the ability of government to protect their interests. Neither applies in current day Afghanistan; the Government is weak, especially outside Kabul, and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has been left filling the vacuum. In turn, this leads to unrealistic expectations of non-NATO civilian actors, which they cannot meet. More could be done if people talked to each other better, understood the limitations and constraints of each others’ approaches, committed the right level of resources and the right calibre of people, and combined to help drive improved performance from the Afghan government and its agencies.

The Brief

The context for my visit was twofold. First, NATO’s attempts to move to a more holistic approach in delivering its security mission, as expressed in the following extract from the November 2006 RIGA Summit communiqué:

Experience in Afghanistan and Kosovo demonstrates that today’s challenges require a comprehensive approach by the international community involving a wide spectrum of civil and military instruments, while fully respecting mandates and autonomy of decisions of all actors, and provides precedents for this approach. To that end, while recognising that NATO has no requirement to develop capabilities strictly for civilian purposes, we have tasked today the Council in Permanent Session to develop pragmatic proposals in time for the meeting of Foreign Ministers in April 2007 and Defence Ministers in June 2007 to improve coherent application of NATO’s own crisis management instruments as well as practical cooperation at all levels partners, the UN and other relevant international organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations and local actors in the planning and conduct of ongoing and future operations wherever appropriate.1

Second, the particular situation in Afghanistan, where, in the view of many, NATO has ‘bet the Alliance’ and cannot afford to fail. It was therefore of particular relevance to see how the Riga issues play out on the ground in Afghanistan.

In asking to visit I proposed three broad areas for investigation:

1. An assessment of the overall co-ordination structures for the international effort in Afghanistan, and how to address any doctrinal/philosophical issues that are getting in the way of effective civil/military co-operation;
2. NGO and other civilian perceptions of ISAF’s role, with particular reference to PRTs, and what can be done to improve mutual understanding/Channels of communication;
3. What is needed for the civilian side to contribute to a more comprehensive approach.

My programme comprised (a) discussions in Kabul with the Government, the UN, the NGO community, and ISAF; and (b) a visit to a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) outside Kabul (Herat). In the event extreme weather conditions obliged me to spend an extra night in Herat, which in turn meant that many of the planned meetings in Kabul could not take place.

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Overall Co-ordination Structures and Doctrinal/Philosophical Issues

Philosophy and Doctrine

Within NATO there is much discussion about how to improve co-operation between the military and civilian actors. However, in my general experience most of the barriers are not caused by people on the ground but rather by the political framework within which they are asked to operate. Therefore my first priority on this visit was to look at the overall framework for international intervention in Afghanistan, and to understand how it impacts on civil/military co-operation.

The rights and wrongs of this intervention, and any detailed analysis of the problems it is trying to address, are beyond the scope of this report. Nevertheless, some general points are worth making.

First, from the start of the Afghanistan campaign in 2001 there were claims that there would be an ‘integrated approach’, covering all dimensions of the situation: military, diplomatic, and humanitarian. To humanitarian and development organisations, who rely for their effectiveness in large measure on being perceived as impartial, neutral, and independent of governments, this set loud alarm bells ringing. Fears were deepened by the creation in 2002/3 of PRTs. Although these were intended as a means to help co-ordinate and provide leverage to best effect both military and civilian crisis management tools to create long-lasting security and stability, they were seen as blurring the distinction between political, military, and humanitarian action. This was partly because civilian assets were co-located alongside military ones in PRTs under military command – leading to a perceived militarisation of the relief effort – and partly because of mistakes that were made, especially in the early days, by the PRTs themselves.

Second, it needs to be said that what NATO is attempting in Afghanistan is a hugely ambitious project, which has arguably never been attempted anywhere in the world on this scale and in this social and economic context. The international community, with ISAF as its vanguard, is not simply trying to repair a broken state, but to build one that has never really existed before in any meaningful sense.

Therefore, although it is perhaps easy to define at a high level an end-state that everyone would sign up to – for example, peace and security for all Afghan citizens – it is clear that there is little consensus among the different external agencies as to how best to bring this about. The debate is about the very nature of the development process, and the power of external agencies to make it happen. The assumptions about nation-building accompanying the increasingly muscular interventionism practised by the US and her allies since the Cold War ended are being put to the test in Afghanistan.

A Huge Footprint

Turning now to the way the international community is organised in Afghanistan, the most exceptional feature is of course the co-existence not only of a Security Council-mandated ‘integrated mission’, The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), but also the Security Council-mandated, NATO-led, ISAF. (I do not go into the separate issue of the US forces outside the NATO structure.) Then there is the additional co-existence of a NATO Senior Civilian Representative (SCR) alongside the Commander of ISAF (COMISAF). As if this were not enough, there is not only a
conventional European Commission (EC) office, with a Head of Mission, but also a European Union (EU) Special Representative (again, I do not pursue this in this report).

All this is on top of the usual array of embassies, UN agencies, other international organisations, and NGOs that one sees in poor countries around the world. It adds up to a very dense structure and, not surprisingly, has spawned a mass of co-ordination bodies, often with overlapping remits. This consumes time and effort, not only for the internationals, but also for the Government of Afghanistan. We outsiders make a huge footprint in Afghanistan, very visible to the Afghan people. They are entitled to – and do – ask whether we are managing ourselves as effectively as we could be.

**Does NATO have its act together?**

Given my brief, it seemed appropriate to try to define the complementarity between the SCR and COMISAF, and also between NATO/ISAF and UNAMA. This is especially important because, whereas civilian agencies traditionally find it easier to relate to non-military structures, it is obvious that a good mutual understanding – at least – between civilians and military is essential if NATO is to succeed in Afghanistan.

The SCR was on leave during my visit, and I did not therefore get the chance to talk to him. From conversations I had it would seem that there is some debate about what the role should be (beyond managing the non-ISAF aspects of the NATO relationship with Afghanistan, e.g., the Partnership for Peace dimension). Yet one thing that came through strongly from many discussions I had was that many of ISAF’s internal challenges can be tracked back to a lack of consistency of approach between the contributing NATO Nations. To me this seems an obvious area for the SCR’s involvement.

For example, and critically for the success of its mission, although ISAF IX has organised itself effectively at HQ level to integrate ‘reconstruction and development’ (‘R+D’) requirements into overall planning, this is much less well supported at Regional Command (RC) and PRT levels. Here, different national approaches/constraints predominate and as a result RCs/PRTs are often inadequately resourced, lacking staff in numbers and without the skill sets needed to support ‘R+D’. Nations also impose widely differing security constraints on their personnel – civilian and military. These affect how those personnel are perceived by the local population and the lack of consistency and coherence hampers the achievement of the Commander’s Intent.

As these kinds of problems can usually only be resolved at the political, as opposed to the purely military, level it would seem to me that COMISAF really needs a powerful advocate with direct access to the North Atlantic Council (NAC), through the NATO SG, who can put the nations on the spot and help unblock the system to deliver greater coherence and effectiveness.

More controversially, perhaps, it can be argued that COMISAF needs similar support in managing relationships with local stakeholders, particularly the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan. This would not in any way diminish COMISAF’s existing relationships with these stakeholders, but it would give them more political ‘cover’. (As it happens, General Richards was quite prepared to take on this more political role, but it may not be sustainable now that he has left at the conclusion of ISAF IX on 4 February.)
My own analogy here is that of non-executive chairman and chief executive; COMISAF is NATO’s chief executive in Afghanistan, while the SCR is the non-executive chairman. Like any other chief executive, COMISAF controls the troops, but his chairman can secure the political space that allows him to get on with his job. Standing back to back, they jointly provide strong leadership to the ISAF mission. In this context, ‘Senior Civilian Representative’ does not seem an adequate job title: ‘Special Representative’ (of the NATO SG) would perhaps seem more appropriate.

*Does UNAMA play the leadership role it should?*

Turning to the relationship between ISAF and UNAMA, what struck me is how much ISAF has moved in to fill the space the UN would normally occupy. Although it is true that the Security Council has given the security role to NATO/ISAF, ‘security’ in this context can be so broadly defined that ISAF takes virtually everything upon itself. This, I would suggest, is not in the interest of the mission, and certainly makes it more difficult to secure the engagement of the non-NATO civilian actors, especially the NGOs.

For example, ISAF has done an excellent job of mapping the various activities contributing to ‘security’ in the broader sense, including civilian-delivered ‘R+D’ projects, through a tool named the Afghan Comprehensive Stability Picture (ACSP). This shows what is being done, and the critical gaps.7 However, this information naturally belongs within the government machine, and traditionally the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) helps national and provincial government develop the required capacity to generate it on a sustainable basis. To the extent that there has been a lack of capacity within government and UNAMA to fulfil this function, one can hardly blame ISAF for picking up the ball and running with it. A consistent cry, both from within ISAF and on the civilian side, was for UNAMA to play a stronger leadership role in the development area. UNAMA has clearly got some very good people, and on the face of it could do a lot more.

There are in fact many good examples of UNAMA and ISAF collaborating on this and of UNAMA trying to use its convening power to bring the various actors together. However, there are also some powerful obstacles in the way of a greater UNAMA role. First, security: there are still a number of provinces where UNAMA does not consider it safe to be at present. Second, it is impossible to exaggerate the extent to which the PRT concept has alienated the development community and thrown normal models of co-ordination into disarray; it will take a lot to get this back on track. Third, UN member states need to put more effort into strengthening UNAMA and giving it the best possible tools to do its job. Fourth, Western donor nations should ask themselves whether they acknowledge sufficiently the UN’s proven track record in certain areas, for example recruitment of international civilian police officers/advisers.8

Perceptions of ISAF’s Role and How to Improve Channels of Communication

*How ISAF is perceived by civilian agencies and vice versa*

This brings me to the vexed question of the role of PRTs in ‘S+R’ and ‘R+D’, and the implications for what is generally known as ‘humanitarian space’. As the PRT concept has developed and the number of PRTs has
expanded most of the development community has watched with dismay, and many have decided to have as little as possible to do with them.

It is as well for all parties to acknowledge that the perceived militarisation of relief and reconstruction in Afghanistan through the adoption of the PRT concept by the US, UK, and now ISAF as a whole has made co-operation with non-NATO civilian agencies, at least, very difficult. On the civilian side, the concerns I heard ranged from:

1. Concern about 'blurring' of roles, with consequential damage to perceived impartiality, and a knock-on effect on security of operations and staff;
2. The difficulty of engaging with military personnel who are on shorter rotations and barely have time to understand the country before it is time to move on;
3. 'Cherry-picking’ by the military; taking the easy projects and ignoring the rest, accompanied by poor co-ordination in some areas;
4. The frustration of being invited to advise on project proposals only to see one’s advice systematically ignored;
5. The deep concern at the skewing of the allocation of development resources to support political/military objectives (where a Nation’s troops are engaged in a particular part of the country there is an expectation that development resources will follow, even if this runs counter to the Nation’s overall development strategy for the country).

On the other hand, there is a palpable sense of frustration among the military that the civilian agencies do not move faster to exploit the space won by hard-fought military activity. They see themselves as creating a brief window of opportunity in which superficial security (the cessation or absence of active fighting) can be converted into deeper rooted stability with international and Afghan Government civilian support – if the latter doesn’t happen they are locked into a cycle of clearing the Taliban out of one valley and watching them spill into the next or come back, and having to re-engage in fighting. It is clear from talking to people within NATO/ISAF how genuine is the desire of the military to co-operate more effectively with the civilians. The latter need to be more ready than they are now to meet them half way.

Everyone agrees PRTs need more coherence

One theme that is shared by both military and civilian players is the need for much greater coherence within and between PRTs. Although they are part of ISAF, they only report to it in a partial sense; the military side reports through the ISAF chain of command, but the civilian side does not. Thus the modus operandi of the civilian side is shaped as much by individual national considerations as by the requirements of the overall mission. In the (Italian) PRT I visited, the Commander had to be very sensitive to the different interests of his principal funders, the Italian Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs/International Co-Operation. These each had their own requirements, with the Commander (who of course also had to satisfy his Regional Commander in RC West) to a considerable extent caught in the middle.

In turn this makes it much harder for agencies to engage with PRTs, as the rules are so different from one to another. In response to this, ISAF IX has done a sterling job in trying to bring about greater coherence across the PRTs. The new PRT Handbook, the regular PRT Newsletter, standardised reporting requirements, and much greater investment in common
training and induction for PRT staff, are notable examples. There is a limit though to how much ISAF can achieve without greater political will and coherence at the level of the contributing nations; this links back to the previous point about the need for a greater role in this regard for the NATO SCR/SRSG.

**The PRT role must be better defined**

After all this time, there is still a fundamental lack of clarity about the role of PRTs. Are they the main vehicle for relief, reconstruction, and development in Afghanistan, or is their role to create a permissive security environment within which those activities can be undertaken by other agencies? The PRT mission statement, as agreed by the Executive Steering Committee in Kabul in January 2005, suggests the latter interpretation:

PRTs will assist the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to extend its authority, in order to facilitate the development of a stable and secure environment (underlined in the original) in the identified area of operations, and enable Security Sector Reform (SSR) and reconstruction efforts.¹⁰

However, it was put to me that the PRT model was never intended to support the aggressive counter-insurgency role that is now required in the south and east. In these regions neither the Government nor the non-NATO civilian agencies are able to operate freely, and even the civilian components of the PRT's struggle to leave their heavily guarded base camps. Thus the idea of combining military and civilian assets in pursuit of a common objective does not really work.

Some critics would go further and say that from the start PRTs were an attempt to do peacekeeping on the cheap, and that it was naïve to think that by digging a few wells and rebuilding some schools enough hearts and minds could be won to counter the power wielded by those who, for a variety of reasons, were fundamentally opposed to the authority of central government. What was needed instead was a more robust security presence, which – until quite recently, with the Taliban staging a comeback – the international community was unwilling to provide. On this interpretation PRTs were a gamble that did not pay off, and the model is stretched to the limit now that ISAF is fighting a major counter-insurgency campaign in the south and east.

Putting this to one side, one can define the key elements that amount to the achievement of the PRT mission:

1. Superiority, backed by military force, over insurgents and visible, effective, policing of the rule of law;
2. Provincial authorities providing leadership and control and being democratically accountable to their people;
3. Effective co-ordination of internal and external resource inputs, delivering tangible improvements to people’s lives.

Supporting all this is a major challenge, requiring different capabilities, knowledge, and skill sets. The question is how much the PRT should be trying to deliver itself, and how much it should be helping to build the capacity of others, particularly the local authorities – especially when there are other bodies like the UN for whom this is core business.

The answer is complicated by the fact that the security situation varies from one area to another, but it is nevertheless important to try to define some principles. Given the concerns about the military taking on too much, it would help to build confidence
with other agencies if there were an explicit policy statement, perhaps from the PRT Executive Steering Committee, saying that PRTs will only aim to carry out those tasks that for security reasons cannot be carried out by other actors (e.g., the Afghan Government, Army, and Police; the UN, NGOs, and others). Where a lack of security means they have to do it themselves they will take care to avoid falling into the trap of filling the vacuum on a permanent basis and creating an unnecessary dependency.

Such an approach could also be turned to advantage in security terms. Instead of saying to the local population that because of a lack of security the military are going to step in and do civilian projects, the line would be that without security the civilian agencies will not be able to operate. The former approach gives the community no incentive to deny the insurgents; the latter puts the onus on them to do just that and offers a better carrot. It also helps to reduce the dependency on external actors, which is counter-productive to government and civil society taking more responsibility.

Some people I spoke to within ISAF said that the objective over time was for PRTs to come under civilian command (a few already do). This raises the question of whom they would report to; some said it would still have to be the Regional Commander, others were happy for it to be the relevant embassy. To me this seems a muddle. Either the security situation calls for something that has to be under military command because its primary function is to achieve superiority over the insurgency, or there could indeed be a non-military ‘PRT’ supporting the local Provincial Development Committee but divorced from any residual military structure.

A more focused and restricted role for ISAF

If the PRT role were focused and clarified in this way, ISAF could concentrate on its core function of progressively developing the capability of the Afghan security forces (Army and Police), leaving to a strengthened UNAMA the role of harnessing and coordinating the international development community’s efforts in support of the provincial authorities, including the ‘softer’ aspects of the Security Sector Reform agenda (issues of good governance beyond strengthening the coercive power of the security forces). For example, UNDP should be supporting the development of indigenous planning capacity at both national and provincial levels; this is one of its core functions.\(^{11}\) As indigenous capacity grew the PRT role would shrink even further. A clear statement of intent agreed jointly by the Government, UNAMA, and ISAF would make it easier for civilian agencies to engage with this process rather than stay at arms length as they are at present.

A key role for development and civilian actor advisers

It would also help if the role of development advisers were clarified. These occur at all levels (ISAF HQ, Regional Commands, and (some) PRTs) and seem to operate in very different ways. In my opinion the core DevAd role should be helping commanders to understand better the development context in which they are operating; this will be achieved in large part by maintaining good channels of communication with the development community, combined with the relevant background – preferably as a member of that community. In this way military activity can be supportive, rather than disruptive, of the development process.\(^{12}\) However, that is not the same as
advising the Commander how to do development; as stated above I do not see this as an appropriate role for the military. What commanders really need are ‘civilian actor advisers.’ people who can effectively engage with the development community, offer assistance to the latter where appropriate, and ensure that the military side knows what is going on. That is a very different concept from the much more problematic one of trying to ‘co-ordinate’ the work of all actors.

**A More Comprehensive Approach?**

*More honesty and mutual understanding needed about security*

If the above were implemented, it would go a long way to giving traditional development agencies more confidence that they could with comfort engage with the military. However, a key barrier to closer collaboration is that civilians and the military have out of necessity a completely different approach to security. As a guest of ISAF I lived in a world of armed convoys, bullet-proof vehicles, body armour and helmet, and electronic counter-measures. As an NGO staff member, I would depend for my security on (a) doing a good job and being trusted by the local community, (b) being perceived as impartial, neutral, and independent, and (c) using good judgement and being ready to withdraw if needed. But I would, essentially, be defenceless against a determined enemy.14

These different approaches get in the way of dialogue at the practical level as well as the conceptual one. On the one hand it is very hard for military and civilian personnel even to meet when the former can go nowhere without security and the latter do not want to be seen anywhere near it. The UN can – and to an increasing extent does – provide a middle ground and in Kabul UNAMA has been able to convene meetings involving Government, NGOs, and the military. But in the provinces UNAMA’s presence is weaker, and it is harder to be discreet.

On the other hand NGOs and the military disagree as to the current security status. The official ISAF view (January 2007) is that the ‘security situation is stable in 3 of 5 Regions’, and that the ‘incident trend in the other 2 has declined’. Yet a November 2006 briefing prepared by the main international NGO consortium, The Agency Co-ordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), talks about ‘rapidly growing insecurity’ in various parts of the country and says that ‘the country faces the worst crisis since the outing of the Taliban in 2001’ – as of January 2007 this was still their view. NGOs particularly resent being accused by some members of the military of being risk averse, when over thirty aid workers were killed in Afghanistan during 2006. In return, they argue that in many places the military could lower its security profile and send a positive message to the local population, but that, as one person put it to me ‘there is no tolerance for the calculated risk’.

*NGOs et al cannot afford not to engage with the military in the policy debate*

Both these perspectives are valid, but there needs to be better dialogue to try to reach mutual understanding. To its credit, the military understands very well the importance of lines of operation other than the security one. It still has a long way to go in understanding how the development community sees the links between security and development, and what other issues need to be addressed before development can take place. For example there is deep unhappiness about the issue of Security Sector Reform – highlighted in the PRT
mission statement – and how it is being undertaken. As ICG point out:

While military action is a vital part of counter insurgency, it is worrying that it appears to be the predominant element in Afghanistan. It is already evident that without police to hold the area and clearly sequenced political strategies, it often takes only a few weeks for insurgents to appear in areas that have been ‘cleared’. To fill the void, there is increasing emphasis on ‘development’, or building things – preferably quickly – but the political component is missing. (My emphasis)

For their part, the NGOs and others need to appreciate that there is sophisticated and sensitive thinking in the military on these matters, and a determination to press ahead with a new doctrine of civil/military cooperation that factors in other actors’ perspectives as well as their contribution. From an ISAF IX perspective, the most pressing requirement for ACT is the need to focus on a new NATO civil-military cooperation doctrine that includes a counter-insurgency element. NGOs can either sit on the sidelines and let this doctrine be shaped without their input, or they can try to have some influence on it by engaging in the debate. On the evidence of what I saw and was told on this trip, no-one should underestimate the challenge of getting this dialogue going.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The understandable attempt to co-ordinate and provide leverage to best effect both military and civilian crisis management tools in Afghanistan since 2001 has had unintended consequences for relations between military and civilian actors. This has to be seen in the context of the international community’s overall response, which has underestimated the level of troops needed to stabilise the country, but has also over-emphasised the ‘harder’ elements of security at the expense of some of the ‘softer’ ones. Neither the true nature of Afghanistan’s development needs, nor the nature of the development process itself, nor the respective roles of the different actors have been adequately reflected in the overall framework employed. With the resurgence of violence in the south and east over the last couple of years, the limitations of the model are more vividly exposed, and the situation is now acute. Key elements in turning this around include:

1. Greater recognition by the NATO nations of the imperatives on the ground, and willingness to subordinate national preferences to the need to give COMISAF the tools to do the job.
2. A similar commitment from the UN Security Council to strengthen UNAMA and give it the appropriate resources to play a more leading role.
3. A more focused and restricted definition of ISAF’s role in ‘security and reconstruction’ or ‘reconstruction and development’ vis-à-vis non-NATO civilian actors.
4. A continued drive to greater coherence across PRTs and a clearer statement of direction for them.
5. Creativity at all levels in finding new ways of getting people to talk to each other, based on a recognition that no-one has a monopoly of the moral high ground.
6. Leadership at all levels coming from the best people we can send.

Notes

* Author’s note. This report was written following a visit to Afghanistan in January 2007 in my capacity as a Senior Concept Developer for NATO/ACT, sponsored by the UK Ministry of Defence. Although I believe it has stood the test of time, I am very aware that I have barely skinned the surface of a hugely complex and difficult situation. In thanking my hosts and also everyone who took
the time to talk to me I would like to make it clear that the views expressed are mine alone. This is therefore an entirely independent, as well as of necessity a somewhat impressionistic, report; it does not reflect the views either of ISAF or of NATO/ACT.

3. See, for example, Prime Minister Tony Blair’s statement, 7 October 2001, <http://www.pm.gov.uk/output/Page1613.asp>.
5. For example, the Marshall Plan at the end of the Second World War, although on a massive scale was carried out in an essentially permissive environment. Other, more recent, interventions in conflict situations – apart from Iraq – have had more modest ambitions.
6. I put this in inverted commas because I do not believe that the process of development lends itself to the kind of planning that military organisations can do. ISAF documents discuss ‘S+R’ (stabilisation and reconstruction) and ‘R+D’ (reconstruction and development) as if these naturally followed each other – but they are very different. However, my point here is about the lack of NATO synergy and applies equally well even if one only talks about ‘S+R’.
7. It also shows a lack of correlation between ‘assets’ and security; the inference is that good governance is the vital missing ingredient. I return to this at the end of the report.
8. It was put to me that the UN has a proven track record in sourcing and deploying civilian police, including from non-NATO (including Muslim) countries and that the donors who are leading in this area under the Bonn Agreement should ask it to do more. Given that the international community is struggling here this would seem to be worth pursuing.
9. The ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Team Handbook (Kabul, October 2006).
11. See also the earlier comment about civilian police deployment.
12. ISAF HQ gave me a good example. A PRT commander was asked by the local governor to build schools; however the Minister in Kabul told ISAF HQ that the last thing he needed was more schools without trained teachers to work in them – what he wanted built was a teacher training college. A good development adviser would be able to head off such well-meaning but misguided interventions by the PRT, and would also be able to support the Commander in encouraging the appropriate civilian actors to engage with the issue.
13. This term was coined by Paul LaRose Edwards, a fellow Senior Concept Developer for NATO/ACT, and is currently being developed by ACT. They will ‘CIVADs’ for short.
14. In places like Afghanistan, where the ‘enemy’ increasingly does not distinguish between international military and civilians, this becomes an even more acute problem.
16. International Crisis Group, op. cit., p 14. This is also exemplified by the lack of correlation between ‘assets’ and security as recorded by ISAF and noted above.
The Challenges of ‘Hot’ Stabilisation

Daniel Korski*

Introduction

Ducking from incoming mortars, wearing thirty pounds of body armor, driving around in body-guarded, amour-plated 4x4s, living cheek-by jowl with soldiers, and negotiating with tribal sheiks and warlords has now become an increasingly common experience for diplomats and development workers. This reflects a new reality: the increasing need to deal with fragile, conflict-ridden and post-conflict countries. Gearing the UK’s ‘conflict architecture’ to deal with the challenges inherent in post-conflict stabilisation will be key. As Carl Bildt, the former High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina and now Swedish Foreign Minister has written: ‘In the new security environment, state building efforts are as important as nuclear deterrence was in the past. It is imperative to improve our instruments for this.’

Nevertheless, building stabilisation capabilities requires an understanding of the particular challenges that governments will face in contemporary missions. Much like generals are accused of wanting to fight the last war, peacemakers can be guilty of wanting to repeat peacemaking formulas; the vicissitudes of the Iraq War are sometimes blamed on a failure to learn from the nation-building experiences in the Balkans. However, the preponderant nature of stabilisation is changing, much like warfare, and this impacts the strategies and methods required by governments. Learning from the past remains relevant, but today’s greatest challenge may lie in new dynamics. For example, how to deal with the fact that interveners – whether that is the UN or individual nations – are now likely to be seen as combatants, rather than by-standers, peace-keepers or impartial dispensers of humanitarian assistance. From Iraq and Afghanistan, through Lebanon, and Darfur, combatants increasingly see their struggle as part of a broader, global contention in which the intervening force is considered an – or sometimes even the – enemy.

To understand the nature of contemporary stabilisation missions and the challenges they pose, I propose viewing stabilisation as occurring in categories. Each category consists of a number of stabilisation missions, all of which have particular characteristics specific to the conflict and intervention in question. Denis Ross, President Bill Clinton’s Middle East Envoy, once noted that each administration has its own ‘sociology’, which determines relationships, impacts on processes and, ultimately, shapes the outcomes i.e., the policies. In this vein, each intervention is governed by its own ‘sociology’. Missions following humanitarian interventions operate in a very different climate than missions assisting the implementation of negotiated peace agreements without prior military intervention not to mention the extraordinary challenges of multilateral peacebuilding after unilateral interventions. Additionally, peace-support operations, combining military and civilian elements in a concerted effort of peacemaking, for instance in situations where only a fragile ceasefire has been achieved, are a unique category.

But for all their differences, it is possible to distinguish a number of common elements, stemming from the distribution of power within the international system and the changing way that states conceive their interests with respect to failing states. These two additional factors – extraneous to the
missions themselves and even to the causes of conflict – affect the way interventions have been constructed, both publicly and inside the governments, and determine the resources, methods and capabilities required. Co-operation between NGOs, humanitarian actors and the military is key in one category, but may be less important in another where the focus is on building the state’s security apparatus. If missions are seen as a national security priority, rather than as altruistic, then expensive investments in national capabilities may be more politically acceptable.

Five distinct categories are discernable: after the First World War, as European empires began to decline; after the Second World War, with the demise of the European empires and the onset of decolonisation; the Cold War category, up to the mid-1990s; the period stretching from the 1999 Kosovo campaign to the 2001 ousting of the Taliban and the onset of Iraq War in 2003; and the current category, which can be said to have begun from 2004 onwards. This survey is confined to the three last categories, starting during the Cold War, as they are the most relevant ones.

These categories are not perfect, but this heuristic device helps illuminate the changing trends of post-conflict stabilisation and the different national and international capabilities that will be required in the future. There are other ways to categorise stabilisation missions. Simon Chesterman in You the People (2004) distinguishes between differently administrative functions of UN operations. A scale goes from the limited functions in DR Congo and Sierra Leone, the responsibility for police, elections and limited executive power in Cambodia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, to the transitional administrations in East Timor and Kosovo with full executive, legislative and judicial powers. The European Union has adopted this nomenclature. It speaks of missions aimed at strengthening local institutions through advice, training and monitoring, and ‘substitution missions’ where the international community conducts executive functions.

Oliver Richmond, in The Transformation of Peace (2005), distinguishes missions according to their political nature. He introduces several different categories, from hyper-conservative, conservative and orthodox, to emancipatory. Roland Paris, in At War’s End, categorises missions based on their impact and Kristofer Lidén suggests the importance of focusing on the justification or pretext of stabilisation operations.

However, these categories do not extricate us from a confusing debate on ‘missions’ such as ‘peacekeeping’, ‘peace-building’, ‘nation-building’, ‘post-conflict reconstruction’, ‘stabilisation’, ‘counter-insurgency and ‘irregular warfare’. This debate has little practical value for building relevant capabilities and capacities.

Cold War Stabilisation

During the Cold War period, it is possible to discern two different types of stabilisation missions; those under UN auspices and the anti-colonial counter-insurgencies. The UN-led missions were largely aimed at separating combatants, monitoring and maintaining ceasefires, and stopping violence, usually between unitary combatants whose troops were separated by a properly demarcated ceasefire line. James Dobbins called these UN missions ‘interpositional’. A UN-approved force was rarely used to settle disputes, compel observation of international norms or rebuild war-torn societies. The exception was UN assistance
to post-colonial governments, such as the UN mission in Congo in the 1960s, which had a relatively expansive mandate.

The rhetoric of the missions was also limited. War was to be avoided and ceasefires instituted, but societal transformation was not an end of these missions. The UN Security Council, split between US and Russia, was not going to let the UN undertake expansive missions in politically contested regions. The capabilities required, both national and international, were lightly-armed, maneuverable military forces. Most missions – like the UN mission in Cyprus – had only a small number of civilian tasks and civilian capabilities were limited. Civil Affairs units served primarily as liaison functions between the military and civil authorities.

The second type of mission was colonial counter-insurgency, such as in Algeria, Malaya and Rhodesia. Counter-insurgency missions were more similar to present stabilisation challenges. Combatants viewed interveners – Britain in Malaya or France in Algeria – as the enemy and, in varying degrees, as part of the global confrontation between capitalism and communism. The role of the UN was limited with a few exceptions, such as in Congo, but cooperation between civilian and military instruments was much greater than in the parallel UN missions.

In the counter-insurgency missions more attention was also paid to building local capabilities, especially those of the security forces, and to persuade local populations to repel the insurgents. For the British in Malaya, counter-insurgency was not so much a battle to eliminate opponents, but rather a ‘battle for men’s minds’, as General Frank Kitson put it. The more the people were drawn towards the government, the more support they passively gave it, by staying out of hostilities, and the more support they actively gave, in the form of intelligence, while providing less support to the insurgents in terms of shelter and succor. Thus, the interveners, trying very hard to maintain consent, avoided the use of heavy weapons that brought about indiscriminate casualties. David Gagula summed up the prevailing approach: ‘A victory is not [just] the destruction in a given area of the insurgent’s forces and his political organisation. It is that, plus the permanent isolation of the insurgent from the population, isolation not enforced upon the population but maintained by and with the population.’

**Post-Cold War Stabilisation**

The second category, lasting roughly from the 1990s to 2004, was characterised by new and violent conflicts, especially internal conflicts, or conflicts ‘amongst the people’ to use Rupert Smith’s phrase. In 1995, thirty of the major conflicts in the world were within the political boundaries of a state, between opposing government forces and revolutionary groups vying for political and economic power. Civil struggles in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nicaragua, Somalia, El Salvador, and Colombia drew in external actors and the attention of the international community in the post-Cold War period, and saw the development of the second category of post-conflict stabilisation. The strategic change was that America and Europe could in fact intervene: their collective interests were strong enough to trump alternative agglomerations of distributions of power that would have, previously, constrained such interventionist impulses. This new perception was captured in the 1992 report Agenda For Peace, issued by the then-UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros Ghali, and commissioned by the UN Security Council on 31 January 1992 at
its first ever meeting at the level of heads of state. The report was imbued with optimism about the new era of international co-operation that would facilitate its peace activities through the UN.

During the Cold War, peacekeeping operations had been largely restricted to separating national armies involved in conflicts between two states. Peacekeepers were then deployed, with the agreement of the warring parties, to keep opposing troops apart, while other means were employed to address the underlying causes of the conflict. In this second category, the interventions were UN-back ed, carried out under either UN auspices, or that of a regional organisation – e.g., NATO. Most missions were in response to humanitarian catastrophes or had an altruistic rationale, such as the US-led operation in Somalia or the UN missions in Cambodia. In the Balkans, this rationale blended together with a European worry about problems in Europe’s backyard.

A number of other characteristics marked out interventions in this category. First, intervening forces – whether under UN or NATO auspices – were not, with the exceptions of Somalia and, in a more limited degree, Bosnia and Herzegovina, seen as combatants by the warring factions who, in turn, rarely conceptualised their struggle as part of a broader, global contention in which the intervening force was considered a – or indeed the – enemy. For example, while Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, the Bosnian Serb leaders, frequently threatened NATO and on a number of occasions over-ran NATO forces, they did not define their struggle as one with NATO – or the West – as their frequent entreaties for collaboration with NATO against the Bosnian Muslims attests to.

Second, large-scale combat operations were rare but, following debacles in Somalia and smaller confrontations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, forces became equipped with increasingly heavy weaponry for deterrence as well as for support to special operations. Third, and perhaps most important, in this category, stabilisation came to mean an intervention that went beyond physical reconstruction. Freed from the constraints of Cold War politics, the US led a move back to the post-Second World War conception of stabilisation. Governmental – and even societal – transformations became an end in themselves. Rhetoric, both at international fora, like the UN, and in capitals, began to reflect the expanding desiderata. UN Security Council mandates grew in size and scope. Finally, post-conflict stabilisation missions were largely supported by the public in the West.

To undertake these new and expanded tasks, a push began both nationally and multilaterally to build new capabilities. This push was led, in the UN context, by the Brahimi Report which called for an over-haul of UN peacekeeping operations. The European Union, for its part, at the 1998 Franco-British St. Mälo Summit, committed itself to developing both military and civilian capabilities. Throughout the late 1990s, in the missions of Kosovo, and East Timor, this concept of stabilisation was dominant. UNMIK in Kosovo, UNTAES in Eastern Slavonia, UNTAET in East Timor and the Office of the High Representative (OHR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina were thousand-person missions with expansive mandates and pro-consular powers.

This category of post-conflict stabilisation lasted approximately a year into the US-led mission in Afghanistan and ended definitively in late 2004 as the US-led reconstruction of Iraq began to falter. Until
then, and much like in previous operations, both missions pursued a wide-ranging programme, including constitution-writing, elections, governmental reforms, and economic revitalisation. In 2004, the Association of the US Army (AUSA) and CSIS published a matrix of the required tasks running into the thousands, and both the US and Britain began to develop concepts for extensive human and financial capabilities to undertake stabilisation missions. Britain’s inter-departmental Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit (PCRU) was established in 2004 with initial plans to create a 400-person cadre of civilians ready to deploy alongside the UK military. Amongst these, almost all skills were to be represented. In the US, the initial ambition was even greater with talks of a several thousand-person civilian ‘reserve’ and a hundred-strong in-house capacity, both of which would have personnel with a wide range of skills and backgrounds. Similar organisational innovations began to take shape in Canada, Germany and the Scandinavian countries as well as at the United Nations and the European Union. Examples include the UN’s Peacebuilding Commission, the creation of the UNDP’s Bureau for Crisis Recovery and reforms in the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).

A key difference from the preceding category was the new rationale for the missions: the narrative used began to shift from altruism to one of national interest. Fragile and conflict-ridden states were now seen not only as affecting the lives of their inhabitants, but – by serving as hideouts for terrorists, and potential transit-points for the smuggling of illegal goods and people – important to the security and wellbeing of Westerners.

Stabilising and reconstructing fragile and failing countries, helping their governments to build capabilities to deliver key services and undermine potential spoilers or insurgents, were viewed as national security priorities. The National Security Strategy focused its attention on the dangers posed by failed states: ‘America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones.’ In his letter introducing the strategy, President Bush explained: ‘The events of September 11, 2001, taught us that weak states, like Afghanistan, can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states. Poverty does not make poor people into terrorists and murderers. Yet, poverty, weak institutions, and corruption can make weak states vulnerable to terrorist networks and drug cartels within their borders.’ Even though Iraq and Afghanistan are the obvious examples of this new conceptualisation, after 9/11 many U.S academics adopted the view that state failure was detrimental to U.S national security. In an article for Brookings, Susan E. Rice for example argued that Africa was replete with examples:

Sudan has served as a sanctuary and staging ground for al Qaeda and other global terrorist organizations. Its radical Islamist government is identified by the United States as a state sponsor of terrorism. Somalia, lacking any effective central government, has afforded safe operational space to affiliates of al Qaeda. Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations have hidden effectively in various African states (including Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, Cote D’Ivoire, Mauritania, and elsewhere), where they planned, financed, trained for, and successfully executed terrorist operations against American and allied targets.17

‘Hot’ Stabilisation

But while these innovations were under development, the ground began to shift underneath the two main and ‘trend-setting’ post-conflict stabilisation missions, Iraq and Afghanistan, and in turn ushered in the
latest category of post-conflict stabilisation. Like all others, this category maintained a number of characteristics of the preceding categories, but also developed a number of unique and defining characteristics.

The clear difference lies in the role of the intervening forces; these are now clearly seen as the enemy and are targeted as such by the warring factions. The focus has also shifted away from wide-ranging missions to operations more focused on stability, security assistance and quick-impact reconstruction. The aim is now primarily to prevent a recurrence of conflict, buying time for a permanent peace settlement and demonstrating some form of immediate 'stability dividend'. The expansion of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), initially established in Afghanistan in 2002 and rolled-out across Iraq, has underlined this new concept of stabilisation operations. It has also begun to determine the organisational format for stabilisation missions: integrated civil-military teams, embedded in brigade or division-size military headquarters, with a remit to focus on local or provincial development.

Two additional closely-related differences exist between the counter-insurgencies of the Cold War and contemporary ‘hot’ stabilisation; the role of the media and the prevailing human rights culture. Today, the media have access to the battlefield, the combatants and the ordinary civilians in a way that was not possible in the 1960s. They can report events quicker than governments can react. This shapes and constrains the actions that governments and the military can take in a stabilisation mission.

The constraining factors come, not from the speed of information, but from the changing norms in Western societies. Since the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights, human rights and *jus in bello* – acting lawfully during war – have become cornerstones of Western identity and warfare. The new COIN field manual for the US Army and Marines points out how actions will be measured against applicable rules and standards found in international law, even when combatants show no respect for any legal rules. Dismissing or marginalising international law is harmful to efforts to compete for legitimacy and power and to convince the target population that the rule of law informs not only the ultimate objective but the way in which legitimate government will be created. Respect for the rule of law may have been important in the counter-insurgency of the 1960s. As Robert S. Thompson wrote in *Defeating Communist Insurgency*: ‘If the government does not adhere to the law, then it loses respect and fails to fulfill its contractual obligation to the people as a government.’ But this has become all the more important today.

Broken down into its component elements, ‘hot’ stabilisation can be seen as revolving around the following ‘four Ps’ – which support the two other Ps, political settlement and peace dividend:

- **Protect civilians and institutions.**
  Security is often listed as a top priority for people living in conflict-affected countries. At the most basic level, an adequate level of security is needed to implement a local government programme. It is also necessary in order for citizens to believe that violence is no longer an alternative and to turn their attention to non-violent methods of conflict resolution. While it is necessary to provide for security through any means available, local authorities should play a role in ensuring that
security measures in their locale are adequate. Support, training and mentoring of security and justice actors is therefore critical.

- Prevent recurrence of violent conflict. This will require managing and reducing, but not necessarily solving, underlying tensions concerning inequalities in the distribution of power and resources. It also requires understanding which reinforces stability or instability in a given situation.

- Promote local institutions. Lessons from past experience indicate that weak governance is usually at the heart of fragility. Weak institutions with limited capacity to perform their core functions contribute to weak governance in many fragile states, which fuels a search for alternative or parallel power structures.

- Prepare for longer-term sustainable development – and for a transition to more traditional development actors and an exit of stabilisation forces. This requires creating building blocks for development, and articulating a narrative of what peace can deliver.

Future Capabilities

Ensuring that this new concept of stabilisation mission is implemented will require action and capabilities on many levels, by many actors, and in many and difficult circumstances. Developing the necessary capabilities is not a task for national governments alone. Post-conflict stabilisation has the greatest chance of success if it is undertaken by a joined-up, capable multinational coalition. Efforts to develop the international community’s capabilities in this field – i.e., that of the UN, NATO and the EU – are therefore underway. However, the most urgent reforms must begin at home. International organisations – and ad hoc coalitions – will continue to fail until national governments are structured to deal more effectively with the challenges of conflict stabilisation.

One of the more radical ideas to restructure national governments – and above all the British bureaucracy – has been put forward by Paddy Ashdown, the former Liberal Democrat leader and High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He suggests a so-called ‘bespoke approach’, in which potentially failing or rogue states are identified early and teams of country experts – at first relatively small – are assembled to manage the prevention process. Since development is frequently a key means of prevention – especially in the case of failing states – these teams should include development experts at the earliest point. If it then becomes obvious that prevention will fail and conflict cannot be avoided, these bespoke teams can be further strengthened with military planners and those who will be involved in the post-conflict reconstruction category. Their job will not be just to prepare for that category, but also to influence the military plans as they are constructed. As Ashdown argues, these ‘bespoke’ teams should then form the core of the post-conflict reconstruction mission that goes in to begin that category, just behind the front line troops.

Adopting such a bespoke approach would require a whole new way of joined-up thinking from within government and multilateral institutions. There are those who would go much further. One analyst, Jake Chapman, argues that ‘the current model of public policy-making, based on the reduction of complex problems
into separate, rationally manageable components, is no longer appropriate.\textsuperscript{15}

Proponents of more radical reform argue that responsibility for whole systems – like the criminal justice system, transport or children’s services – could be organised along mission areas, rather than be divided between different agencies, each with their own budgets, structures and targets. These are similar ideas to those advanced by James Locher III, a former US Assistant Secretary of Defence and architect of the 1986 Defence Reorganisation Act, who talks about re-engineering governmental departments into horizontal, mission-focused organisations, like Britain’s Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC). The newly-established Project on National Security Reform (PNSR) is currently examining the viability of this model for the entire US national security system.\textsuperscript{16}

But even before such thoroughgoing ‘hardware’ changes are contemplated, the following four ‘software’ improvements need to be introduced to deal more effectively with the challenges of ‘hot’ stabilisation.

- **Improve information-gathering.** The quality of post-conflict assistance greatly depends upon the quality of information available to planners. Comprehensive, accurate, specific and up-to-date information on economic, social, political and community conditions needed for realistic, appropriate planning. Such information also helps to prevent unrealistic expectations among beneficiaries that can eventually lead to disappointment and resentment. As such information may not be readily available, measures need to be put in place immediately to develop and disseminate it.

- In order to play a more effective role, it is important to understand what is driving (or has the potential to drive) violence or instability in a particular country or region. Having a deep understanding of underlying causes of instability, fragility and conflict is critical to designing effective programmes – before, during and after violence. This requires a process and analytical tools to develop a cross-government, and subsequently pan-alliance – analysis of a conflict. Too frequently, government departments approach conflicts with a particular departmental perspective in mind. Development agencies focus on economic causality, the military focuses on defence reform and the diplomats on political problems. But such piecemeal perspectives risk missing the underlying causes of conflict.

- Create a **pan-government planning process.** Governments need procedures and methods to ensure the participation of all relevant actors in the planning of a civil-military, multi-agency mission. In the UK, once a political decision is taken, the Chief of Defence issues a Planning Directive to the Chief Joint Operations. Then a Military Strategic Estimate is written, which, once ministerial decisions are made, leads to a Chief of Defence Staff Directive. This in turn leads to the Joint Commander’s Mission Directive etc. Other government departments do not have equivalent planning processes and can only ‘plug into’ the military process or plan separately – therefore making integration more
difficult. There is no pan-government planning process led, for example, by
the Cabinet Office in the UK, and only a few relevant joined-up plans exist.

• **Measure progress.** It is important, from the outset, to agree on what constitutes
success within the various activities we undertake. Language which
suggests that fragile states will be turned into Sweden or
Switzerland in less than a decade is not helpful. It is also important to
find ways to weigh the various factors based on importance/priorities, as well as ways in which to aggregate activities. It is not enough
to have success on one front. If the Sierra Leonean army is reformed,
but the government remains ill-disciplined, disorganised and corrupt,
a military coup may be inevitable. Progress on Security Sector Reform,
however impressive it may be in its own right, ultimately becomes
nugatory. It is also crucial to determine mechanisms for measuring
local perceptions of developments, for it is how the local
population perceives actions that ultimately determines political
success. Finally, a focus on outcomes, not outputs is critical. An army may
have 120,000 trained soldiers, but are they providing security? Do people
feel safer?

Once these ‘software’ changes have been implemented, it will be possible to see how
much more transformational change is required to improve government’s
structures. Two essential ‘hardware’ changes are likely to include resourcing and
manpower.

• **Efforts underway to improve future stabilisation and reconstruction
operations will be handicapped, unless a flexible resource system** is
established. Unlike the military, civilian agencies do not have large
budgets to re-organise priorities and re-programme to meet short-term challenges, nor can they draw on the Treasury Reserves as easily. A flexible
resource mechanism is required to sustain the civilian part of deployments and to fund short-term, quick-impact activities.

• **Develop the capability to deploy civilians.** While the military has
always had an expeditionary capability, civilian departments have
frequently been unable to recruit, train, fund, deploy and manage
civilians in dangerous missions. What is required is a civilian expeditionary
capacity.

• A corollary of greater deployable civilian capacity is the need to have an ‘operational focus’. In the
defence establishment everyone’s focus is on operational capability:
How to ensure that all systems are geared to train, equip, support, position, and project the soldier, seaman and airman to ensure
battlefield victory. UK military philosophy emphasises the relative
autonomy to be granted to the operational level. This stands in
marked contrast to the existing departmental approach, where most
decisions are taken in Whitehall, primarily by senior officials. But, as
one practitioner puts it: ‘Committee-led institutions are rarely suited to the
real-time, high risk, decision-intensive business of crisis management.’
The ambition must therefore be to ensure that the 'operational focus', which permeates the military approach is, as far as possible, replicated on the civilian side and to that end, more decision-making needs to be delegated to the field.

Conclusion

Today the international community is faced with a very different kind of global confrontation than during the Cold War, or even the immediate post-Cold War period, in which military engagement is clearly only one part of the answer. National governments and the international community must come to grips with the challenges of 'hot' stabilisation, and operations where they are seen as combatants by the warring factions, who conceptualise their struggle as part of a broader, global contention in which the intervening force is considered an – or indeed the – enemy.

Success in 'hot' stabilisation means re-conceptualising national and international efforts around the four Ps: Protecting civilians and institutions; preventing recurrence of violent conflict; promoting local institutions; and preparing for longer-term sustainable development. In addition, this requires creating building blocks for development, and articulating a narrative of what peace can deliver.

Coming to grips with this may mean dramatically changing the way that governments have been structured and have been approaching foreign and security policy for decades. In the first instance, it means improving the systems for information-gathering, conflict assessments, pan-government planning, and measuring progress. In the longer-term it means better funding of stabilisation work, and developing the capability to deploy trained, pre-selected, equipped and 'incentivised' civilians. Failure to introduce these changes will undermine the government’s ability to deal with fragile, failing and post-conflict states.

Notes

* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author alone. They in no way reflect the views of the British Government, any part thereof, or any other organisation with whom the author may be associated.
8  In Somalia, not only were US and UN forces targeted by Mohammed Al-Faiyed’s faction, but Osama bin Laden now makes the unverifiable claim that a then-incipient Al-Qa’da also targeted the U.S.
9  The one exception may have been the Mujahdeen support of the Bosnian Muslims in the Bosnian War, but they did not play a key role in defining the Bosnian Muslim agenda.
10  When NATO bombed Bosnian Serb positions in 1994-5, it did lead to violence against the UN forces, most prominently hostage-takings, although casualties were few and did not represent a modus
operandi of the Bosnian Serb forces.
12 US Army and Marine Corps, Counterinsurgency Field Manual (U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24; Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5)
16 See www.PNSR.org, a non-partisan initiative led by James Locher III designed to implement comprehensive and systemic reforms to the US national security system.
‘We’re winning Sir, we just don’t believe it yet’
Public Perception and Modern Military Operations.
Mark Beaumont

Introduction

Public perceptions, in allied, neutral and hostile populations at home and overseas, have a decisive influence on the long-term success of military deployments. This has always been the case, but technological and social developments have changed the relationship between populations and their enemies. Governments are increasingly powerless to affect the messages that reach either their electorate, or those who would harm them. In extreme cases, the central role of politicians can be renewed, such as 9/11, where many looked instinctively to the US President to explain and define the new dynamic. Yet, the explosive and often unregulated proliferation of information and media sources makes this impossible to sustain over the longer-term. Thus public perceptions of threats, defeat, victory and legitimacy are challenged and shaped in a more fluid information space, one in which politicians are predominantly reactive and playing a decreasing role in setting the terms of debate. This has a profound impact on public support for military operations in the UK, the theatre of operations and globally, and on the willingness of non-military actors to engage fully with the Comprehensive Approach, through which our government chooses to deliver its foreign policy.

This article sets out to explain how public perceptions of military victory and legitimate expeditionary deployments in considerable parts of the Western world developed from a limited knowledge of the Second World War, but have failed to fully evolve in line with the changing nature of modern military operations. I intend to draw together a set of general questions and suggested solutions applicable to combined deployments, and do not seek to critique any particular national government or defence policy. In this spirit, I use the terms ‘the public’ and ‘the press’ as generic descriptors for citizens in any country who contribute to what their leaders consider to be public or media opinion respectively. Where I have given specific examples they are intended purely to illustrate a wider point. The discussion will start by suggesting reasons to explain why the terms of debate have not moved on, outline how this undermines the success of our current operations and suggest some strategies to address the concerns raised. I accept that the nature of warfare has changed and accept that the military tasks that affect our nation strategically are far wider and more nuanced than the defence of our island against the armed forces of an opposing state. However, there is not space to debate the exact nature of that change here. Similarly, while it will make some links between public opinion at home and the evolution of a permissive civilian attitude within theatres of operations, it does not set out to reassess coalition strategies for winning ’hearts and minds’ in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Public opinion is an ethereal concept, hard to measure and quantify, and difficult to predict. For the purposes of this article, the term public opinion shall refer to personal viewpoints held by the electorate, or sections of the public (such as the media, religious or cultural groups) that influence the planning and conduct of UK military operations. I make no attempt to provide statistics, or to explain a theoretical framework for shaping public opinion. What matters is not the size of the quorum,
but the influence that civilian and military decision-makers perceive an idea to have on their political masters, their own objectives and the welfare of those men and women under their command. For when public opinion is perceived to have coalesced to the extent that decision-makers consider it as part of the planning process, then it has affected military operations. The resolve of our leaders need not be proportional to the actual number of people who hold a given view or the (probably smaller) number who would themselves act on it, either in peaceful or hostile protest; but our current military commitments require brave, forward-thinking decisions focused on the long-term objectives if our deployments are to succeed. The more disjoint there is between public opinion and politicians, the larger the personal risks for leaders who make strategic choices that come with difficult short-term hurdles attached. Lack of public support reduces a politician’s tolerance for these risks, and increases the pressure on military commanders to align some campaign decisions to the electoral, rather than strategic military timescales. This puts the long-term success of our deployments at risk.

Background – Public Perceptions of Military Success and Failure

The Second World War sets much of the framework through which today’s public understand war, notably the characteristics of victory and the conditions for the opening and closing of hostilities. Apart from a select band of academic, military and political commentators, few will have seriously considered the nature and purpose of military action since their school days. The dominant public perception remains that war takes place between states, and the death, personal hardship and national resilience required to win all start and stop at legally defined points. Competing analyses do exist, explaining war as a response to the exploitation of labour, as an indisputable feature of world politics, or as an inevitable response to self-interested imperialism, but these are rarely explored with school pupils. The Second World War is taught to young people as a six-year war, with legally declared start and finish points, in which armies fought to overthrow national governments by degrading the armed forces and the military-industrial complex of the enemy (and the morale of the civilians who manned it). These are the criteria that large sections of the British electorate connect with victorious military action.

Conversely, and for many of the same reasons, perceptions of defeat both in Europe and the US stem from Vietnam. Where the enemy refused decisive engagements, this looked like a failure of military planning. When the Vietnamese leaders were not pressured into political negotiations by high casualties or the sustained application of superior technology, the public feared that equipment was inadequate or the enemy were highly resilient. Modern analysis tells us that a decentralised campaign was an inevitable response for local commanders. They faced an American enemy equipped and trained to achieve decisive victory in protracted battles against an enemy intent on protecting static critical objectives. Logistical support therefore came through diffuse networks, often bypassing the major cities and originating in other countries to reduce the effectiveness of conventional military tactics. Furthermore, many Vietnamese did not look to centralised politico-military command structures for instructions to fight or surrender. Instead they fought, re-supplied and died as local forces, with local loyalties and political objectives. They were united only by a desire to be independent
and respect for the figurehead that spoke, albeit through a strongly Communist-influenced rhetoric, for freedom to choose their own destiny. In this we see many of the problems facing coalition forces today, and the fearsome impact that a collective objection to occupation and a sustained indecisive campaign can have on public support for military operations.

Crucially, twentieth-century conflict (notably, the Second World War and the Korean and Cold War) openly acknowledged that defeating the opposing ideology was a key objective. The great terrors conducted by the Nazi and Communist regimes have also added a moral element to the Allied victory. As positive public opinions of military operations are inextricably linked to our embedded perceptions of victory, it has become expected that a successful campaign includes an ideological triumph, and that winning bestows moral legitimacy to the decision to go to war. Though moral legitimacy in the longer term could stem from a loss at the hands of military forces, much depends on subjective analysis. For example, it could be argued that the case for Irish self-rule was boosted following the British response to the Easter Rising or that Kuwait’s claim for UN intervention to reverse Saddam Hussein’s hostile actions in 1991 was strengthened by defeat. Yet, allocating moral legitimacy to conflict situations is typically fraught. Within an admittedly grey area, the more clear-cut cases tend to fall into one of two broad categories. The first includes states defeated by an overwhelming pre-empty attack, such as Belgium following Nazi invasion in 1940, or Tibet’s defeat by the People’s Republic of China in 1949–51. The second covers actions by state security forces against elements of their own population, usually resulting in alleged war crimes or crimes against humanity. Examples include Slobodan Milosevic’s repression of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo in the 1990s (following their demands for a return to earlier levels of autonomy) or the Turkish response to the Kurdish and Armenian independence movements. Each shows the sensitive, divisive and frequently inconclusive nature of these cases not just for academics and politicians, but for ordinary people.

It is exceptionally difficult to find a case in which a defeated state aggressor retains legitimacy in the eyes of the wider world, particularly in the shorter term, and even harder still to find such a case embedded in the public consciousness. Few, if any, politicians would wish to tie the legitimacy of their military campaigns or foreign policy objectives to a moral high ground based on a defeat. The relentless scrutiny of a free press and the intense need to demonstrate results over a three- to five-year election cycle aside, national pride demands success. Career professionals in the military, politics and the departments of state seek promotion and recognition for their successful work on behalf of the nation. Media and public information sources have, for the most part, followed this general line throughout history. But, today’s leaders face a very difficult challenge. Troops now deploy for many reasons including defence diplomacy, peacekeeping, mentoring and peace support. All out war-fighting is but one, and the lines dividing ‘traditional’ war and today’s military tasks are increasingly fluid. However, public perceptions of ideological strength and moral legitimacy remain rooted in a definition of victory and an understanding of conflict stemming principally from the Second World War. The general public have not responded fully to governmental efforts to broaden populations’ understanding of modern war or of the developing role that our armed
forces can play in tactical non-state threats such as human insecurity, terrorism and drug trafficking. This explains why convincing voters that our twenty-first century expeditionary operations are worthwhile and are going well is proving to be such a huge challenge.

Repositioning the Strategic Debate – What Role for the Armed Forces?

It is vital that governments continue to act to positively shape the public understanding of our current military operations, and to articulate their mission in a way that is linked to international stability, for this is central to the interests of British citizens. However, it is equally crucial that further steps are taken to re-define public perceptions of British interests to account for our global responsibility to protect populations at risk (as articulated by Kofi Annan in 2001), and to explain why it is important to use military forces as part of a strategy to tackle threats that originate overseas. There is a strong link between the impact (and cost of addressing) drug-related crime, health issues and social fragmentation in the UK, and Afghan farmers forced to grow poppies in Helmand province by Taliban officials and criminal gangs. Similarly, mass immigration to London, Berlin or Paris from the Balkans, Somalia or Darfur has much to do with the relative successes of military deployments by the UK and the wider international community to those regions, and the ongoing human security issues faced by those populations. I do not suggest that military deployments can solve these problems alone, but they are part of the solution. The Ministry of Defence continues to need support to show the public why our armed forces must do more, for moral as well as tactical reasons, than protect our island from invasion or attack by hostile states.

Much of the apathy, confusion and poorly informed objection to foreign and security policies has arisen because significant sections of the public have a weak grasp of the strategic conditions essential for the continuation of our current standard of living in Britain and other developed nations. Nations, regardless of the government that leads them, have core requirements in energy, population flow, trade and financial transactions, and strategic resources and commodities. Western governments have generally done little to articulate these, partly due to concerns about an imperial past or current economic inequalities. It will take a brave leader to break this taboo, as the concept of war for oil is notoriously unpopular. However, as competition for finite resources increases over the coming decades, securing strategic supply lines (such as the tanker routes from the Persian Gulf) will buy vital time for government policies and civil society that seek to reduce dependence through efficiency, alternative energy development and the diversification of supply. Promoting the understanding that military operations and defence diplomacy are part of the solution to reducing our national energy dependence is vital. Clear public acknowledgement of the link between our individual lifestyle choices and our foreign policy relationship with resource-rich nations continues to be key.

Considerable weaknesses in public support for military operations has arisen because there is no cross-party consensus on either the threats facing the nation, our strategic requirements or the best method to safeguard these interests. It is naïve to suggest that parties will sign up to a common approach to deliver foreign policy objectives, or even to an agreed articulation of those priorities. However, it is equally misleading to suggest that each government takes power with a detailed party-specific articulation of
how military forces will be employed, or a radically different analysis of the thematic and geographic priority areas important for Britain. Civil society could debate these fundamentals more regularly and in greater detail. This may decrease the chance that the public become disillusioned with foreign policy choices. While no-one can articulate in advance an approved response to cataclysmic events like 9/11, it should be possible to agree that any government would consider military support in a humanitarian crisis, even if the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) could not agree. The global general public needs to be engaged in further debate to assess whether they are prepared to suffer casualties when the result of government inaction could be the extermination of significant parts of another country’s population. For example, would the UK public rather that the government act in controversial circumstances, particularly when the vulnerable lack the resources and structures to act themselves, or risk stoking a global sense of injustice by choosing not to send significant military assistance? This debate would be highly contentious and could spawn significant dissent in parts of British and international society. Yet dissenting voices are not necessarily a bad thing. The open demonstration of free speech and a wide-ranging public debate should strengthen opinions of British democracy at home and abroad. Failure to widen the debate or to engage in specific terms would reduce our understanding of the real reasons for dissenting voices.

Helping the Public to Understand Twenty-first Century Military Tasks

Some Western governments risk missing the chance to boost their own credibility and articulate the validity of their foreign policy choices by explaining new wars through old prisms. The success of international deployments would be affected if political leaders came under unbearable pressure to bring troops home far too quickly, based on a perception that military victory on the field of battle is the objective, rather than the long-term stability of areas in which threats, such as terrorism, disease, forced migration and crime, develop. Those sections of society who hold entrenched and outdated opinions, especially that our armed forces are only for the defence of our own island territory, that predictable supplies of strategic resources such as oil are not important or that humanitarian problems overseas are not our problem, must be shown another side to the argument. It is important that the public are conscious of the links between global human security and our own, and recognises the role that our armed forces can play as part of wider solution. Without it, military operations may be unduly influenced by domestic concerns and timelines, and could be undermined by a lack of engagement of other nations and from crucial non-military actors (including charities and aid groups). Enemies who draw strength – both abroad and within communities in the UK – from public opposition or apathy towards sustained military deployments overseas would be heartened by public disinterest.

The centrality of high-profile political activity in concluding the First and Second World Wars, not least in terms of publicity, cemented the public expectation for transitions from war-fighting to stabilisation in clearly marked stages. Accordingly, the processes of modernisation, democratisation or westernisation began with a military victory recognised by both sides. So, public support (both in the invaders’ home country, and in the defeated nation) for long-term engagement (the Marshall Plan, overseas basing of troops, political
engagement) was bolstered by clear progress from conflict to political and economic stability. However, because of the increased complexity of missions and conflict triggers since 1945, it is no surprise that the public tend to focus on the destruction of the opposing armed forces as evidence for success and proof of the illegitimacy of the enemy’s conduct and underlying ideology. However, this fails to account for the new challenges of what Rupert Smith describes as ‘war among the people’. Opposing forces are hard to identify, and many consciously use the cover offered by civilian dress and non-military infrastructure such as schools and places of worship. High-visibility infrastructure targeting rarely degrades the arms supplies required to prosecute low-technology warfare against coalition forces, further reducing the scenarios in which technological advantages can be decisively employed. Highly advanced material can be most dramatically challenged using invidious inventions such as Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), often low-tech solutions developed from items easily sourced in conflict zones or passed along supply lines from supportive regimes or ungoverned spaces. Combat in Iraq and Afghanistan today shares many of the hallmarks of earlier wars for the soldiers involved, not least because successful soldiering continues to rely on physical and mental resilience, team-work, adaptability, top-class marksmanship and field craft, and effective leadership. To the public, however, campaigning appears markedly different from the decisive battles of the twentieth-century. Few engagements in Iraq or Afghanistan today lead to high numbers of enemy casualties, typically because the enemy is choosing to avoid larger-scale confrontations to limit the effectiveness of coalition air superiority and the press do not always choose to publicise or report these widely.

Finally, the links between opposing politicians and those fighting against coalition forces are increasingly disparate, and at times, entirely absent.

Enemy fighters have limited responsibility for the local population as a whole because they are not operating under a formal state-focused covenant (though they may have other, more selective loyalties). The war weariness of the population as a nation therefore holds little weight with resistance fighters, and does little to catalyse political engagement. So, in the absence of domestic political progress, different groups engage with or oppose coalition forces more strongly, influenced by religious, tribal and other complex patterns of loyalty; many are foreign fighters, fiercely motivated by an international rejectionist ideology, packaged in populist Islamic language and motif. Some seek profit or personal advancement, and many actively gain from operating in anarchy and refusing to engage with the fledgling state structures being fostered by coalition efforts. This, when combined with depleted state structures and low capacity within civil society, is a critical threat to the success of coalition military operations. Allied military forces are increasingly expected to deliver improved state functions (such as health, infrastructure and education) for local people, rather than provide the security conditions in which local governance, NGOs and other non-combatants take on the risks and opportunities presented by the reconstruction and democratisation process. Where political progress is made, it is fragile and can struggle to deliver the swift end to opposition and the concrete step forward expected by the public with a twentieth-century understanding of a peace treaty as a milestone that signals an end to hostilities.
George Bush’s declaration that the war was over in May 2006 illustrates rather well the high priority that many governments place on showing that military intervention results in political progress. It demonstrates even more effectively the impact on public opinion that can occur when modern military operations have not been fully set within a truly twenty-first century frame of debate.

What Can be Done?

Education

Governments could take immediate action to better equip the next generation with the critical thinking skills required to place twenty-first century military deployments into a more nuanced context. Core curricula for school history, politics, citizenship and adult learning could be developed to show how the World Wars set the strategic environment in which we now operate, rather than anchor the human cost and experiences to twentieth-century timelines. This would provide all school leavers with updated frames of reference for modern political and military events, and widen effective participation in electoral and other current affairs debates.

Governments, civil society and academics could use the analysis and publication of the lessons and successes from past deployments to widen public awareness. Retrospective public analyses, perhaps under Crown or national auspices, would help to engage education, academia and civil society in public debate over the benefits but also the cost and sustained engagement required to cement the gains of our military (and diplomatic and development) campaigns. Examples including the former Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, the Falkland Islands and Korea would break down expectations that today’s deployments are short-lived commitments: UK forces are still in Bosnia and Herzegovina after more than a decade and nearly as long in Sierra Leone and Kosovo, yet elements of the international public expect the task to be completed in Iraq and Afghanistan after a scant few years.

Reaching the real public

Historically, and partly due to the considerable cost of regularly updating the computer software and hardware that underpins an immense communications machine, governments have been slower than mainstream media outlets to embrace the increasing variety of communications methods available. While improvements have been made more recently, official policy and comment from government departments and the print media was unlikely to have reached those who favoured blogs, RSS feeds, newsgroups or chat rooms in the years immediately following 9/11, during which huge changes to the foreign policy landscape occurred. Government sites, by nature of their huge scope, can be less accessible than many others devoted to narrow issues. This may be frustrating for those who seek to debate the conduct of military operations or offer suggestions to those who make policy. In the UK, letters and emails to MPs as well as freedom of information requests do receive an official response, but these remain individual links to the public. Responses could be consolidated as official Q&A documents and made publicly available to promote the sense of dialogue and accountability between government and the populace. Online polling hosted by government sites related to defence and foreign policy, perhaps modelled on the No. 10 ePetitions site, could give a useful insight into areas of concern or satisfaction, and give near real-time feedback on operations, trackable over time.
It is right to scrutinise the relationship between the media and central government, but changes to the way in which governments provide information on military operations to media sources could increase public demand for more than just salacious stories of scandal and slaughter. Part of this improvement might involve convincing editors that more wide-ranging and balanced coverage contributes to the national interest, and that public opinion affects the success of our military missions. Whether or not one believes that too much or too little information is currently released, mainstream media (especially on streaming news channels) provides incredibly uniform coverage. Coverage of defence issues are often limited and generic, despite the disproportionate public interest in dramatic military footage (such as the heroic action involving Royal Marines strapped to Apache helicopters shown in the UK in January 2007) and human stories from conflict zones. Without an increase in the amount of genuinely newsworthy footage available to the press, media outlets can only steal a march on rivals by uncovering or misrepresenting so-called ‘scandals’ (usually equipment issues), civilian casualties (with related criticism of mission or tactics) or being the first to re-broadcast shocking footage from insurgent cyber-jihadi sources. While some scrutiny is valid and can result in positive changes, all three scenarios can undermine public understanding and support for the mission, and increase marginalisation, both at home and abroad. This perpetuates conditions that undermine Western military objectives. While it is true that departments of state cannot always release items for security and other reasons, governments should consider doing more to promote interest in military stories. Ensuring that government is a genuine source of regular, quality news items (perhaps by releasing more of the high quality footage taken by military camera teams) may bring greater leverage to increase the coverage given to soft power stories relating to development and other reconstruction activities.

**Must we Rigidly Define the Mission and Timelines?**

Much has been written about the evolving nature of modern warfare, and the need for national militaries to improve tactics to counter small, agile insurgent forces commanded and controlled by isolated cells and united only by a common ideology and strategic intent to oppose Western objectives. Coalition commanders on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan have had some success in deploying our professional armed forces to degrade enemy forces and undermine their supply and recruitment loops. Yet, there appears to be a tension, particularly within the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, between enabling decisive small-scale, highly adaptive missions and commanding and controlling the different strands within NATO’s more rigid structures to deliver the overall mission. This can translate into a confusing message for the indigenous population and the public in troop-contributing nations, who can sometimes see local military successes that do not translate into demonstrable progress towards strategic political objectives. In turn, this can generate incoherent support for coalition reconstruction goals among the populations in operational theatres and can contribute to a muddled public perception of the mission statement. Under these conditions, it is easier for hostile imams, commanders, community leaders and cyber-jihadists to misrepresent coalition intentions and exploit any confusion for their own malignant purposes. Military operations are far more complex in societies
where a patchwork of potential power-brokers vie for control. In these cases, allied governments are often expected to manage the democratisation process, risking their own success criteria on the fortunes of fractured factions. Engaging with particular groups threatens even-handedness but can lead to strong progress (as in Al-Anbar province in Iraq). Yet a focus on implementing the democratic system before identifying credible players and developing capacity risks the success of the system itself: for who will risk their life to engage with a model of governance that appears incapable of delivering basic human security? Insurgent and international jihadi groups exploit the lack of clarity around mission success factors and often flawed individual perceptions of coalition efforts, driven in large part by an agile information campaign that grips public opinion across the world. It is these factors combined that contribute to the insecurity and community divisions on which today’s jihadism thrives. In turn, this undermines efforts to establish and maintain the swell of positive public opinion required to support sustained military deployments and the human and financial costs that go with them. However, this is now the reality in which our armed forces operate, and governments need to ensure that their publics are equipped to understand less defined missions, without clear stages, in which the UK and other allied nations are likely to take more casualties in peace support conditions than during the intense fighting.

**A Knock on to Coalition Partners?**

By taking steps to update the terms of public debate, governments can begin to remove opposition to military deployments that stems from a lack of knowledge of the current issues facing Western nations. Opinion influencers might look to highlight debate on international themes such as crime, drugs, disease and unmanaged migration, which are rooted in poor human security, and away from a terrorism threat aimed predominantly at the USA. These are issues that demonstrably affect many countries, and though the risk from terrorism remains high and should remain part of the comprehensive approach, it could be argued that the greater long-term risk stems from the expanding part of the global population that lack basic rights. Interventions explained through a humanitarian prism are likely to garner wider support, and it may be easier to explain why these themes cannot be solved by short deployments and to demonstrate how other arms of government and civil society compliment military tasks. Pressure on newly elected democratic leaders, such as Hamid Karzai, to deliver quick results should also ease slightly if politicians from coalition nations face less domestic pressure to end military commitments within one or two electoral cycles. Those reticent or opposed nations may find their position considerably harder to explain than opposition to a global war on terrorism that has tended to be presented (perhaps incorrectly) as overly focused on the military dimension. This would reverse the current situation in which, for some, being seen to not join a coalition is perceived to confer greater international legitimacy than committing significant military resources to address potentially disastrous human security threats.

**Focusing Media Coverage on More Than Just War**

Coverage that places smaller-scale skirmishes or stand alone deployments into a strategic campaign narrative is relatively infrequent, though this may be the result of unambitious editorial policies or perceptions in the media
world that the public would not be interested in journalism of this sort. Either way, this is a missed opportunity to positively shape public perception of our military campaigns. However, much depends on the capacity of deployed personnel to lead a highly-nuanced media campaign, directed at the public in theatre as well as at home. Governments everywhere strive to co-ordinate media messages from their different ministries and sources, and many invest in considerable infrastructure and staff to try and achieve strategic media impact. But hostile conditions capacity within deployed Headquarters means that media operations in military theatres are run with considerably less resources than would be expected in Fleet Street and in departments of state. Deployed staff tend to be military officers, but, as a young officers’ early career is likely to focus on command in the field, it would be generally unlikely for officers deployed to media teams to have a significant depth of experience in civilian journalism. These factors combined mean that military media personnel in some deployed headquarters can become besieged, striving to manage journalists’ requests for access and information and actively plan media engagements so as to balance combat experience with exposure to the wealth of softer reconstruction tasks carried out by the armed forces and other groups.

Getting the Right Messages Heard at Home and Abroad

Exploiting the connection between in-theatre reporting and domestic and international audiences should continue to be a top priority. Failure to do this effectively may well undermine governments’ own attempts to reach out to opponents of military action, in British communities and abroad, and to support the development of a permissive environment within conflict zones. While force protection and operational urgency catalyse joint working and better co-ordination between government arms within conflict areas, there are still significant challenges to developing an effective relationship with the public there. The infrastructure required for electronic broadcasting rarely exists in today’s operational areas. Where it does it can become an incidental casualty when allied forces seek to degrade the first response capability of an enemy, usually by knocking out power and communication networks. Where satellite television is found, it tends to be those stations set up specifically as ideological and cultural alternatives to CNN, Sky and the BBC, and therefore disinterested in engaging in nuanced debate about coalition objectives.

Public opinion is formed in a very different way in Iraq and Afghanistan (and also in other societies heavily influenced by tribal and communal religious practices). In remote areas, international outreach requires the patronage of religious, tribal and community leaders who are often the only focal points for political comment. Such activities require deep linguistic expertise and a level of cultural and social sensitivity that is highly challenging to build up over a short military or diplomatic tour. Succeeding in this area is crucial because there is a clear link between the successful dissemination of media messages relating to military deployments and cohesion between communities in Britain and abroad. Governments should continue to strive for a concise, accessible and linked narrative expressed in conflict zones at home, for few leaders can afford for significant sections of society to actively choose not to engage with the public debate. Many ethnic and religious communities in Britain and elsewhere have incredibly strong
communication links with their counterparts in Pakistan and other former colonies. These links can extend through to the front line in Iraq and Afghanistan, or to proxy agents providing information, whether it be faithfully repeated or amended to elicit a different, or more sinister, response. Therefore any governmental approach must deliver considerable scope and subtlety, incorporating outreach, debate, opinion seeking and discussion by political representatives and government organs. At the very least, governments should aspire to understand how Muslim and other communities articulate the role of the armed forces. There is also a need to understand the conditions (if any) in which individual Muslims (at home or abroad) accept that non-Muslim soldiers can legitimately conduct operations in Islamic countries. It is vital that wider society, including foreign policy and defence structures, have a relationship with the most alienated and isolated communities built on citizenship rather than conflict. While many minority communities contribute disproportionately to health and the law in the UK, they are less represented in the foreign policy and security sectors. This risks a considerable disconnect between elements of British society and UK foreign policy and the national and other organisations that deliver it. Home-grown terrorism is but the most shocking effect of this alienation.

**Conclusion – Cyber-jihad and the Battle for Legitimacy**

Since Vietnam, many have considered it too risky to explain military operations as catalysts for social and political change. Whether this was acted on consciously or not, in cases such as the first Gulf War or Kosovo, this contributed to the strict definition of mission parameters and rules of engagement. Deliberately or not, one result was a limit to the nature of the military commitment, perhaps to reduce the likelihood of protracted combat. This allowed nations with less extensive military forces or fragile governing coalitions to engage with reduced risk, and (crucially for public support) made it easier to declare an end to hostilities. Yet, it also segregated the military objectives from the social changes that humanitarian and cosmopolitan concerns demanded, and removed the need for politicians to engage in a debate that constructively updates the public understanding of the environment in which modern armed forces must operate to effectively reduce the threats to our country.

Tony Blair and President Bush seemed prepared to risk much on the relationship between national and international security, and longer-term social and political changes in those countries. London and Washington went to huge lengths to deny that regime change was the central goal of the ongoing military campaign in Iraq, though movement towards an Iraq governed by Iraqis has so far been the result of their policy. This, and a reluctance to cite the upholding of United Nations resolutions as the principal rationale for military action (which would prompt inevitable comparisons with Israeli non-compliance) may have helped to make Weapons of Mass Destruction the focus. Would voters have supported a humanitarian explanation for the removal of Saddam Hussein? With both leaders committed publicly to a two-state solution in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, with outspoken public support for action in cases of terrible human suffering (following Rwanda and Kosovo) and approval for the re-establishment of democratic control in Sierra Leone and Liberia, there was a clear case to be made. Perhaps the two governments assumed that the majority would not understand unless the justification was
rooted in the simple language of security and survival. Yet, the explanation for Iraq may have been more credible had British and American media, academia, education and politics been engaged in a bold debate about the role of the armed forces in tackling modern threats to our societies and our obligation (if any) to the security of abandoned communities around the world. That is not to say that more people would have supported the war, but governments may at least have reduced the reputational and electoral risk associated with heavily security-related public messages (noting for example that parliamentary approval is not needed in the UK to authorise military deployments).

To protect our people, our armed forces must now act in a radically different paradigm to that commonly understood by the general public, both at home and abroad; it is one in which successful, highly-nuanced and proactive public relations must be combined with steps to develop the public’s understanding of the modern strategic environment and the role of our armed forces within it. Changes to education must go hand in hand with openness from government departments to publish newsworthy items and engage in a proactive dialogue with the public over military operations and policy. In the UK, this poses questions about how to further increase capacity and co-ordination in operational theatres, with Whitehall and media outlets. However, longer-term improvements will require some difficult debates that expose the public to the role of the armed forces in helping to address the strategic concerns of the twenty-first century. If governments fail to do this, the public may continue to read mission analyses that continue, unhelpfully, to start with an inherent mistrust of expeditionary operations (perhaps fearing that they are motivated by oil and driven by Washington), while military inaction is acceptable as long as overseas development aid moves towards 0.7% of GDP. Humanitarian assistance funding is spent through NGOs and international organisations, many of whom cannot operate in the most hostile environments to tackle the underlying causes of terrorism, human rights abuse and international crime. While there are cases in which the presence of troops is unhelpful, ultimately national military forces need to be projected as part of an international, multi-agency response to human suffering if long-term threats to specific national populations are to be averted.

The media and public opinion are part of the battleground for success in our security operations overseas. Most opposing national and non-governmental actors recognise that conventional military confrontation with modern Western coalitions is untenable over the longer term. The supreme technological advantage available to western coalitions has forced our opponents to seek victory by undermining the legitimacy of our deployments in the eyes of our own public and in allied nations. Here, government ministers (e.g., former Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed Saeed Al-Sahaf – ‘Comical Ali’) and insurgent groups can work, sometimes inadvertently, towards the same end, presenting liberations as imperial adventures or strategic targeting as attacks on civilians, elected representatives or human rights. This legitimacy is critical to allied forces. Governments must satisfy their voters, and the international legal and democratic values that they seek to champion abroad if the political will for sustained deployments is to be maintained. This places an intense burden of proof on allied forces to actively demonstrate legitimate targeting, knowing that ambiguities (or mistakes) will be
The digital age has spawned an unprecedented level of interest in the planning and conduct of military operations, increasingly in near real-time. The number and variety of media outlets has multiplied at an extraordinary pace and, with the rise of the Internet, commercial satellites and digital communications, individuals and interested groups can play their own role in national and international debate.

These developments allow both parliaments and publics to scrutinise military activities in considerable detail, relating the commander’s intent (which is often expressed in sanitised form as a post-operation media brief) directly to events on the ground. Sometimes the movements and decisions of individual soldiers become the subject of public critique, represented by newspaper graphics or online animations. Enemies, moral opponents, armchair commentators and the general public now have an unprecedented insight into UK and coalition military tactics, facilitated by the international media.

The challenge for government is enormous: our opponents are making very effective use of media resources to attack the legitimacy of our deployments. They have proved extremely adept at harnessing the power of mass communications to do this, from videos of beheadings to hosting and catalysing political debates that ignore government positions and explanations almost entirely. Many thousands of contacts worldwide contribute to this. In stark contrast, coalition nations seek to establish legitimacy through action in conflict zones. Coalition governments have relied (to differing degrees) on the protection offered by our scientific advantage, the threat from terrorism, the special relationship and moral imperatives as reasons to justify the sustained deployment of armed forces. However, until civil society addresses the difficult discussions needed to move the terms of debate on from the twentieth-century World Wars, the public are likely to continue to pressure leaders to conduct military operations to naively short timeframes. If Western public relations fails to negate the impact of cyber-jihad or satisfy the searching requirements of an independent media, some leaders may succumb to this pressure at the expense of vital longer-term strategic objectives. This risks sideling one of the key advantages in bringing long-term military operations to a successful close: the impact of the resilience and resourcefulness of our highly adaptable and professional armed forces.

Notes
2 Although media often seize on particular negative issues, particularly the welfare of our soldiers, to pressure the state to act accountably (see William Howard Russell in the Crimea to modern Afghanistan).
Current Challenges in Civil-Military Relations

Tørris Jæger*

Introduction

There is an ongoing debate in Norway on civil-military relations in armed conflicts. Civil and military experts and professionals take part in this debate. Norway is a member state of the UN and NATO, not of the EU and participates today globally in military operations. The Norwegian Armed Forces have developed some ‘Civil-Military Cooperation’ (CIMIC) capacities, not least through its experience with contributions to UNIFIL 1, operations in the Balkans and in Afghanistan.

The clear distinction between military and humanitarian activity is established government policy (as described in the national budget 2007). Yet, challenges occur in the stringent application of this policy when Norwegian forces are stationed abroad. In general, Norwegian Armed Forces CIMIC policies follow NATO guidelines. It appears though, that in practice, CIMIC has hardly been recognised or used as a strategic tool and not always consistent with existing policies.²

The Norwegian Red Cross is an active participant in the discussion. It bases its arguments on the concept of ‘Neutral and Independent Humanitarian Action’ as developed by the International Committee of the Red Cross. This concept takes a conflict as a given fact. It strives to ensure that all those taking part in the hostilities respect humanitarian law. Neutrality is therefore a means to an end, not an end in itself. It is a tool used to ensure access for concrete action in all situations. The ICRC seeks to establish and maintain a dialogue with all parties ... This does not constitute a pronouncement on their worthiness as interlocutors, nor does it grant them any particular status. Impartiality means that humanitarian action should benefit people without discrimination ... Assistance and protection must be provided according to needs. Independence ... implies that its humanitarian action needs to be distinct – and perceived as such – from any political or military interests... [In any conflict, parties will tend to reject humanitarian organizations they suspect of having ulterior political motives. Integrated approaches combining political, military, reconstruction and humanitarian elements, as advocated by the United Nations and a number of States, conflict with the principle of independence as understood by the ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross] and the entire International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Therefore, while these policies can be very effective for organizations with other mandates, the ICRC cannot and will not subscribe to them.³

A Red Cross Perspective on Civil-Military Relations

The Norwegian Red Cross aims to promote understanding, acceptance and respect for a specific Red Cross/Red Crescent role within armed conflicts and the concept of humanitarian space. Our focus is on three main target groups:

- Within the Norwegian Red Cross, i.e., the leadership centrally and in the districts, the organisation’s spokespersons and its delegates working abroad.

- Political leadership at the ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Defence (MoD) as well as key members of parliament. The focus is also on an operational level, i.e., within the MFA-bureaucracy regarding funding practices, within the MoD and regarding operations abroad and within the armed forces at CIMIC and commanding officers level.
• The wider public and other humanitarian actors

The Norwegian Red Cross addresses this subject in internal and external courses, military exercises and seminars with the Norwegian Armed Forces, NATO, in bilateral, public or expert meetings and in the media. The concept of 'Neutral and Independent Humanitarian Action' does not imply a Red Cross monopoly on humanitarian assistance in armed conflicts, nor that it should be universally applied. It specifies the approach developed and chosen by the ICRC as the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movements being the lead agencies in providing assistance and protection in situations of armed conflicts. It is based on the idea that in the highly polarised environment of armed conflicts, there is a need of at least one actor who has no stake in the conflict or its resolution as such and has the credibility and ability to exclusively provide assistance and protection to victims and be guided by only humanitarian principles in doing so.

This approach is not necessarily always a popular idea with parties to a conflict. Yet past experience and continued presence and activity by the ICRC in contexts of armed conflicts show that it is widely accepted, respected and even considered useful and necessary by parties to a conflict themselves. Yet, acceptance for this particular stance is not a given and may be rejected by certain actors at certain times. The rejection of such action should be properly analysed and corrective action in the implementation of humanitarian assistance and protection should be taken if necessary. This means that the principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence cannot just be stated, but depends on the parties to a conflict to also perceive operations as being implemented in this way. Yet, possible rejection of neutral, independent and impartial humanitarian action by certain actors, in certain areas or in certain periods should not lead to the conclusion that this approach should be abandoned. It is a functional approach to implement a particular humanitarian mandate, namely to provide assistance and protection to victims of armed conflicts. Providing assistance and protection requires continued access to all victims of armed conflict and continued dialogue to all parties of a conflict. Other actors operating within contexts of armed conflicts may choose other approaches to reach their specific objectives.

Neither the Red Cross nor humanitarian organisations in general should be considered or consider themselves having exclusive legitimacy in providing humanitarian assistance. Military actors may well be under an obligation under international humanitarian law, in particular in situations of belligerent occupation, to provide assistance. Humanitarian organisations will not argue against others saving lives just as much as nobody will argue against a lay-person providing first aid when no professional medical assistance is available. Yet, certain conditions should apply for external military actors engaging in humanitarian assistance in situations of armed conflict:  

• There is no civil alternative;

• The needs are real and critical, i.e., the assistance provided is directly life saving;

• The assistance is provided without discrimination on a needs first basis, i.e., impartially.

• Provision of assistance is not used for other purposes, i.e., to win consent, gather information, and so on.
Further, military actors often have technical expertise and heavy equipment that provide them with a comparative advantage in maintaining, repairing, building or controlling larger infrastructure, e.g. bridges, airports, roads, etc. Also, it would seem only fair that external military actors repair the physical collateral damage they may have caused during hostilities. Yet, military actors, much as all other actors, have to consciously balance their assistance and activities in regards to the socio-economic, socio-political, conflict related and environmental impact. All resources brought into a conflict area can have a direct bearing on the conflict and can be easily manipulated if not used with foresight and prudence. Digging wells can have an impact on the water table and thus on availability of water over wide areas, roads facilitate access for other actors (private enterprises, authorities, development and humanitarian organisations), thus possibly privileging one group before another, creating new or fuelling existing conflicts.

The Civil Dimension of Civil-Military Relations

The notion of civil-military relations often creates confusion due to the diversity of the civilian actors involved. Roughly, external civil actors can be divided into three categories: humanitarian, development and state-building.

Humanitarian actors are exclusively concerned with providing assistance and protection, i.e., addressing humanitarian needs that require an immediate and urgent response. Humanitarian action can, but does not necessarily imply or provide, for a long-term structure-building impact. It should, however, consider the long-term effects and impact.

Development assistance aims to facilitate and contribute to building sustainable structures and systems to foster economic development and address long-term needs that include, yet can go beyond, basic public services. This concept of development assistance would include non-governmental organisations whose work is not necessarily geared to strengthen the capacity of a specific government, e.g., working for the facilitation of woman’s education under the Taliban regime without necessarily or intentionally strengthening the regime itself.

Lastly, state-building aims to facilitate and contribute to building sustainable state structures, such as law enforcement, judiciary, armed forces, tax collection, and so on. This mostly implies international organisations (OSCE, UN, EU) and government-to-government support. Support for state-building is often undertaken with a clear political objective which also conditions the support provided.

Though this categorisation is useful to understand the substantial differences between these actors, it may be of limited applicability in areas of operation. One civilian actor may be involved in activities in more than one category or carry out activities such that they cut across the categories. Support to public health services may serve an immediate humanitarian purpose but may also have a beneficial long-term impact. Hence, it may be difficult for the civilian population, the authorities and parties to a conflict to make the difference between actors who support public service delivery with a humanitarian or developmental objective or actors who support government and state structures with the political motive of supporting a specific regime or type of regime.

The difficulty is that phases and types of
response which earlier may have been separate in terms of timing and geography now collude in the same context, i.e., that humanitarian activities take place at the same time as state building and development assistance. In Kabul today, the ICRC carries out detention visits with a clear humanitarian purpose, while both development and state-building actors also provide support to their respective constituencies. Yet, for humanitarian organisations it is essential to be recognised as such – as neutral and impartial – to be able to deliver effective humanitarian action for all those in need across conflict lines. Unless humanitarian organisation are able to communicate to all parties of a conflict in which they act with an exclusively humanitarian agenda, their presence and activities may not be accepted or be put at risk.

The challenge to mark the differences between actors is all the more difficult in contexts experiencing almost a flood of newly arriving actors occurring often in the aftermath of an external military intervention. Here, the civilian population, authorities and parties to a conflict will inevitably make the link between the external military intervention and the newly arriving actors and thus link the latter to the political agenda which triggered the external military intervention. Humanitarian organisations have difficulty dissociating themselves from these ‘new’ actors and consequentially may no longer be perceived as neutral.

The intention is not to make a case for some organisations being better than others, but rather to facilitate an understanding for a functional division of tasks according to different objectives which in turn require different approaches and skill sets. This is why the ICRC is not opposed to integrated or comprehensive approaches as developed in the UN and elsewhere, but argues for its role apart to be able to maintain contact and access to all parties to a conflict and to all those in need. Much like journalists who can choose not to be embedded, the ICRC chooses to act in parallel instead of integrated, in the belief that it so best serves the victims of armed conflict.

The Military Dimension of Civil-Military Relations

The problem of distinction amongst different types of civilian actors is additionally and increasingly aggravated by military actors operating in appearance or in types of activity as if they were humanitarian actors. In Afghanistan, the Norwegian Armed Forces have been using white landcruisers – the trademark vehicle of humanitarian organisations operating in armed conflicts – and provide medical assistance to the civilian population.5 Other external military actors have equally chosen a humanitarian-like appearance and engaged in similar or other type of humanitarian activities. Sometimes, humanitarian assistance is used as a lever to win consent, as a means for force protection, to get access to information or even made explicitly or implicitly conditional on supporting the provider of such assistance.7 Thus, external military actors can be a major contributing factor in blurring the distinction between humanitarian and military (or security related) tasks.

Manipulation of humanitarian assistance for non-humanitarian purposes can have serious and direct consequences for humanitarian organisations. If military actors appear or act as if they were humanitarians, they create confusion and insecurity as to who provides humanitarian assistance on the terms of humanitarian principles, i.e., according to
need only and without discrimination. Blurring the lines may result in humanitarian organisations no longer being perceived as neutral. Thus, they may lose their credibility and acceptance as an actor genuinely and exclusively motivated by humanitarian and not political concerns. Consequently, they may lose access to those in need, or be considered soft targets easily threatened and attacked.

There is no legal or universally recognised definition of what exactly humanitarian assistance is or how it should be provided. Yet, the International Court of Justice has described the essence of humanitarian assistance in its judgement of Nicaragua vs. United States of America in 1986 such as, that:

[t]he characteristics of such aid were indicated in the first and second of the fundamental principles declared by the Twentieth International Conference of the Red Cross, that ‘The Red Cross, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours – in its international and national capacity – to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, co-operation and lasting peace amongst all peoples’ and that ‘It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours only to relieve suffering, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress.’ An essential feature of truly humanitarian aid is that it is given ‘without discrimination’ of any kind. … [N]ot only must it be limited to the purposes hallowed in the practice of the Red Cross, namely ‘to prevent and alleviate human suffering’ and ‘to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being’; it must also, and above all, be given without discrimination to all in need."

This description indicates clearly that humanitarian assistance should not be regarded as like any other tool available to a military commander. Though there may be obligations under international humanitarian law to provide assistance to the civilian population, external military actors should not engage in humanitarian assistance unless the need is well assessed and critical, cannot be met by civilian actors and the basic principles of impartiality and ‘do no harm’ are being respected.

Governments contributing to military interventions should hence maintain a principle-based division of tasks of different state-institutions, e.g., the non-interference of the armed forces in civilian affairs when they deploy their armed forces abroad. The establishment and maintenance of security is understood as a prerequisite for the development assistance and state-building, but by no means implies or necessitates that those who are responsible for these security related tasks also engage in the provision of public services which are not within their mandate or competence. There is no reason to assume that civilian populations in situations of armed conflict are less able to understand this functional division of tasks than civilian populations living in peace. There, armed forces do not engage, for example in building schools either – and if they do it is equally questionable. The provision of security to the civilian population is difficult enough, yet arguably sufficient to create acceptance for external military intervention if it succeeds in providing a framework that allows other actors to provide non-military tasks.

External military actors assisting the civilian population may undermine the development and outreach of respective national public and/or private services. Thus, they prevent the building or reconstruction of well-functioning systems of public service delivery with national reach. Though it is not a primarily
humanitarian concern, it should be noted, that civil governance cannot be strengthened by signalling to the civilian population and the authorities, that it is 'normal' for military actors to engage in non-military tasks and to substitute the civilian alternative. This current and common practice can be in direct contradiction to the stated goals of an external military intervention, e.g., in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan in 'assisting the Afghan Government in extending and exercising its authority and influence across the country, creating the conditions for stabilisation and reconstruction'. Hence, the mandate is to facilitate for the presence and activity of other actors, not to replace or compete with them. However, external military intervention is not necessarily a pre-requisite for humanitarian action. Professional humanitarian organisations are often present and active in armed conflicts prior to and during external military intervention. Their presence though must not be misinterpreted as a substitute for political action and conflict-resolution. This is inherently a political and not a humanitarian task.

Motives behind humanitarian or other non-military projects carried out by military actors, can have an impact on the perceived legitimacy of such projects by the target population. The argument often goes that a school built, is a school built, no matter who carried out or stood behind the project. Yet, the decision-making process and the people who take part in it, the competence and ability to come to an informed and balanced decision, the motives and perceived legitimacy behind such a decision may be vastly different when carried out by a military as opposed to a civilian actor. These elements may result in differences of acceptance, local ownership and sustainability. Ill-conceived projects can even put populations at further risk, since their intended beneficial impact for the civilian population may be interpreted as a form of collaboration or support by opposing parties to a conflict.

Military actors find it understandably difficult to count on civil organisations, either because they are non-governmental and hence can not be ordered to operate in areas according to priorities as defined by the armed forces or their governments, or because states and international organisations have not developed sufficient capacities to carry out non-military tasks. Winning acceptance and consent through humanitarian assistance may then be tempting, but military actors need to understand that the 'Quick Impact Projects' with short term benefit and impact cannot substitute for the more long-term efforts for state-building and development. Development and state building can be supported, possibly facilitated, but not provided. Unrealistic expectations towards how quickly visible progress can be achieved by civilian actors may contribute to wanting to provide immediate improvements and to substitute for perceived lack of civilian willingness or ability to do so. To date there seems to be little or no empirical evidence to prove that this has long-term beneficial impact on the acceptance for external military intervention as such.

Further, it seems that the provision of humanitarian assistance in the wake of external military intervention is a foregone conclusion. Often, humanitarian organisations are met with the argument that external armed forces had to provide assistance, because the humanitarian organisations were not there to do the job instead. There are two important elements to consider here. Firstly, in situations of armed conflict, it is not difficult to 'generate' need, i.e., to
identify groups or populations that eagerly accept all assistance they may be offered. Humanitarian organisations are better placed to evaluate if assistance is really needed critically in a comparative perspective of needs elsewhere and how it should be provided. Secondly, the type of assistance external armed forces often seem to be interested in is not necessarily humanitarian assistance. Rather, assistance is sought that shows quick results and thus the benefit of external military intervention. This type of assistance is mostly not provided by humanitarian organisations and the organisations that do so will often be reluctant to do so in situations of ongoing armed conflict. The instability of the situation makes it difficult to create sufficient local ownership and sustainability – recognised criteria for development assistance.

For humanitarian organisations, it is very important that external military actors operate coherently and consistently over time and throughout a possible alliance of different external military actors. ISAF contributing countries have vastly different approaches in dealing with humanitarian assistance, which makes it more difficult for parties to a conflict, authorities, the civilian population and humanitarian organisations to deal with. Similarly, in Chad, French armed forces provided aid to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in operation DORCA. They transported UNHCR and WFP supplies and humanitarian personnel from the French military base in N’Djamena in the summer of 2004 in the wake of the Darfur crisis for refugees coming over the border from Sudan. Today, the French armed forces provide military assistance to the Government of Chad in fighting rebel groups. This connection between humanitarian and military actors reflects on the supposed neutrality of humanitarian assistance. Hence, it is important to consider these types of activities also regarding their impact in a pre- or post-conflict phase.

The Dimension of Efficiency and Competence

It does not seem efficient to spend resources on such projects and on building capacity and competence within armed forces to conceive, plan, implement, follow-up and evaluate projects. External military actors should not be over-burdened by diverting their resources and attention to tasks for which they are neither mandated nor equipped nor competent.

External military actors and other advocates of armed forces carrying out non-military tasks often argue that they are confronted with an overwhelming need and that they have available spare capacity to provide assistance. Humanitarian organisations have to realise that beneficiaries will hardly reject assistance because it comes from an actor working outside its field of competence and mandate. Yet, the responsibility of those providing assistance goes beyond the project or activity itself. It implies also a responsibility for long-term consequences. Assessing needs correctly, providing assistance without discrimination based on humanitarian needs only and being able to assess its immediate and long-term impact on the target population and other relevant stakeholders, requires professional skills, capacities and experience. There is no need for armed forces to build up and develop such new and costly structures, competencies and capacities, which humanitarian organisations already have. Experience and accountability to both beneficiaries, donors and to authorities in the recipient country, as well as public scrutiny and have contributed to refine
humanitarian practices over long periods. Professional humanitarian organisations have won hard-earned experience in calculating environmental, socio-economic, socio-political and conflict-related impact as well as in the consequences of humanitarian action on relations within and between target groups, communities, conflict parties and other actors into their project designs. Through formal and informal networks, they evaluate needs in a more comprehensive perspective and allocate resources accordingly. Surely, this is not a faultless system, but it is based on sound professional experience and competence. The availability of military resources and capacities does not imply that external military actors dispose of adequate methods on how to use these resources for non-military purposes.\(^\text{10}\)

Humanitarian organisations work to save lives. Yet, they have learned through their own mistakes that not everything that can be done in the short run, will have a positive impact in the long run. Thus, they have a professional and moral duty not to provide assistance that may cause unintended, but very real damage. They have to be able to calculate short-term benefits with possible long-term damage and to balance intended impact with unintended consequences. Hence, the humanitarian imperative ‘do no harm’. This imperative is not a given, but not least a reflection of the experience of humanitarian organisations with unforeseen effects, with the limits of what external intervention can achieve and how quickly or enduring the intended impact will last. It is never a problem to identify needs in contexts of armed conflict. It is, however, decidedly more difficult to assess needs with a comprehensive perspective, to realistically calculate mid-term and long-term impact, to balance its intended consequences with often unavoidable, yet to some degree foreseeable unintended consequences and to provide assistance accordingly. Hence, the capacity to provide assistance does not necessarily imply that it is in the interest of those one intends to assist, to actually do so. This is the complex reality of providing humanitarian assistance: humanitarian organisations learnt this by causing harm themselves and learning from that experience. There is no need for others to make these mistakes again.

The provision of professional humanitarian assistance requires not only specific competence, but also a specific organisational culture. This competence can surely be built up or ‘bought’, but the organisational attitudes and approaches necessary to professionally implement humanitarian assistance may lay at odds to a military approach on how to act in a situation of armed conflict and how to engage with civil populations, authorities and parties to a conflict. It requires the ability and mutual acceptance to interact with civilian actors and authorities working in this field to ensure a good mutual understanding and coordination of efforts. Association with external military actors may be detrimental to civilian actors as it may create mistrust or linkage to the political objectives behind an external military intervention. Due to needs of force protection, it is difficult for external military actors to access populations in need and engage in a dialogue on an equal footing, create an atmosphere of genuine trust to enable them to assess needs properly and to provide assistance in an impartial manner.

External military actors are not a neutral party, as their deployment is always based on political decisions. This unavoidable fact put them at odds with the necessity of providing humanitarian assistance in line with the description provided by the International
Criminal Court. This is no judgment about who is right or wrong, good or bad, but a reflection of fundamentally different roles and objectives which require a functional division of tasks. For this to be accepted, political and military actors need to understand that humanitarian organisations legitimately pursue different goals, that they do not form part of a 'comprehensive approach' or an 'integrated mission' and their sole objective is to provide humanitarian assistance and protection without necessarily contributing to the political objectives motivating external military intervention.

Furthermore, the necessity of force protection requires external military actors to operate with a cumbersome apparatus. This heavy machinery is also very costly whereas humanitarian organisations work with a different security approach based, inter alia, on transparency and acceptance, established contact with local populations and a vast majority of local personnel versus fewer expatriate personnel. Provision of humanitarian assistance is not a core function of armed forces and hence requires the acquisition of respective competence, structures and systems. This may be very costly and highlights the need for proper empirical analysis regarding cost-efficiency of external military actors vs. humanitarian organisations carrying out humanitarian activities.

Possibly, governments should develop alternative tools than their armed forces to contribute to state-building by developing adequate, non-military capacities that can work within a mandated political framework yet outside a military operation and without intervening in the provision of neutral, independent and impartial humanitarian assistance. As a minimum requirement for non-military activities, military efforts [...] directed towards implementing relief or rehabilitation efforts, [...] should concentrate on areas of comparative expertise. This implies understanding exactly where these areas are. This could involve agreement that military focus on providing assistance that humanitarian agencies cannot (in security and large-scale infrastructure work, for instance), and that both communities work together more effectively to define respective roles and objectives in the protection of civilians.11

Resources available and necessary for humanitarian assistance should be reserved for professional humanitarian organisations who dispose of the necessary competence, capacities and experience. Also, when external military actors engage in activities outside their core mandate, the funding should come from the respective MoDs as a matter of coherence and consistency. Armed forces are not humanitarian or developmental organisations and should not be regarded or funded as if they were.

Conclusion

Meeting humanitarian needs is the overall priority. To meet those needs, it is necessary to have continued access to, and dialogue with all, stakeholders, an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the local, national and regional context and the ability to evaluate and respond to those needs in a wider perspective and a comprehensive approach.

Access to populations in need may be limited due to the armed conflict. Humanitarian organisations that are perceived as neutral, impartial and independent will often gain access to stakeholders or populations that are out of reach for external political or military actors. In situations of armed conflict there are always needs to be met and no actor will find it difficult to identify groups that
require and merit assistance. Yet, all provision of humanitarian assistance should be guided by the principle of providing assistance where needs are critical, most urgent and immediate without discrimination. The amount of resources allocated to crises intervention in general does not allow for using them otherwise. Of course, humanitarian organisations must be able to convincingly prove that beneficiaries’ needs are best met through this approach, i.e., that it is in the interest of the recipients of humanitarian assistance as a whole and over time, that it is provided in a neutral, impartial and independent manner.

Notes

* The article reflects the view of the author alone and not necessarily those of the Norwegian Red Cross.
1 Proposition to Parliament No. 1 (2007-2008), ‘Regieringen er opptatt av å sikre størst mulig klarhet i forholdet mellom humanitær og militær innsats, slik at humanitære grunnprinsipper om humanitet, upartiskhet og neytralitet ikke undergraves’ (Programkategori 03.20 Globale ordninger, 163 Nød hjelp, humanitær bistand og menneskerettigheter).
4 External military actors also provide assistance in situations not related to armed conflicts. These are not subject of this paper.
5 There are, of course, many other relevant civilian actors, most importantly national or local organisations, institutions or government agencies, but also national and international economic actors, faith-based and professional organisations, etc. The categorisation above focuses on the main external actors providing assistance during or after an armed conflict. The intention is not to give an exhaustive definition of each type of actor or activity, but to highlight the functional differences due to mandate, objectives and approach.
6 The Norwegian Armed Forces have announced in July 2007 that they would change the colour of their vehicles used by the Norwegian led Provincial Reconstruction Team in Meymaneh, Afghanistan. Medical assistance is or has been provided through public health structures and earlier through their AF own medical set-up.
7 See Raj Rana, ‘Contemporary challenges in the civil-military relationship: Complementarity or incompatibility?’ in International Review of the Red Cross 855 (2004).
10 UNIFIL 1 presence in southern Lebanon is reported to have unintentionally prevented the establishment of local medical and veterinary services as UNIFIL provided these services free of charge, leaving a massive gap upon departure.
11 Victoria Wheeler and Adele Harmer (eds), Resettling the rule of engagement, trends and issues in military-humanitarian relations, Humanitarian Policy Group report 21 (March 2006).
Contemporary Civil-Military Co-Operation in the Field

UK Joint CIMIC Group

Introduction

This article explores the UK’s approach to Civil-Military Co-operation (CIMIC) and expands on current military doctrine to discuss the activities that UK CIMIC personnel have been involved in on operations, particularly those recently in Helmand Province, Southern Afghanistan.

The United Kingdom’s recent involvement in complex operations, notably Iraq and Afghanistan, has led to greater focus on the role and application of its CIMIC capability. While many in the ‘stabilisation’ arena equate CIMIC to simply hearts and minds, infrastructure improvement or the dispersion of funds on Civil-Military Operation (CMO) projects, this misinterprets the role of CIMIC forces. CIMIC is:

- The co-ordination and co-operation, in support of the mission, between the Commander and civil actors, including national populations and local authorities, as well as international, national and non-governmental organisations and agencies.

UK forces in Afghanistan are returning to this definition in their application of CIMIC: supporting the commander in the widest sense of his mission, rooted as it is in a comprehensive, cross-government approach: co-ordinating and co-operating with civilian actors, and working alongside the local population and Afghan institutions. This increasing cross-government approach, however, is bringing with it a separation of CIMIC activity into two levels; ‘tactical’ and ‘operational’.

Tactical CIMIC is every soldier’s responsibility, but is conducted most effectively by those with specialist training and experience. It is part of the commander’s ‘non-kinetic’ armoury, alongside information operations and psychological operations. These soft effects have to be set within an information campaign that seeks to deliver consent and minimise civil interference within a broader operational level stabilisation and development plan. Often, trained CIMIC personnel will therefore act on behalf of civil actors, particularly where the security situation or geography prevents their presence.

Operational level CIMIC seeks to support a comprehensive, cross-government approach by acting as a link between the military and other government departments or actors and advocating the broader plan within the military headquarters. CIMIC allows the commander to interact effectively on a day-to-day basis with the civil environment. By providing co-operation, co-ordination, mutual support, joint planning and information exchange between military and civil actors, CIMIC assists the commander with the achievement of the military mission and maximises the effectiveness of the military contribution to the overall mission. CMOs delivered as a result of this integrated planning, be they governance capacity building, security sector reform or infrastructure improvement, are simply undertaken by whoever is best suited.

UK Joint CIMIC Group

The Joint CIMIC Group (JCG) can trace its immediate history back to 1997 when the Army formed the Civil Affairs Group in the light of operational experience in the Balkans. The original concept was that this new capability would be found from within existing resources and would comprise
Territorial Army reservists acting as functional specialists. In reality the Group consisted of ten regular high-readiness staff, together with a larger pool of Territorial Army CIMIC generalists. In 2004, the unit more than doubled its regular deployable cadre and became tri-service, with personnel from the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Air Force joining the re-named Joint CIMIC Group. Full operating capability was declared in 2006, though there will be a further increase in regular capability in 2008 to meet the current high operational tempo.

The JCG provides staff officers and CIMIC support teams to deployed formations on operations. The staff officers are familiar with the capabilities, motivation and limitations of civil actors and have an understanding of their processes. Staff officers are embedded in the formation headquarters and civilian equivalents (for example a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT)) and support operational CIMIC where military headquarters are alongside civilian structures. They help synchronise with military effects, integrate or harmonise civil partners’ activities and ensure that the commander gets the support and advice he needs. CIMIC Support Teams (CSTs) operate at the tactical level and support the tactical, usually battalion or company, commander’s mission through advice, input into the planning process, assessment and liaison. With an understanding of the wider operational plan, the CST seeks to mitigate the detrimental effects of the civil dimension on the military mission and vice versa and use the civil dimension where possible to support it.

The Practical Application of Tactical and Operational CIMIC

At the operational level, CIMIC is about liaison, planning and providing informed direction to the tactical commanders and their CIMIC staff. Operational planning will take place within the military headquarters through the joint effects management processes and with other government departments and agencies through such structures as PRTs and their related working groups. To provide a well-informed input to both processes, the operational CIMIC staff must establish good relations with the legitimate local and national authorities and any NGOs and international organisations within their area of responsibility. CIMIC staff will be required to plan and operate in both secured areas, where stabilisation and reconstruction and development (R&D) activity can take place and in ungoverned areas where engagement will be the priority. CIMIC staff need to be fully cognisant of all UK, Coalition and national plans and programmes so that alongside other development of stabilisation experts, they can advise on overlap and gaps in delivery and help bring greater harmony of effort. Where there is an absence of civilian capability to undertake stabilisation or development activity, CIMIC staff may be required to take on a number of roles outside their normal military remit.

Military Interaction

To inform key leader engagement, CIMIC officers will work to establish and develop personality profiles for local characters of importance. They will also help co-ordinate key leader engagement, providing guidance on which military and PRT staff should lead the interaction with different local bodies, authorities and personalities. CIMIC helps develop measures of effectiveness for the military effort and task forces to conduct the necessary assessments. As events on the ground unfold, and in conjunction with Information Operations and Psychological
Operation staff, CIMIC plans activity, in order to mitigate negative effects and capitalise on opportunities to influence a target population and build consent. Furthermore, through full involvement in the military planning process, Operational CIMIC ensures all military activity, and especially pre-planned kinetic targeting, is undertaken with an understanding of both the impact of the immediate operation and longer-term ramifications for the civil environment. Finally, direction to tactical staff is provided through all the usual orders processes.

*Interaction with Other Government Civilian Structures*

Operational CIMIC staff will seek a full understanding of stabilisation and development programmes. This knowledge then assists in guiding parallel planning for appropriate influence activity, stability operations and kinetic operations. This work takes into account all existing theatre, international and national plans. In conjunction with the stabilisation and development staff, CIMIC personnel will prepare and submit proposals to the PRT (or similar structure) for funding approval or identify alternative sources of funding if available. There continues to be much debate over the interaction between stabilisation, development and capacity-building programmes and military hearts and minds or consent-winning activity. Put in the context of an over-arching information strategy and as part of a comprehensive inter-departmental plan, it is clear that all activity must be conducted within a framework that supports longer-term aims and objectives.

During periods when geography or the security situation prevents the free movement of civilian personnel, CIMIC may act as ‘outreach’ and liaison for the PRT. CIMIC staff will participate in inter-departmental and inter-agency working groups set up to implement activities and measure and report progress against lines of operation within the wider plan. These working groups are chaired by experts and include military and civilian interested parties, local government departments and/or ministries, as well as appropriate international organisations and NGOs when present. To ensure a ‘comprehensive’ approach these programmes are also integrated with the military planning cycle. CIMIC staff will also be responsible for establishing military liaison with any NGOs/international organisations located in the area through routine NGO briefings or the establishment of a civil-military operations centre. With improvement in security, CIMIC staff will help facilitate the transfer of responsibility for programmes from military to civilian ownership in order to facilitate military disengagement and allow effort to be refocused.

*National and Local Authority Interaction*

CIMIC staff develop relations with government officials, elected bodies, tribal leaders, line ministries, religious leaders and development authorities using the availability of CMO project funding as one of the tools to initiate engagement. Carefully targeted key leader engagement will then further the information campaign, inform measures of effectiveness and provide assessments for military and OGD planning staff. When adverse security prevents OGD interaction, CIMIC staff may represent civilian agencies at appropriate meetings.

*Tactical CIMIC*

Tactical CIMIC aims to interact and develop
relationships and mutual understanding with key leaders and the local population so that effective liaison can take place. This provides support to the force and civilian population alike, helping to set the conditions for subsequent stabilisation and development activity.

**Military Understanding of the Civilian Environment**

In any area of operation, the intricacies of an indigenous society may appear foreign and suspicious to the British military. Through cultural awareness combined with effective dialogue, misunderstandings can be overcome and valuable local information gained. Improving the understanding of the differences between what could be considered ‘suspicious’ but is in fact ‘normal’ means there is a reduced likelihood of alienating innocent civilians. By reducing such incidents, a greater level of consent from the civilian population will be achieved, which in turn affords the military greater freedom of action.

**Civilian Understanding of Military Actions**

The actions of a foreign military could be alien to a civilian population and as a result civilians will not know how they should conduct themselves when near foreign troops. This lack of understanding may result in behaviour which could be considered hostile by the military. By explaining how certain behaviour is perceived and how people should conduct themselves with key leaders and other groups of the population, misunderstandings can be reduced. This, in turn, allows the military to continue its activity unhindered and further builds consent.

**Information Exchange**

Once relationships have been established the civilian population have been known to give military forces useful information, and vice versa. Such a demonstration of mutual consent and trust works to enhance the protection and freedom of manoeuvre of both civilians and military.

**Integration with Other Non-Kinetic Assets**

At the tactical level, effective influence activity requires a full understanding of the local target audience. When word of mouth is the established norm, CIMIC key leader engagement will build trust and help deliver messages developed in the information plan. Deliberate kinetic operations designed to defeat the enemy are preceded by and followed-up with effective and targeted influence activity. This helps to maintain support for military activity rather than alienating the population.

**CIMIC Themes**

There is no template for CIMIC to apply on every occasion, as each area of the civilian population will have its own issues, concerns or priorities. These factors can only be understood and dealt with through developing detailed situational and cultural awareness. There are over-arching principles which assist CIMIC operators in the field and three themes that guide activity:

- **Support Longer-Term Objectives.** Longer-term objectives fall directly out of strategic and operational level civil-military planning. In circumstances where there is no civilian representation, the CIMIC advisor will need to represent the views of OGDs and set the conditions for their arrival.
• *Prevent Dependency*. Effective CIMIC works towards setting the conditions for disengagement of forces. Creating dependency works against this and can be detrimental to the mission.
  - In the event that an initiative that affects the civil environment is led by the military, it is essential that an appropriate non-military actor is identified to continue with the work or sustain the programme. If no such actor can be found and the military have to pull out, there is likely to be a drop in consent and the military will be perceived as having failed to deliver.
  - If the military offer the population services which should be provided by other actors (for example medical care), there is a danger that they will become reliant. Any subsequent assessment of need will therefore be inaccurate and a key capacity overlooked for development.

• *‘Do No Harm’*. Any activity should be assessed to ensure that no unintentional harm is done, for example in undermining tribal or societal structures. All programmes need to be examined for their possible secondary and tertiary effects.  

**Conclusion**

In a country where tribal affiliations, religion and ethnicity (to name but a few) are issues that separate the population, it is impossible to describe the average Afghan. As such, any approach involving the civil environment must take into account the diversity of local population and recognise and address the differences. Nevertheless, there is an absolute requirement to maintain awareness and appreciation of the hostile environment that Helmand presents; the local population are more than aware of their situation and respect honest, robust and transparent dialogue.

This paper has set out some of the activities and principles that have guided CIMIC activity in Helmand Province over the recent past. There is no template, but it is clear that the full integration of all aspects of the campaign and a harmonisation of military and civil effects will bring improved outcomes. Further, a full understanding at all levels of the armed forces of the kinetic, non-kinetic, stabilisation and development plans has improved engagement with the Afghan population and helped build capacity in nascent institutions. Essentially, the aim is to create an environment in which moderate voices can flourish and populate legitimate institutions that deliver effective and appropriate public services.  

**Notes**

1 Including Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) and Commander’s Emergency Response Projects (CERP)  
2 UK Military Joint Doctrine Publication 3-90  
3 The term ‘civil actors’ may be taken to include other government departments, international organisations, donor organisations, other security forces (for example, civil police), NGOs, the corporate sector (including private security providers), national and local authorities, coalition civilian representatives and the local population  
4 PRTs vary in construct and structure dependent upon the lead nation, their composition, role and support. Common structures, relationships and responsibilities are emerging  
5 In Helmand Province, the military headquarters is co-located in the provincial capital with the civilian-led Helmand Executive Group  
6 In Helmand there are 6 working groups; Security, Counter-Narcotics, Governance, Political & international organisation, Police & Justice and Social & Economic Development  
7 e.g In Afghanistan the Provincial Development Plan and National Solidarity Programme.
8 e.g. UN, EU or USAID.
9 e.g., Provincial Council, District Council and Mayors.
10 In Afghanistan, the Provincial Development Committee (PDC).
11 Targeting taxi drivers with messages on how drivers should conduct themselves at VCPs means that a large group of people are able to spread messages quickly and efficiently.
12 Such information may be about the location of mines, suspicious people or activity in the area or changes to patterns of life. Similarly, the military will advise on their understanding of the security situation e.g., safe or cleared routes.
13 An illiterate population with no access to radio or television will not benefit from certain leaflet drops and television or radio broadcasts will be wasted.
14 These are: compliance with the law; understanding civil actors; cultural awareness; differentiated relationships; co-operation, respect and trust; effective communication; situational awareness and transparency; dependency and transition management; and incorporation of local perceptions (JDP 3-90).
15 If locals are employed by the military at a rate of pay that undermines existing pay structures, there is a high probability that the economic situation in the local area will suffer; people might leave their existing employment and thus create an employment gap which cannot be filled.
16 From 'Rewiring Interventions? UK Provincial Reconstruction Teams and 'Stabilization' in Afghanistan' by Lt Col Matthew Jackson and Dr Stuart Gordon. Forthcoming Paper
No Space for Humanitarianism? 
NGO perspectives on civil-military relations and the Comprehensive Approach

Howard Mollett

As I speak, just as surely as our diplomats and military, American NGOs are out there serving relationship with the NGOs who are such a force multiplier for us, such an important part of our combat team. [We are] all committed to the same, singular purpose.¹

Increased military involvement in reconstruction and post-conflict stabilisation reflects both the coherence agenda and the absence of civilian capabilities (both nationally and internationally) in these areas – leading to ad hoc structures and approaches. There is clearly a need to create more enduring and civilianised structures for managing multidimensional responses.²

Humanitarian agencies are confronted by manifold challenges in their relations with different military actors, including international peace operations, state militaries and non-state armed groups. As such, ‘civil-military relations’ (CIVMIL) constitutes a critical issue of relevance to non-governmental organizations (NGO).

Civil-military relations also need to be understood in the broader context of shifts in NGO roles, donor aid policy, military intervention and conflict in developing countries. The ‘War on Terror’ has introduced new dimensions to longer-term changes in donor and military policy, which promote ‘integrated approaches’ across political, military and aid strategies. Certain trends appear encouraging – at the level of rhetoric, if not implementation. Thus, some variants of the Comprehensive Approach appear to recognise the need for civilian-led political and reconstruction strategies in post-conflict situations. ‘Lessons identified’, if not ‘lessons learned’, emerging from Iraq and Afghanistan underline the ineffective and counter-productive nature of short-termist, military-dominated approaches to CIMIC. Yet parallel trends appear to be worsening the politicisation of aid.

The first section of this article outlines the central importance of humanitarian principles for NGO engagement in CIVMIL. This is followed by a review of current NGO approaches to interacting with the military, assessing strengths, weaknesses and gaps. The final section outlines the key policy and operational trends impacting on CIVMIL debates, and the ability of NGOs to deliver aid safely and effectively. The conclusion outlines recommendations for both NGOs and policy-makers.

NGO Approaches to Civil-Military Relations

NGOs, both international and local, can work in some of the most insecure and conflict-affected regions of countries like Afghanistan, Somalia and Sri Lanka. That access, often fragile and dynamic, is dependent on the acceptance of local communities and belligerents in the conflict. The respect of humanitarian principles is central to negotiating such access.

Humanitarian Principles

Humanitarian action is defined by the following core principles: humanity, independence, impartiality and neutrality. Impartiality implies that humanitarian assistance is allocated to recipients on the basis of need alone, without prejudice to political, ethnic or other such variables. Neutrality requires that humanitarian actors remain neutral with respect to the politics between the belligerent sides or external actors intervening in a conflict. The
independence of humanitarian action requires that assistance is provided free of ulterior motives that might compromise its impartiality and neutrality. It is focused on saving lives and the alleviation of human suffering in crisis situations: nothing else. NGO commitment to humanitarian principles is not inspired by abstract theory, but rather the need to ensure the safety and security of field staff, partners and beneficiaries. The granting of humanitarian access by belligerents is contingent upon the above principles, and the perception that humanitarian agencies are true to their claimed neutrality. It is critical for the sustainability and safety of humanitarian relief in violent and heavily politicised settings. Associations – real or perceived – between aid agencies and military forces can compromise that neutrality, thereby undermining access. In southern Afghanistan, for example, one NGO’s local partners were approached by Taliban representatives and told: ‘Your aid is good for the local community and may continue. However, if you or the programmes you implement become associated with the NATO forces, then you will make yourselves a target.’

NGO policies and operational guidelines

In general, NGOs prefer to co-operate on humanitarian response with other civilian agencies, particularly associations representing beneficiary communities at the local and national levels. As described above, interactions with the military can have unintended consequences for the safety of local staff, partners and beneficiary communities. However, in certain situations, NGOs may conclude that a relationship with the military is necessary for security or humanitarian access purposes.

The standard reference points for NGO policy on CIVMIL reside in the Red Cross Code of Conduct and the following UN operational guidelines:

- Inter-Agency Standing Committee (ISAC) reference paper on civil-military relationship in complex emergencies
- Oslo guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief (2006) (covering natural, technological and environmental emergencies)
- Guidelines on Use of Military or Armed Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys (2001)

The above policies and operational guidelines provide global frameworks, which need to be contextualised and adapted at the field level. Indeed, the IASC reference paper is specifically drafted as a template for these purposes.

- Broadly, NGO positioning can be described in terms of the following three categories:
  - Co-existence: Where co-operation between humanitarian and military actors is inappropriate, the level of interaction is best described as one of co-existence.
  - Co-ordination: When appropriate, dialogue between humanitarian agencies and the military can help protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition,
minimise inconsistency. NGO policies tend to underline that communication with the military should serve to clarify in the minds of military personnel the independence, objectives, values and operational practices of NGOs. Dialogue at international level – particularly in the planning or early stages of military operations – can reduce the risk of dangerous misunderstandings in the field.

Any co-ordination processes and mechanisms in-country should give due consideration to balancing the need for transparency, discretion and maintaining the distinction between humanitarian and military operations. As such, NGOs prefer in-country dialogue to be facilitated through neutral, third-party institutions – such as UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) – and pursued in a co-ordinated fashion among different humanitarian agencies.

NGO policy statements often emphasise that the primary role and competency of UN-mandated forces lies in providing for civilian protection and a secure environment in which civilian agencies can deliver assistance. In terms of security, many NGOs prefer military forces to provide area or route security, which benefits the wider local community, rather than escorts for individual aid agencies.

- Co-operation: Under certain ‘last resort’ circumstances, many NGOs do recognise the need for support from the military to relief operations. In line with the Oslo guidelines on natural disaster response, NGO policy emphasises that this should be limited to support designed to enable life-saving interventions. Military involvement in relief operations should be under civilian leadership and by invitation, not imposed. It should be restricted to those capabilities that civilian agencies cannot provide and/or those situations in which civilian agencies cannot operate due to capacity or security-related constraints. Military involvement in relief should also be phased out as soon as civilian agencies are able to replace them. For these reasons, NGOs are often wary of initiatives instigated by military institutions which seek to promote shared roles that ‘blur the lines’ with humanitarian action.

**Humanitarian space**

For NGOs, the term ‘humanitarian space’ has become shorthand for the political and operational space to respond to needs effectively and safely. As such, it draws attention to the factors impeding such access and needs-based response, including interference by national and local authorities, belligerent groups or donor funding driven by political and security interests. Although important, more recently there has been a shift towards understanding humanitarian space in terms of humanitarian outcomes for beneficiaries themselves: the extent to which their rights to assistance and protection are respected.

However defined, humanitarian space is shaped by multiple factors in any given crisis. Aside from perceptions of an agency’s neutrality being compromised, threats to humanitarian space can also emanate from criminality and random violence. Research
from the Overseas Development Institute indicates that while general levels of violence against international aid-workers have not changed dramatically, the levels of political targeting have increased by 208 per cent over the past seven years. CIVMIL constitutes one critical element of the factors which shape an agency’s political identity for the local population or belligerents in a conflict. Thus, CIVMIL needs to be understood in the wider context of factors constraining or enabling access, and impacting on the security of aid agencies.

**NGO Perspectives on the Comprehensive Approach**

An increasing number of donor governments are developing policy, institutional, funding and operational frameworks aimed at promoting ‘policy coherence’ and integration across political, military and aid interventions. Most recently, this has taken the form of ministry of defence-led initiatives termed the Comprehensive Approach (CA). While the CA terminology originated in UK doctrine, it has also been adopted in EU and NATO policy discourse. Other nations use this or other terms, such as ‘Concerted Planning and Action’ in Denmark, to describe similar initiatives.

The Comprehensive Approach emerged from the recent experience of Coalition and NATO interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. As such, at one level, it embodies lessons learned from the failings of military-dominated strategies for stabilisation and reconstruction in those contexts. Although wider factors are also at stake, most studies suggest that the overwhelming emphasis on short-term CIMIC interventions, often focused on force protection, was ineffective or even counter-productive in terms of wider mission goals. The focus on the combat phase led to a neglect of processes and institutions associated with ‘post-conflict’ political, social and economic recovery. In turn, this led to an under-investment in, and marginalisation of, civilian capacities for assistance.

The above ‘lessons identified’, if not quite ‘lessons learned’, have informed the CA’s emphasis on the need for effective co-ordination between military, political and other civilian actors. Thus conceived, it arguably reflects a progressive shift away from narrowly-defined CIMIC towards attention to a broader concept of civil-military relations. Notwithstanding this shift at conceptual level, the CA remains a military-dominated discourse. While governments such as the UK have established inter-departmental co-ordination fora on the CA, these initiatives are born from military and ministry of defence agenda. Much of the debate on the CA focuses on narrow and technocratic issues about departmental territoriality and organisational culture. However, the concept’s origin, momentum and wider trends driving the process raise significant concerns from an NGO perspective.

The CA is primarily an intra-governmental agenda, albeit increasingly brought to the multilateral level through the EU and NATO. While coherence of government policy is an obvious and important objective, NGOs maintain serious concerns about potential impacts for their own independence and humanitarian space. This remains as much a critical challenge for NGOs to manage as for policy-makers to determine. Some advocates of the Comprehensive Approach imply that it may eventually seek to also incorporate NGOs. Furthermore, different military and donor government officials maintain varied under-
standing of the term’s definition. For some officials, it implies a radically new way of operating, which respects and supports civilian leads on tasks associated with stabilisation and reconstruction. For others, it is merely a new label for old-style ways of working. From an NGO perspective, there is a serious concern that – particularly in contexts of high strategic importance to the donor nation – the Comprehensive Approach’s conceptual support for civilian leadership will be dropped. At field level, current operations in Afghanistan suggest that international forces will continue to assert a military pre-eminence in hostile environments in which they are conducting combat operations. This reflects both the level of authority delegated to the force commander in-theatre, and the imbalanced spread of resources between military and civilian actors involved. Such an approach appears to threaten the space for NGOs or other agencies to deliver independent, neutral and impartial humanitarian assistance.

The following sections highlight five key policy and operational trends with implications for NGO perspective on the Comprehensive Approach: integrated civil-military operations; the military role in civilian protection; implications of changes in donor policy and funding, military CIMIC strategies; and humanitarian reform.

Integrated Civil-Military Operations

A push towards ‘integration’ has dominated civil-military relations policy and operations over the past decade. This has manifested in the development of UN integrated missions, NATO and Coalition provincial reconstruction teams and, most recently, the creation of the US AFRICOM structure. The following section focuses on NGO perspectives on UN Integrated Missions and the US AFRICOM initiative.⁵

Integrated Missions

‘Integrated missions’ are now regarded as the rule for UN operations in complex emergencies. According to one senior UN OCHA official, ‘it is no longer a question of whether to implement integrated missions, but rather how’.⁶ Recent examples include: Afghanistan (UNAMA), Burundi (ONUB), Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), and Liberia (UNMIL).

The tragic consequences of peace operations in Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda confronted the UN with the failings of ad hoc and incoherent intervention in complex emergencies. This culminated in a series of studies that highlighted the consequences of unco-ordinated military and civilian response (1996 Joint Evaluation of Assistance to Rwanda; the 1992 Agenda for Peace; the 1994 Agenda for Development; and the 2000 Brahimi Report).⁷ These reports shifted the policy debate from advocating ‘multifunctional operations’ to ‘integrated missions’. Agenda for Peace epitomised the former, detailing a proliferation of civil and military tasks, but with an emphasis on sequential deployment and less attention to their interaction. The Brahimi Report epitomised the latter approach, placing a stronger emphasis on integrated command and control.

The integrated mission concept seeks to operationalise the integration of political, military, development and humanitarian approaches in UN peace operations. Under the leadership of a Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), UN agencies are expected to operate within the mission’s single structure and align with goals of restoring security and establishing conditions for sustainable development.
Advocates claim three key advantages: facilitating a common strategic vision, harnessing system-wide action, and allowing for overall management of resources. Actual missions have varied in their level of integration; ranging from ‘integration-lite’, in which the mandate includes some responsibility for oversight of humanitarian action, to a maximalist model, in which the SRSG and humanitarian deputy set a strategy and objectives for all humanitarian operations. A major evaluation in 2005 recommended that missions should not be designed in a blueprint fashion, and that ‘form should follow function’ depending on needs in the given context.

It is true that a lack of coherence and co-ordination in peace operations, especially between security, humanitarian and development actors, remains problematic. Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes provide one example. DDR consists of short-term military components (disarmament and demobilisation) and a long-term development process (reintegration). Failure to adequately link, sequence or resource DDR has led to insecurity (as in El Salvador, Guatemala and Angola), and even jeopardised peace processes in some instances.

However, NGOs question the emphasis by some policy-makers on integration as an appropriate policy approach in all circumstances or an end in itself. Effective co-ordination does not require ‘integration’. Particularly in situations characterised by conflict or risks of violence, the responsibility for humanitarian co-ordination should remain outside of political and military mission structures. Military and political missions should not be given mandates or capacities which duplicate or undermine the remit and efficacy of an independent OCHA, which should serve as the voice and representative of the humanitarian community. Donors and the UN need to invest in civilian, and specifically humanitarian, co-ordination structures for humanitarian response.

Under integrated missions, the role of UN Humanitarian Coordinator is often assumed by the UN Resident Coordinator. Yet, all too often, UN Resident Coordinators have proven inadequately attuned to humanitarian concerns. This has led to a slow recognition of humanitarian crises and reluctance to advocate on behalf of humanitarian concerns. For example, some commentators suggest that this led to the internal displacement crisis caused by the war in northern Uganda between the government and the Lord’s Resistance Army being largely ignored until the last quarter of 2003.

Certain aspects of the integrated mission concept could be welcome from a humanitarian perspective, but these are yet to translate into reality. For example, the integrated mission planning process implies a co-ordinated approach to pre-deployment planning, including consultation with humanitarian agencies. If organised in a way that does not compromise humanitarian neutrality or independence, this could be useful. Experience demonstrates that once CIVMIL strategies and mechanisms are established at the planning stage, it is hard to re-negotiate or adapt them on the ground. However, consultations need to be carefully framed to avoid the impression of NGOs being co-opted for intelligence-gathering purposes. Consultations should therefore focus on planning effective co-ordination mechanisms and forecasting potential humanitarian consequences of military interventions.

Recent experience in relation to the transition to a hybrid AU-UN force in Darfur
AFRICOM

AFRICOM, the new US integrated civil-military command for sub-Saharan Africa, constitutes the latest development in so-called ‘integrated’ civil-military operations. According to its advocates, AFRICOM embodies the so-called ‘3-D’ model: promoting coherence across defence, diplomacy and development strategies. Despite assurances that AFRICOM embodies an integrated approach, the planning team drawing up its operational structure and strategy consists of over one hundred military and defence staff representatives and just three representatives from civilian agencies. One US State Department official interviewed for this paper referred to AFRICOM as a potential ‘militarisation’ of US Africa policy. A draft concept note for an AFRICOM ‘Civil-Military Forum’ asks: ‘How can the US military, INGOs and African civil society work together in humanitarian space?’

NGOs engaged in policy dialogue with the US Government on AFRICOM advocate that its remit is specifically focused on more appropriate roles for the military. As such, AFRICOM should focus on the capacity-building of African militaries for peacekeeping operations and defence reform. Particular emphasis should be placed on promoting the respect of international humanitarian law and human rights. Civil-military relations aspects of AFRICOM’s operations should respect existing international policies and guidelines on NGO-military interactions. Current proposals on the AFRICOM Civil-Military Forum, for example, appear to ignore the role of existing multilateral actors, such as the role of UN OCHA in facilitating CIVMIL processes, and African national and regional institutions.
Military Roles in Civilian Protection

One of the most shocking weaknesses of international peace operations has been the failure to protect civilians from violence. Experience in Rwanda, Somalia and Bosnia has underlined the failure of local and international actors to protect civilians from atrocities, including ‘ethnic cleansing’, massacres and genocide.

Political attention to these failures led to the agreement of the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ (R2P) doctrine at the World Summit in 2005. R2P outlines a spectrum of potential actions across the different phases of conflict, including preventative and post-conflict measures. However, debate on R2P has particularly focused on military intervention aimed at preventing and ending violations of human rights. While the political debate has focused on the question of ‘when’ to intervene, the ‘how’ question is equally pressing and unresolved.

Civilian protection remains a contested concept. NGOs struggle with defining their responsibilities in addressing the ‘harder’ end in terms of protection from physical violence. Towards that end, many NGOs attempt to review their programmes to assess how ‘protection sensitive’ they are. The role of international military operations in civilian protection is also increasingly emphasised in both NGO operational management and advocacy. For example, NGOs in northern Uganda have sought to provide dedicated services and advocacy in support of women that experience sexual and gender-based violence. One aspect of such work has included advocacy and outreach to the international community, local and national authorities and the national police and military to promote more effective prevention and response.

Some military forces have developed guidance on protection-related tasks in operations in more permissive environments. For example, there is a considerable body of experience in co-ordination with humanitarian agencies, promoting civil order, provision of security for camps of internally-displaced peoples and conducting preventative patrols. However, there is a huge gap in terms of political will, doctrine, capabilities, training and rules of engagement for operations in more hostile environments in which there is a risk or reality of genocide, ethnic cleansing or massacres. There remains little consensus or guidance on how international forces might carry out ‘the responsibility to protect’.

For NGOs, these issues throw up multiple challenges. Coercive military intervention that serves to intervene in violence or protect civilians will always be controversial. For aid agencies, taking a position on such intervention will intrinsically compromise their neutrality in a conflict, and so impact on humanitarian access. The NATO intervention in Kosovo illustrated the reluctance of international powers to deploy ground-forces, preferring to make use of aerial bombardment. It also epitomised the dangers of military intervention becoming branded as ‘humanitarian’, thereby blurring the proper definition of humanitarian action. For these reasons, there is considerable scope for better defining the different types of roles that military and civilian agencies can pursue, the inter-relationship between them, and their potential effects on civilian safety.

Donor Policy and Funding

While debates on the Comprehensive Approach often focus on interactions between aid agencies and the military, it also has implications for wider policy, including
the strategic focus, allocation and modalities of aid funding.

Institutional reforms: Policy coherence or security first?

The Comprehensive Approach builds on wider changes in donor governments and international institutions. New institutional, policy and funding mechanisms within donor governments and multilateral institutions have sought to promote ‘policy coherence’. Key examples would include the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit in the UK (recently re-branded as the ‘Stabilisation Unit’) and the Stability Fund of the European Union.

Coherence would seem a self-evident good, and yet policies can be both coherently right or wrong. In the UK, ‘policy coherence’ arose from a broader discourse on ‘joined-up government’ in the late 1990s, as outlined in the ‘White Paper on the Modernisation of Government’.11 ‘Join-up government’ epitomised a key premise of the New Labour administration, namely that ideologically polarised debates could be transcended through ‘Third Way’ solutions. Critics suggested that the ‘Third Way’ depoliticised decisions that were eminently political.12 Implicit was a kind of managerialism – a notion that political dilemmas have technical or procedural solutions. That same charge also haunts debates on ‘policy coherence’ efforts in security and aid policy.

While recognising the need for policy coherence, NGOs are concerned by the extent to which funding is driven by donor strategic interests, rather than the developmental or humanitarian needs in recipient countries. In the USA, for example, aid policy has become explicitly framed within the national security strategy. Between 2002 and 2005, total US assistance managed by the Department of Defence (DoD) went from 5.6 per cent to 21.7 per cent, while that managed by USAID fell from 50.2 per cent to 38.8 per cent.13 Across a range of donors, this has translated into a shift in attention towards security-related expenditure and priorities associated with the War on Terror. A particularly striking instance of this shift is the re-direction of aid resources towards countries and regions prioritised under the Global War on Terror, in particular Iraq. In Afghanistan, a number of donors, including the UK, have largely limited direct funding to NGOs for work in provinces in which they pursue military operations. Consequently, it is not surprising that NGOs are sceptical about the intentions of governments in terms of the CA when broader donor policy is so evidently driven by security interests.

Donor Focus on State-Building

Under the ‘War on Terror’, so-called ‘fragile states’ have risen up the foreign affairs and donor policy agendas. To cite the USAID fragile states strategy: ‘Weak states tend to be the vector for these destabilizing forces, manifesting the dark side of globalization, and pose a very difficult kind of national security challenge.’14 Pre-9/11 aid policy in fragile states could be characterised as largely ‘state-avoiding’. Weak and contested governance in such states led donors to avoid financing government structures and to emphasise humanitarian programmes.

In attempting to tackle state fragility, the fragile states agenda promotes efforts to move beyond ‘projectised’ and short-term humanitarian aid modalities. It also places particular emphasis on co-ordination across political, security and aid strategies. Aid co-ordination is leveraged through new funding mechanisms and planning processes, such as Common Humanitarian
Funds (CHF) in on-going crises and Multi-Donor Trust Funds (MDTF) in post-conflict transitional environments.

In some post-conflict contexts, it appears that these funds have promoted greater coherence in aid strategies, lessening the administrative burden on recipient governments. Multi-mandate NGOs, which operate across relief, rehabilitation and development phases, have considerable experience of relevance to efforts to consolidate peace and promote post-conflict recovery. NGOs have considerable experience in joint NGO-government reconstruction programmes and local and community-based approaches to governance. In Sierra Leone, for example, CARE International is channelling funding and technical advice to ENCISS, a programme which is facilitating dialogue between community-based organisations and government at village, district and national levels. Fully staffed by national staff, this programme plans to eventually transition into a fully-autonomous national institution. Such programmes can support the demand-side of good governance in terms of civil society exercising an accountability function.

However, there are also significant concerns from an NGO perspective. In Afghanistan, for example, NGOs perceive that funding for their frontline livelihoods programmes has been cut as donors emphasise state-centred aid modalities, such as the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund. This has led to ‘service gaps’ emerging in regions and sectors that are beyond the capacity or the operational reach of the government. For example, funding for alternative livelihoods programmes in Afghanistan stalled during 2006–7 as donors shifted funding from NGOs to a government-managed trust fund.

State-centred aid modalities also pressure NGOs to respond to donor- and government-identified priorities, rather than support civil society and community-based initiatives. This trend is also associated in shifts in donor approaches to funding and contracting, which increasingly emphasise tendering processes. Contract-based funding gives the donor more control over programme implementation throughout the project cycle. This shifts NGOs further into the project implementer/contractee role, thereby raising questions about NGO independence and the space for grassroots ‘bottom-up’ initiatives. Private sector agencies operating under contract are also unlikely to challenge official donors on policies or programme effectiveness. Consequently, donor funding available for ‘bottom-up’ civil society initiatives has reduced.

In volatile post-conflict environments, NGO alignment with the ‘state-building’ agenda can also present security risks. Pressure on NGOs to participate in government-associated or managed programmes can result in them being targeted by insurgents. Donor debates on fragile states are inadequately focused on the comparative advantages of NGOs, and the risks which current funding trends carry in terms of ‘service gaps’ emerging, or attacks on government-aligned programmes by insurgent groups.

*Use of private security companies*

In Iraq and Afghanistan, donors have channelled increased funding through private sector agencies and private military/security companies (PSCs). Such companies frequently operate in consortia and work in collaboration with local security providers, which are often comprised of local strongmen and militia implicated in the conflict. An emphasis in
counter-insurgency doctrine on ‘winning hearts and minds’ has led some military policy-makers to posit a need for ‘opposed development’ in contexts like the southern provinces of Afghanistan. As NGOs and other traditional development agencies are unwilling and unable to implement such programmes, the PSC industry is keen to expand its role in such operations.

In contrast to humanitarian agencies, PSCs operate in conflict-affected environments on the basis of armed deterrence. Indeed, this constitutes their main ‘comparative advantage’ in contrast to aid agencies operating on the basis of humanitarian principles. NGOs fear that PSC delivery of aid on the basis of armed deterrence blurs the lines between aid programmes and military operations. The impact of ‘opposed development’ for programmes based on community acceptance is also of serious concern. Experience from Iraq, Afghanistan and other war-zones suggests that such firms often hire staff and conduct themselves in a highly dubious fashion. Recent research in Afghanistan raises particular concerns regarding the hiring of PSCs to implement road construction, and the links between these agencies, militias and local power-holders implicated in insecurity and extortion along rural transport routes. In contrast to international and national military or police, there is also a lack of regulation and accountability for such organisations in terms of human rights or international humanitarian law.

Military CIMIC Strategies and Quick Impact Projects:

Military approaches to civil-military relations are typically framed by doctrine and operational strategies on civil-military co-ordination (CIMIC). This tends to emphasise force protection and hearts and minds objectives, often described in terms of ‘building consent’. A key element of military CIMIC strategies is the implementation or funding of quick impact projects (QIP).

The notion that aid, and quick impact projects in particular, contribute to building consent has become orthodox among some military officers and policy-makers. However, evidence suggests that these assumptions reflect more ‘best theory’ and bad history, rather than ‘best practice’ on the ground. In contexts like Afghanistan, it is highly dubious that economic incentives, such as military-funded or -implemented QIPs, can change deeply-held political, social and cultural beliefs, attitudes or identities. Long histories of ‘aid culture’ and military intervention in contexts like Afghanistan ensure that local actors are often more experienced in ‘hearts and minds’ strategies than international forces on the ground. During the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan, for example, small mobile columns consisting of military forces and civic action specialists, such as medics, were dispersed across the country.

Political limitations to ‘hearts and minds’ strategies arise from the prevailing climate of fear, suspicion and cynicism after decades of weak or oppressive government and brutal external intervention. Local populations receive information about the nature of the government and international forces from many sources, including widespread insurgent propaganda. Judgements are also formed on the basis of personal experience. Thus, in Afghanistan, the US Government is frequently portrayed as having undue influence over President Karzai and government policies. Government corruption and the tactical deals struck between the international military and corrupt or brutal governors, local officials or warlords are also
widely discussed and resented. Accounts of Coalition forces wrongly accusing and detaining innocent individuals as suspected Taliban or Al-Qa’ida members are well known. Reports of brutal and culturally-insensitive practices during search operations by Coalition forces, such as bursting into women’s quarters, also resonate strongly. However defined, CIMIC, reconstruction and assistance cannot compensate or substitute for the absence of a political settlement or security. Indeed, aid more generally represents a small component of most Afghans’ coping strategies in times of conflict and transition. Predominant strategies include communal co-operation on rehabilitation, or sending sons to Iran, Pakistan or elsewhere to work and post remittances. According to one project participant:

Villagers are watching which way the weather is going. People are nervous. They want to make sure that today’s alliances will not disadvantage them tomorrow. They hear from the Taliban: ‘NATO will be gone within a year or so, and it will be us that rule then. Just you wait.’

As military funding or direct implementation of QIPs is driven by military strategy, it inevitably causes a politisation of assistance. As such, from an NGO perspective, military QIPs are a concern in terms of blurring the lines between military operations and humanitarian assistance. Several analysts have also suggested that the military could develop learning and capabilities on means to promote force protection that do not ‘blur the lines’. Such efforts would certainly be welcomed by humanitarian agencies seeking to implement relief programmes in the same operational space.

**Humanitarian Reform**

Three aspects of current efforts to reform the global humanitarian system are particularly relevant to civil-military relations: the focus on humanitarian principles in reform; initiatives to strengthen humanitarian co-ordination; and efforts to improve programme quality, learning and accountability.

Concerns have been raised by a number of NGOs that recent UN-led humanitarian reform efforts have been overly top-down, UN-centric and technocratic in their focus. As humanitarian agencies seek to promote greater co-ordination and technical professionalisation, maintaining a focus on core humanitarian principles remains a critical challenge.

Strengthening humanitarian co-ordination is generally recognised as one of the weaker aspects of UN-led reforms to-date. And yet, effective policy dialogue or co-ordination between the military and humanitarian agencies requires effective humanitarian co-ordination as a prerequisite. One cannot function without the other. At present, there is not one stand-alone UN Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) deployed anywhere worldwide. Factors include resistance from UNDP, who institutionally ‘own’ the combined Resident Coordinator/HC position, and resistance from host governments opposed to the political stigmatisation associated with an HC deployment. Recent experience in Uganda suggests that OCHA itself performed badly in terms of preparing the ground for the deployment of a stand-alone HC. Given these realities, humanitarian agencies need to better understand and overcome the factors militating against effective humanitarian co-ordination. Positive experience of the combined RC/HC post, such as in terms of Ross Mountain’s involvement in the Democratic Republic of Congo and East Timor, is often attributed to the personal qualities and political aptitude of the individuals involved.
For the HC to be effective in civil-military relations, they need to have the necessary skills, experience and personality in working with the military.

Lastly, NGO engagement on donor policy related to civil-military relations will be greatly aided by humanitarian reforms related to programme quality, accountability and impact assessment. NGOs need to be able to demonstrate their added-value in delivering improved humanitarian outcomes for people caught up in crisis. As some policy-makers contend that the military is technically proficient and fast, humanitarian agencies need to demonstrate both the political importance and the programmatic efficacy of a principles-based approach.

Conclusions

Relations between the military and humanitarian agencies have long been challenging and contested on both sides. Humanitarian agencies are increasingly challenged by the serious consequences of blurred lines between their work and military operations. The concern is not a theoretical one, but rather a practical issue in terms of their responsibility for the safety and security of field staff, programmes and beneficiaries. NGOs are also increasingly seeking to take the initiative in civil-military relations by constructively engaging the military on its proper role: namely the provision of security and civilian protection.

In some of its manifestations, the Comprehensive Approach appears to offer a step in the right direction. In part, it has emerged from the recognition that military-dominated strategies for stabilisation and reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan have experienced serious short-comings. As such, some versions of the Comprehensive Approach emphasise the need for investment in civilian leadership and civilian capabilities. However, the concept remains a fundamentally military-led agenda. Wider trends in donor policy and military operations also raise concerns about likely realities in the implementation of the Comprehensive Approach. At present, NGOs lack the capacity to understand these trends, or respond adequately at either policy or operational levels. Yet, in countries that become strategic priorities for donor nations, the implementation of the Comprehensive Approach will have significant implications for NGO funding and operations, local perceptions of NGOs’ identities, and the safety of their staff on the ground.

Notes

3 Interview, 13 June 2006
4 Stuart Gordon, op. cit.
5 Forthcoming research due for publication in early 2008 commissioned by the BAAG and ENNA (NGO networks focused on Afghanistan) will provide up-to-date analysis on CIVMIL trends in Afghanistan.
6 Interview, March 2005.
8 DRD (2004)
9 Responsibility to Protect
11 UK (1999)
12 Petras (2000)
13 OECD, ’DAC Peer Review: Main Findings and
Recommendations’ (2006),
<http://www.oecd.org/document/27/0,2340,en_2649_201185_37829787_1_1_1_1,00.html>.
14 USAID Fragile States Strategy, PD ACA 999
(January 2005), p 7,
15 Ref to BAAG/ENNA research

16 Giustozzi (2000) p.186
17 BAAG (2006) p.6
18 Insert ref to Gordon paper
19 For example, see documents related to the UN-NGO ‘Global Humanitarian Platform’ available on
the website of the International Council of
Voluntary Agencies (ICVA):
<http://www.icva.ch/un-ngodialogue.html>
Civil-Military Capabilities
Development within the EU

Joachim Bruns

Introduction

The challenge for ESDP operations is to create a comprehensive approach to strategy, planning and conduct that is crucial for mission success. This has been reflected in the experiences in the field. In the Balkans and elsewhere, the EU has learned that there is no simple sequencing of military first and civilians later, and stabilisation and reconstruction efforts are never as civilian as one would wish. Today, almost all military operations need a complementary civilian effort. Bosnia, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are cases in point. Many EU civilian crisis management missions rely on military expertise and can also benefit from military support. Furthermore, many civilian missions take place in an environment where security requires military assistance.

Experience to date indicates that three factors are essential for effective response, namely: timely reaction; tailoring to requirements; and enhancing effectiveness through better co-ordination of civil and military crisis management instruments. These elements should be able to complement each other in a coherent way, throughout the entire crisis management process, from conflict prevention and crisis resolution to cessation of conflicts and post-conflict.

Political-strategic Framework

What is the EU’s level of ambition? A clear answer is difficult. It certainly includes the EU’s overall strategic vision and its interests as a global actor contributing to international crisis management, as outlined in the European Security Strategy (ESS) adopted at the end of 2003. The EU’s overall objective is to support, restore, and contribute to self-sustaining stability, primarily in regions that are of strategic interest to the EU. This involves endeavours in the field of crisis prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict reconstruction, thereby following a comprehensive and – ideally – holistic approach in which security and development are two complementary sides of the same coin. To achieve this, a range of crisis-management instruments are needed in addition to political, diplomatic and humanitarian tools. The EU needs military capabilities which are available in time, and which can be effectively commanded and sustained for expeditionary missions, both for intervention and stabilisation operations. In parallel, civilian capabilities are needed in order to be able to contribute to internal stability and institution building, in particular in the area of police, justice and rule of law, and civil administration; and last, but certainly not least, the large field of short-term humanitarian relief activities and of mid- and long-term economic development and reconstruction programmes provided through the European Commission. The successful implementation of a well co-ordinated, or even integrated, ‘one-stop’ civilian-military approach is the distinctive feature that the EU can add to international crisis management.

The parameters for effective crisis management are set in the European Security Strategy, which recalls the imperative for the EU to become more active, more capable and more coherent. Three factors are essential:

- timely reaction, including ability for rapid response both on the military and the civilian side;
- tailoring the intervention to the specific requirements of an individual crisis, making optimal use of the civilian and military crisis management instruments concerted at the EU level; and
- co-operation with relevant actors and organisations.

These principles have been confirmed by experiences in the field. Again, they apply both to military and civilian missions. Within the last four years the EU has conducted or concluded seventeen operations on three continents, thirteen civilian or civilian/military missions and four military ones. In the Balkans, in Africa and elsewhere we have learned that there is no simple sequencing of military first and civilians later. Today, almost all military operations need a complementary civilian effort. On the other hand, many of our civilian crisis management missions do rely on military support or take place in an environment where security requires military assistance. Two further challenging civilian operations have been or are likely to be deployed this year: in Kosovo and Afghanistan. What does all this mean for the development of capabilities in – what is of particular interest today – the civilian and civil-military fields respectively? Military capabilities will be only briefly touched on in order to then present the civilian and civil-military dimension in a broader and more complete picture.

Military Capabilities

In the first Headline Goal (HGL) 2003, adopted back in 1999, the EU set itself the aim to develop the capabilities required to deploy within sixty days a joint/combined corps-sized contingent (around 60,000 staff). This goal was defined by the shock of the Balkan wars. Europe wanted to be able to manage itself, in its own ‘backyard’, a peace support operation of the initial size of NATO’s IFOR/SFOR operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). It is assessed that the EU has now met the HLG 2003 although it is still limited today and constrained by a number of significant and well known shortfalls which, not surprisingly, are comparable with those suffered by European NATO Allies: strategic transport, satellite capabilities and ISTAR, among others.

However, the strategic environment has evolved significantly since 1999, and new challenges have moved capability-building to a new dimension. Based on the European Security Strategy, EU Member States have committed themselves to a new Headline Goal with a 2010 horizon. This new commitment reflects the transition from the idea of deployment of large corps-sized forces to the idea of deploying smaller, but highly efficient mission-tailored force packages at high readiness able to accomplish – so called – ‘Petersberg-Plus’ tasks in accordance with the ESS. This HLG was certainly inspired by the first autonomous ESDP operation Artemis (around 2,000 men) in Eastern DRC. The EU thus needs forces that are more flexible, mobile and interoperable in order to be able to intervene quickly and decisively before a small conflict spirals out of control, or even in a preventive capacity as in the successful EUFOR DRC operation in 2006.

The subsequent planning process to identify the required military capabilities has been conducted over two years and the operational impact is now under evaluation. In this context, one important question is how to get on with the capability development process beyond 2010 and towards the long-term requirements. Another question is how to co-ordinate this process with the capability development
Conducted within NATO, which is a major concern for many EU NATO nations. Finally, there might be a need to explore, *inter alia*, possibilities for striking a balance between generically identified requirements, strategic priorities, and Member States’ aspirations and potential; this might enable us to define a realistic military level of ambition as well as the associated risk and political consequences.

In principle, capability development can be conducted along two lines: first, through improvement of the ‘hardware’ such as investments in strategic transport; second, the softer and often less expensive way of improving arrangements and procedures. The EU is currently addressing four strands of work simultaneously: full operational capability of the battlegroup concept; the follow-on work to the Maritime Dimension Study; the RR Air Initiative and the implications of rapid response for the strategic planning processes. Regardless of the particular strand of work concerned, there are four common issues that deserve further consideration if the EU wants to increase the efficiency of EU military rapid response – command and control, force generation, concurrency and jointness. Without going much into detail, these four aspects, characteristic of military capabilities development, also have much relevance for the development of the civilian capabilities.

**Civilian Capabilities**

Civilian Crisis Management is less well-known among the public and less spectacular than military operations are. Their stabilising effect, however, is equally important. Experiences in well-known crisis regions show that civilian instruments constitute an essential part of comprehensive crisis management, and by far the majority of ESDP operations have been of a civilian nature.

EU Member States are therefore making particular efforts to strengthen civilian European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) capabilities in six priority areas: police, justice, civil administration, civil protection, monitoring, and generic support to operations or EU Special Representatives (EUSR). In terms of numbers, Member States have made remarkable commitments. However, assurance of the timely availability of adequately trained and equipped personnel for multiple commitments is still lacking.² The Civilian Headline Goal (CHG) 2008 has been established to better address these issues, following the same methodology as applied to the military HLG process. Similar planning scenarios are used that cover the whole range of possible missions – from entire *substitution* of all institutions in a failed state to *strengthening* those institutions in a country considerably weakened by internal strife, corruption and organised crime. As a result and across the priority areas, executive functions, on the one hand, and the advisory, mentoring and monitoring functions on the other, required in civilian operations were identified.

Subsequent work conducted thus far has resulted in detailed information on the declared civilian capabilities of EU Member States, a number of non-EU European NATO nations and certain third states. Critical shortfalls have been identified and prioritised, focusing on Police and Rule of Law. They are addressed in the framework of the Civilian Capabilities Improvement Plan 2007. However, one can safely say that the CHG process has contributed to the success of current ESDP operations, in terms of planning, mission support, and identifying adequately qualified personnel required in the various priority areas.
Civilian ESDP capabilities are primarily constituted by skilled individual experts, able to work in a mentoring, monitoring and advisory function embedded in the (senior) management level of the administration or the executive of the country concerned. This contrasts with the military capabilities, which are normally conceived as and provided by weapon systems and/or equipped and trained units. In certain situations, however, effective civilian crisis management also demands multi-functional, trained, and equipped civilian capability packages rapidly available for various deployments. Rapidly Deployable Police Elements (RDPE), such as Integrated Police Units (IPU) and Formed Police Units (FPU) that can be deployed within thirty days, are an essential tool in areas where the EU efforts aim at contributing to fill the ‘law enforcement gap’ at the beginning of a crisis intervention when often only military forces are deployed. IPUs and FPUs are robust police forces able to perform a vast spectrum of executive police tasks and intervene in complex scenarios. Under certain circumstances, an IPU can be temporarily included in a military chain of command, whereas FPUs perform executive police tasks, including in non-stabilised situations under a civilian chain of command. The concept of RDPE has been subject to significant discussion and it has turned out that further work is needed to achieve Member State common understanding on the complex parameters and modalities for the structure and use of these police forces. Since 2006, the European Gendarmerie Force, constituted by five nations, has been set up; it remains to be seen under which circumstances and modalities they might be used by the EU.

In the domain of Rapid Reaction, a noteworthy achievement of last year is the establishment of multidisciplinary Civilian Response Teams (CRT), which are deployable within five days. They are able to conduct early needs assessment and fact-finding in the crisis region, and can establish a rapid operational presence on the ground; the planned use of CRT-resources to prepare the setting up of our civilian mission in Afghanistan is a good example. CRTs can also provide support to and reinforcement of existing EU in-theatre presence, including that to EUSRs. Based on operational experience, a proposal has been made to consider a joint deployment of a CRT alongside a battlegroup, which would permit the battlegroup to better focus on its key military tasks and support early planning for comprehensive follow-on ESDP commitment.

There is, of course, much work ahead. Currently, work towards implementation of the Civilian Capability Plan continues. Priorities are: (1) addressing qualitative and quantitative shortfalls, in particular in the area of justice, (2) involvement of third states and the UN/OSCE, (3) evaluating lessons from ongoing missions, (4) and last but not least, focus on civil-military cooperation. The forthcoming police/rule of law operation in Kosovo that will probably consist of some 1,200 to 1,400 personnel, and the envisaged police/rule of law operation in Afghanistan will pose unprecedented challenges in terms of recruitment and management in a particularly difficult environment and over strategic distances. It shows that the search for specifically qualified personnel within the CHG 2008 is not a theoretical exercise.

**Role of the European Commission**

Any presentation of EU crisis management would be incomplete without mentioning the huge array of instruments that the European Commission (EC) can provide, in
particular in the field of humanitarian assistance, post-conflict rehabilitation, long-term institution building, and development. Indeed, in order to ensure the necessary coherence and complementarity between ESDP operations and related EC assistance, effective co-ordination is essential, not least at the early planning stages. It can help to ensure that the planning and implementation of limited duration ESDP operations take due account of long-term EC strategies for assistance to the concerned countries – and vice versa. In addition, through the new ‘Instrument for Stability’ the Commission has acquired an important ‘rapid response’ tool to improve the impact of EU assistance in an acute or impending crisis situation, in close co-ordination with ESDP actions. By working closely with the Commission, including its delegations in the field, the EU has already demonstrated how together it can optimise the overall impact of the combined efforts. In the case of the ESDP Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM), where the Community financed the mediation of the peace negotiations and programmes for reintegration of former combatants, the work of the AMM was mutually reinforcing. I am, however, not well qualified to represent the Commission’s case. The EU Military Staff (EUMS) and more precisely Civil/Military Cell located within the EUMS includes two EC representatives who are providing an initial working-level interface for better co-ordinated planning. This is a modest, but important first step towards more effective inter-pillar co-ordination and co-operation in mission planning.

The Challenges of Civil/Military Co-ordination (CMCO)

Seen from the proven military principle of unity of effort and command, the weakness of the current EU system is that not all instruments are in one hand. In other words, the EU’s richness and potential for crisis management cause, at the same time, difficulties in co-ordinating the different actors and balancing the different means. The arrangements foreseen in the Constitutional Treaty in this respect, and in particular the joint External Action Service, are in my view bitterly missed. Much work has been done over recent presidencies to take CMCO forward, from integrated planning at the Brussels-level to better co-operation in the field. There are a number of areas, however, where further progress is needed and is possible. Today’s crisis management missions require considerable resources and Member State’s capabilities. The EU clearly must strive to fill the ‘hardware’ capability shortfalls on military side. But as practice in the field has shown, complementary efforts can be made in order to improve operational capability and performance, at little cost, by looking at structures and procedures and this could apply both to the civilian and military dimension. The key point is to deliver strategic effect following a clear political-strategic objective marking the desired end-state. This requires comprehensive and coherent planning, starting in Brussels.

In terms of capabilities development, this could be seen as a particular form of advance planning. ESDP operations will be expeditionary; multinational in nature; ‘joint’ from a military perspective and ‘multi-instrumental’ in a comprehensive context. With this in mind, it seems sensible to further link the civilian and military capabilities development. Obviously, there is a need to achieve the objectives that the EU has set itself in the two present HLGs. But how does the EU proceed beyond 2008 and 2010 respectively? Should one continue with two different processes and timelines? Or is there scope for harmonisation both in terms
of content and timing? Given that future crises will require an ever more comprehensive approach, it is worth exploring the potential of a truly comprehensive civilian/military capability development process. This notably involves the definition, by all civilian and military actors concerned working jointly, of future challenges and strategic options.

Post-Hampton Court / Civilian Command and Control Issues

In terms of the planning and conduct of operations, Dr. Solana has submitted his proposals to meet the mandate, given by the European Council in 2005 at Hampton Court, to strengthen the crisis management structures in view of our increasing future challenges. Nowhere is this required improvement more apparent than in the domain of rapid and co-ordinated action where one of the most demanding aspects is timely and coherent planning. The key to the solution is to undertake, to the greatest extent possible, ‘planning in advance’ – to be better prepared in addressing security risks and emerging crises, not least by identifying opportunities earlier, by better informing decision-making, and by reducing the overall response time.

These factors are not recognised: Member States agreed the establishment of the Civil-Military Cell within the EU Military Staff and its capacity for Strategic Contingency Planning linking ‘work across the EU on anticipating crises, including opportunities for conflict prevention and post-conflict stabilisation’, that means including the Commission. The findings of the Exercise Study 06 hosted by the Finnish Presidency in November last year stressed that advance planning can provide valuable time-saving input for both civilian and military crisis response planning.

Contingent strategic options could inform political decision-makers of the ‘bounds of the functionally possible’ and provide a firm baseline for the transition from contingency planning to crisis response planning.

Finally, in terms of command and control, the provisions for timely planning and decision making at the political-strategic level need to be underpinned by more robust arrangements at the operational level for the planning and conduct of operations using civilian and military means. In particular with a view to the specific challenges associated with the civilian Kosovo and Afghanistan operations, there is a need for a robust management capability. As pointed out by the SG/HR Solana, it makes sense to establish a fully developed chain of command for civilian ESDP operations, including the appointment of a Civilian Operations Commander, authorised to oversee and direct the Heads of Mission in the field and supported by a dedicated staff capacity within the General Secretariat performing the role and function of a civilian Operational Headquarters (OHQ).

Furthermore, based on lessons from the civilian/military Aceh Monitoring Mission and the ongoing civilian/military EU Support Action to the AU/AMIS in Sudan/Darfur, the need has become obvious for closer co-ordination and mutual support of civilian and military planning and conduct of ESDP operations at the strategic level in order to realise greater civilian/military synergy. To achieve this, how should the envisaged Civilian OHQ capacity be combined with the capacities available in the EU Military Staff as both are co-located within the General Secretariat? Also how is effective co-ordination with external military OHQ capabilities to be ensured? A permanent joint civilian/
military watch keeping capability will ensure that robust, crisis-resilient arrangements are in place in Brussels that will enhance the capacity to monitor and communicate with ongoing ESDP operations, particularly during crisis periods, and could help to provide a comprehensive picture of all ongoing ESDP operations at any time.

Summary

The challenges of capability shortfalls and the need for rapid reaction and civil-military co-ordination will remain with the EU for the years to come. There is no choice but to proceed step-by-step towards truly comprehensive and coherent crisis management using the civilian and military dimension. This must be adequately reflected, not only in structures of the EU, but also in the wider setup of our respective institutions and procedures. The EU with its broad set of instruments, with its specific culture of co-operation and co-ordination, and with its growing self-confidence and international recognition, after a number of successful ESDP operations, has the unique potential to live up to these challenges.

Notes

1 The ‘Petersberg Tasks’ proper comprise humanitarian and rescue operations, peacekeeping, and peace enforcement (Combat forces in crisis management including peacemaking); these tasks have been complemented by disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration; security sector reform; and support to third countries in combating terrorism

2 Currently, Member States have deployed less than twenty-five per cent of the declared police capabilities both to EU and UN operations, including Kosovo. Despite some 5,700 police officers declared to be available if needed, Member States have not been able to provide more than an average of twenty police officers, out of fifty posts, to the EU support action to AMIS. On the other hand, a significant number of Member States’ police officers are serving in Kosovo under UN auspices, and a total of some 880 police officers are deployed to EUPM in Bosnia and UNMIK in Kosovo.
Conclusion: Rethinking the Civil-Military Nexus

Michael J Williams

The situation in Afghanistan is one of the most challenging interventions that the international community has undertaken since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Over the course of the 1990s there has been a shift from an international system based on a strict interpretation of national sovereignty to a more open system that recognises the interconnectedness of the modern world. Chaos in distant lands ultimately has an impact far beyond the borders of a troubled state or region. Increasing interventionism by Western governments to manage these security challenges and risks has resulted in a number of problems – not least, how to apply effective defence, diplomatic and development resources within the society subject to the intervention. The need for a whole of government approach has become gradually clearer as Western understandings of various interventions have improved. As David Kilcullen has written, counter-insurgency warfare is ‘social work with a gun’. The final resolution of the conflict will ultimately come through political means, not from military force. Counter-insurgency is not the type of war that Clausewitz wrote about, for in the end a successful counter-insurgency campaign is not about imposition from outside, but about reconciliation from within the fractured society. NATO has recognised this by first advocating an effects-based approach to operations (EBAO) and more recently a ‘comprehensive approach’ that creates security through the application of military force, economic aid, development and reconstruction.

Western governments have attempted to accelerate this process through interventions that use a combination of military force, political advisers, economic assistance and development workers. Unfortunately, these groups are not accustomed to working with each other, they have different motives for their actions, different modus operandi and as a result, there has been conflict and the inefficient application of resources. Co-ordination has generally been ad hoc and the best co-operation and co-ordination on the ground often comes down to matching personalities, rather than robust structures and agreements. Also, the vast majority of government actors on the ground have little or no knowledge of the societal dynamics within which they are operating and it is not surprising that the situation in Afghanistan is difficult. The problem becomes even more complex when non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are added to the mix. The topic is a large one and as such, the conclusion of this report focuses primarily on the international level – improving co-ordination between international organisations, regional organisations and non-governmental organisations. Many of the observations and recommendations will bear a resemblance to problems and lessons learned (or not learned) at the national level. This is not a coincidence given that problems at the international level are simply the problems of the national level magnified. But this report focuses on overall strategy, rather than on-the-ground tactics.

At this point, a disclaimer must be made about the concept ‘lessons learned’ as it relates to Afghanistan. During 2007, RUSI specifically investigated problems of international co-ordination in Afghanistan and has done so from a NATO point of view, i.e., how the Alliance can improve its efforts on the ground and its relations with other actors. This paper provides some of the different perspectives from the various
actors involved in Afghanistan that emerged during the context of the project. The reader can judge for themselves the state of affairs between various actors on the ground. The conclusion will address the major problems outlined in the introduction and individual chapters, offering suggestions on how current operations may be improved. Some of these lessons may be transferable to other interventions. To have a real impact, many of these lessons will need to be implemented by the members of NATO, and not just at the Alliance level. The intervention in Afghanistan is a poor template from which to learn what to do correctly for a number of reasons. First, it is difficult to lift lessons learned in one theatre, directly to another. Each theatre is different and this must be kept in mind. More importantly with regard to Afghanistan, Western governments refuse to acknowledge the political climate surrounding the intervention (the controversial Bush-led War on Terror) and the cascade of problems this causes vis-à-vis organisation with other institutions and NGOs. Even within NATO many of the disagreements about the nature of the ISAF operation and the need for additional military forces can trace themselves back to the circumstances surrounding NATO’s takeover of the mission in 2003, precipitated in part by the US push to invade Iraq. Therefore, this conclusion neither provides a comprehensive review of all the problems, nor does it necessarily provide a template which can then be successfully re-applied to interventions elsewhere. This report highlights the major issues related to civil-military relations in Afghanistan and offers some insights into specific recommendations for ISAF and perhaps some general advice to bear in mind for future interventions. The one firm lesson to take away is that interveners must have humility about what they can accomplish in specific periods of time.

Clarity of Mission

One of the most critical issues related to NATO’s ability to organise with the wider international community is clarity of purpose. Although NATO’s mandate is to assist the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) with the provision of security, it is a broad charge. This makes it possible for some countries to limit themselves to strictly rebuilding operations in rather calm areas and say that they are fulfilling the mission, while other states are engaged in combat operations. Neither side is wrong. The problem, however, is that NATO is a political-military organisation that is based on the concept of solidarity. Although both contributions may be of value to the Government of Afghanistan, they are not seen as equal within NATO. For the last few years, mutual recriminations have gone back and forth between allies over who was carrying their share of the burden in Afghanistan. The Germans have been particularly put upon because of their reluctance to go to the South. But as General Richards said, this was not a problem: he needed to have some forces there, and if the Germans moved, there would be a gap. The real problem was too few troops overall, not necessarily caveats on where troops could operate and what they could do. That said, fewer caveats would be better.

The inability of allies to agree about the number of troops that should be deployed, where those troops should be deployed and what sort of tasks they should undertake ultimately relates to the political circumstances surrounding the invasion. NATO took over the ISAF role in 2003 in large part to help shore up suffering transatlantic relations. This may not be popular to say, but it is a fact. Allies wanted to prove they were loyal to the US and that
they were interested in combating international terrorism – just not in Iraq. And although the mission in Afghanistan is critical to the national security of NATO allies – as 9/11 demonstrated – many policy makers and publics in Europe do not seem to recognise this. The Alliance rushed into Afghanistan without really answering questions such as: Why are we going to Afghanistan? What are the objectives? What can we realistically achieve? What resources do we need to achieve this objective? Perhaps the intentions were good, but the failure to really plan from the outset and make sure goals were joined up has let the Alliance down over the last five years. There are still multiple answers to these questions depending on whom one talks with. Some questions have not been answered at all. This has left NATO in a rather odd place. Technically, NATO is responsible for helping to provide security for the Afghan Government, but because the problems that plague Afghanistan are not reconcilable with military force alone, NATO has broadened its definition of security from a strict politico-military understanding to one more in line with the concept of human security. The Alliance has assumed a number of development and reconstruction tasks – which has created serious strife between NGOs and development organisations that feel NATO is encroaching on their territory. The fact is that NATO should not be responsible for the entire gamut of operations in Afghanistan. The Alliance is ill-prepared to deliver ‘civilian effect’ as the NATO Secretary General has said on numerous occasions. But the involvement of the wider international community has been suboptimal and NATO has been forced to fill the gaps as best as possible.

Recommendation

The baseline for NATO’s problems in Afghanistan is a lack of agreement amongst the allies about the nature of the mission. This can be traced back to the need to further define what kind of organisation NATO should be in the twenty-first century. Should the Alliance concentrate on just a core mission of European defence, or should it manage security far beyond the boundaries of Europe? If so, what sort of missions should NATO undertake and how should it conduct these missions? The most recent Strategic Concept dates back to 1999 and does not match today’s reality and is too nebulous to serve as an effective base for NATO. Reaching consensus and writing a new strategic concept will not be easy, but it must be done in time for the sixtieth anniversary summit in Berlin. A new strategic concept will not bring an end to intra-Alliance disagreement, but it should reduce it and make the Alliance capable of more adequately conducting missions such as ISAF. Regarding Afghanistan, the allies need to reach a consensus on the exact nature of the mission and how that mission should be pursued. At this late stage, it will be difficult. But a special summit that involves the GoA should be held to help reform the mission’s agenda. A second summit should then be held that places NATO and the GoA at the table with other relevant organisations such as the UN and EU to map out a comprehensive, inter-organisational approach. This process could be based upon the London Compact, or that too could be revisited. With regard to future missions, the lesson to learn is discussion, debate and clarification prior to the commencement of the operation are important. There will always be disagreements on how to proceed, but if the ultimate aims are agreed upon, it will make the task much easier in the long-run.
Means, Ends and Local Knowledge

If one asks a policy-maker why their country is involved in the ISAF campaign, the generic answer will be something along the lines of ‘9/11 illustrated with absolute certainty the interconnectedness of the world today. Weak and failing states breed instability that can ultimately have a devastating effect on the national security of the US, Canada, Germany, United Kingdom, etc.’ This is a good generic answer – but the follow-on question ‘Does the intervention in Afghanistan solve the problem of radical Islamic terrorism and what can we do in Afghanistan to address this problem?’ is more complex. Simply put, the means must match the desired ends. The US reaction to 9/11 was principally a military one – the invasion of Afghanistan. Very little thought was put into the follow-on ability to address the underlying political, social and economic dimensions that made Afghanistan what it was in 2001. There is an undeniable military component to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, but the larger component is civilian. A contingent of NATO allies have begun to invest seriously in the civilian tools required of stability operations, but progress across the Alliance is not uniform. Governments need to co-ordinate not only within themselves, but also between themselves to achieve the best effect.

To match the means to the ends there needs to be local area expertise available to Western forces. It is doubtful that Western governments truly understood the nature of the environment they were entering in 2001, nor in 2003 when NATO took over ISAF. The UK Government, for example, came under heavy criticism from the media and public throughout the second half of 2006 because of the heavy fighting British forces were forced to conduct in Helmand. The Government sold the mission as primarily stability and support operations, but as Afghan analysts knew, the situation was much more complicated. The UK Government is on the record saying that they did not expect so much violence. This is inexcusable. Local knowledge and good intelligence is required for sound planning and implementation of interventions in countries such as Afghanistan. To make things worse the knowledge deficit in Government was not filled because, the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit team deployed to Afghanistan in late 2005 to collect information on the ground about the political and societal dynamics was unable to actually liaise with the local population due to safety concerns.

Although duty of care is a serious issue, so too is planning a complicated and costly intervention where the success of this mission is highly contingent on a correct understanding of the local societal and political situation. This knowledge can be supplemented using local hires, but relying solely on indigenous personnel is risky for three reasons. First, you drain the country of the people that you need to run it. Doctors, lawyers, librarians and bureaucrats should be working to improve their country, not translating or guiding Western forces. Second, there will never be enough indigenous experts and to plan the intervention from the start, there must be excellent local knowledge of the area of intervention within the foreign ministries of Western countries. Finally, Western experts serve as a check on locals that may seek to exploit the international effort for their own gain.

Recommendation

National governments must revisit the generalist approach to foreign service officers and expand the number of their
regional and country experts. Militaries and intelligence agencies should do the same. To do this, it may be necessary to incentivise educational programmes so that the individuals with the language skills and regional expertise are actually produced within universities. A good example of filling the knowledge gap within the military are current draft plans to have US Marine Corps officers focus on particular regions of the world – studying the language, customs and culture of a certain area. Such a specialisation does not mean that there forces are limited to one particular area; only that they will excel in knowing all the intricacies of one area. Ultimately, such understandings can be readily transcribed to operations in their non-expert regions as well.

On the civilian side, there needs to be increased investment in developing government capacity to have regional and country experts in the service of the government. This base can be supplemented using a civilian reserve (proposed US model) or deployable civilian experts (UK model), but there should be an in-house government capacity. Taking the US State Department as example, the regional expertise could come under the subject matter expertise. So rather than just having a generic political or economics officer, one would be a Political Officer/South East Asia specialist, or an Economics Officer/Latin America. Service in difficult conditions should be subject to higher pay and service on the ground in pre- and post-conflict situations should be an incentive for qualified and exceptional staff to proceed up the promotion ladder. NATO can then access this knowledge when planning an intervention to ensure that the military command is adequately knowledgeable about the situation. This issue is one part reorganisation, three parts resources. Member states need to devote more finances to such efforts.

A NATO Effort, not a National Effort

Before the Alliance can address the need to work more effectively with the wider international community, it needs to address the fractures within the Alliance’s efforts. As it stands the ISAF mission suffers from a Balkanisation of effort. The Dutch are responsible for Uruzgan province, the Canadians for Kandahar and the British for Helmand. There is a certain amount of national pride attached to each mission and thus each national mission must succeed. The danger is that national efforts threaten to assume greater importance than the ISAF effort, undermining the broader national development goals. This is largely due to the PRT model. The PRTs are usually led by one nation or a coalition of nations. The result is that the political and development side of each PRT reports back to the national capital and not the ISAF commander. This is not to say that the civilian side should be subordinate to the military. But there should be accountability at the NATO or international level, rather than the national level. Because PRTs must appease their governments the entire effort is directed at making their region and their PRT a success. This can cut against the grain of the overall NATO and international effort in Afghanistan – the allies have attempted to moderate this effect, but it remains problematic. It complicates the interfaces and can overload the rather burdened Afghan Government that suffers from a lack of educated and efficient officials.

Recommendation

The political side of the PRT must report to a civilian director in Afghanistan and not respective national capitols. This director must be empowered by the Allied
governments to exercise full discretion regarding the activities the PRTs undertake and how they are implemented. He or she would be responsible for liaising with the military to ensure the military operations and civilian operations are properly co-ordinated. He or she would also be the point of contact for the Afghan Government so that in working with them he or she can establish the priorities that the PRTs should undertake within the broader Afghan development strategy.

NATO and the Wider International Community

Beyond NATO’s immediate difficulties are the Alliance’s broader relations with NGOs and other international organisations in Afghanistan. The relationship with both is complicated. NGOs have serious issues regarding some of the politics surrounding the military action in Afghanistan. Furthermore, because NGOs rely on a different type of security (local trust, rather than armour and weapons) they feel that the attempt of Western governments to use military forces is inherently dangerous to their personnel and makes it difficult for them to operate. This is a legitimate concern and one that must be addressed if NGOs are to be involved in Afghanistan.

Beyond NGOs, NATO also needs wider assistance from the international community. The European Union has recently become involved in Afghanistan, and this developing relationship should be of benefit to both organisations and the Afghan people. The EU will be in charge of police reform: one of the most important tasks, which to date has been inadequately executed. Although the relationship with the EU is not ideal for a variety of political reasons, the UN-NATO relationship is worse. There currently exists no formal memorandum of understanding between the United Nations and NATO, despite the fact that NATO has worked as a ‘subcontractor’ for the UN on several occasions. The UN presence in Afghanistan is also rather small. This is down to several reasons: 1) the initial assessment in 2001, that a small footprint would be better than a large one; 2) security concerns; 3) inability to fill the current number of posts. The first is most directly related to this paper. Although Lakhdar Brahimi, then Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, initially thought that the Afghans would not be receptive to foreigners in Afghanistan, this assessment has proven incorrect. As a result, the civilian component of the comprehensive approach has been lacking, militaries have picked up the slack and paradoxically now civilian agencies are angry that the military is engaging in development and reconstruction tasks.

Recommendations

The United Nations and NATO should establish an official memorandum of understanding between the two organisations. This does not limit NATO to acting only under the aegis of the UN, but it will reinforce the fact that NATO has almost exclusively acted under a UN Security Council Resolution. It will help to streamline international efforts and it will allow access to an enormous wealth of information in the civilian experts of the UN. The UN and NATO should also work through the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to strengthen a working group consisting of relevant international actors (regional security organisations, NGOs, international organisations) so that future planning can be conducted in a more effective manner.
This committee could perhaps also establish and resource training and exchanges between the military and civilian communities involved in stability operations. This may mean that NGO capacity needs to be supported so that a special CIVMIL advisor can be appointed to participate and then work within the NGO, but such an expense would be worthwhile. Only through experience sharing, education initiatives and courses can NGOs, international organisations and military forces work before a conflict to improve mutual understanding.

National governments should also look at how their funding is allocated. For example, UK efforts to direct all UK funding through the Government of Afghanistan have hindered the ability for NGOs to maintain and further develop a capacity to engage with the government and the military. The British Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG), an umbrella organisation that is crucial to helping co-ordinate Irish and British NGO efforts, is unable to act effectively since all of its funding was cut by DFID and provided directly to the Government of Afghanistan. BAAG serves as a useful conduit through which the British Government and military can work with NGOs. Given the resource crunch in NGOs, a CIVMIL advisor in every NGO may not be possible, but having one or two such people at BAAG that can serve as interlocutors between the UK government, the military and various NGOs is an invaluable and wise investment. Other NATO allies should also carefully consider how their funding impacts the ability of NGOs to develop a CIVMIL liaison capacity. It is counterproductive to fund NGO operations in Afghanistan, but at the same time not to support the development of better NGO-government and military relations.

Finally, NGOs need to take stock of their involvement in Afghanistan and decide how and if they want to be involved. During the workshops, the theme of ‘it was safer for us to operate under the Taliban’ kept coming up. The implication was that NATO has made things worse and that if there was no NATO mission, the NGOs could carry out their work in safer conditions. This of course ignores reality. NGOs were not attacked when they worked in Taliban controlled Afghanistan because they ultimately supported Taliban control. Now that their work benefits a democratic GoA and the NATO efforts, they are targets. Many multi-mandate NGOs are loathe to admit any similarity between their work and NATO, but many of their programmes, such as women’s education, are not simply humanitarian in nature; they are also Western and attempt to change the societal fabric of the country to be more Western. It is wrong for NGOs to pretend that the situation was better under the Taliban. It is important that NGOs remain independent of military forces and operations, but it is also important that the ultimate similarity of goals is recognised.

The European Union is a valuable actor with which NATO must have a functional relationship. Given that the EU tends to have more civilian resources at its disposal, the NATO-EU relationship in crisis states such as Afghanistan would be a logical one to develop. To do this, NATO and the EU must work out the kinks and the double-hatting involved in the process. They must also consider that a majority of EU states are also NATO members. It does not make sense that the two organisations are unable to work together. At the bureaucratic level, a culture of competition must be eliminated. At a functional level, exchanges and joint training between NATO military assets and EU civilian assets would be a good place to
start breaking down barriers to co-operation.

A Co-ordinator

The largest impediment to NATO and international efforts in Afghanistan has been the lack of strongly mandated civilian director of operations. At the end of 2007, the call for a ‘Paddy Ashdown’ for Afghanistan grew louder and Lord Ashdown himself was touted for the job. Until January 2008, it looked as if Lord Ashdown might indeed head to Afghanistan, although events since have proven otherwise. The failure to appoint Lord Ashdown is undoubtedly a major loss for Afghanistan. The need for a civilian co-ordinator of the Western inputs into Afghanistan has been exigent for some time and this report reinforces the repeated calls for an international co-ordinator. The lack of organisation between the civilian and military elements of the NATO deployment, between NATO, the UN and the various NGOs, as well as a lack of co-operation between the GoA and the international community in Afghanistan, could all be substantially reduced if there was a lead civilian director. This individual should not be a proconsul with the powers that Lord Ashdown had in Bosnia. Afghanistan has a sovereign government. Rather, this individual would co-ordinate the NATO civilian effort with the NATO military effort. He or she would also ensure with the COMISAF that NATO was synchronised with the actions of the UN and other actors such as the World Bank. All of this would be done via extensive consultation with the Afghan Government.

Recommendation

The international community should elect a civilian director of operations to organise and direct the civilian efforts in Afghanistan. This individual should ideally be multi-hatted. He or she should have control over NATO civilian operations, should be UN mandated and empowered and anointed as the primary Western civilian interlocutor to the Afghan Government. This person would work with the GoA to ensure that the Government’s civilian capacity is developed and that the international efforts are co-ordinated and support the GoA. For this post to be successful the right individual must be selected. More importantly, this individual must have a clear and strong mandate from the international community and he or she must be empowered to do the job. If the mandate is not clear and if the powers are not provided, the post will be of limited effectiveness. The international community will also need to revisit resource allocation for Afghanistan. Reorganisation often tends to occur because of a lack of resources. Naming a new co-ordinator and reorganising the efforts will not be enough. Just as the civilian co-ordinator must have a clear mandate and a clear power, he or she must also have the human and financial resources to do the job. Reconstruction on the cheap is bound to fail – with or without a co-ordinator.

High Expectations and the Future of Afghanistan

When the West went to Afghanistan to expel the Taliban and hunt down Al-Qa’ida elements, the Afghan people were promised much: democracy, the rule of law, economic development were all within the immediate grasp of the Afghans according to the US administration. But the fact of the matter is that the West promised much and has failed to deliver on a number of promises. In the first four years of the Western engagement in Kosovo, a province with a population just below 2 million received $1.8 billion in international aid. By contrast Afghanistan,
with 29 million people, was pledged $15 billion, but only received $4.7 billion. With the international community trying to do reconstruction on the cheap, it should be no surprise that the progress has been limited. Furthermore, security is patchy in many areas and still largely non-existent in others. Reform has occurred, but it has not been uniform. The Ministry of Interior is notoriously corrupt and the Afghan police, as a result, are a much blighted force. Development projects have been slow in coming to fruition and the Taliban is still able to act with impunity in many areas of the country. Despite all of this, the record of progress in many areas is still good. More children are in schools than ever before, and women are no longer being executed as the half time highlight of a football match. Roads and schools are being built, small companies are starting up. A recent BBC-ABC News-ARD poll showed that the majority of Afghans are still positive about the future, with 54 per cent saying the country is headed in the right direction compared to 24 per cent that believe it is going in the wrong direction. The majority believe that the situation will stay the same or improve over the course of the next year, and 69 per cent of Afghans have a ‘very unfavourable’ view of the Taliban. Furthermore, 58 per cent of Afghans blame the Taliban (36 per cent) and foreign jihadis (22 per cent) for the violence in Afghanistan. Only 9 per cent blame the US and only 3 per cent blame NATO/ISAF forces. Afghans understand the dynamics of their country better than most Western experts and it is unsurprising that they have been sitting on the fence, given their perception of a gap between what the West has promised and what has actually been delivered, which calls into question the strength of the Western commitment.

It is amazing that despite the slow progress of security, reconstruction and development efforts, the Afghans have remained supportive of Western involvement in their country. Thirty years of conflict have certainly provided a bleak backdrop against which to measure current progress. The Western effort in Afghanistan is well intentioned, if not fully effective. The challenge for Western actors is to remember that in Afghanistan and elsewhere, what one thinks can be delivered is only a fraction of what is really possible to achieve. NATO must have realistic expectations about what the Alliance can achieve on the ground. To make the most of the limited resources invested in the mission the Alliance must work better with other actors. NATO does not want to be a one-stop fix-it shop for Afghanistan, nor should it be. To work successfully with the diverse multitude of actors the Alliance must champion the thinking of the comprehensive approach which first and foremost is a philosophy. It is not about getting other actors to fall in-line behind the NATO effort. Rather, the comprehensive approach can be seen as thinking the following when confronted by a problem: what other actors are impacted by this? What can they bring to bear in this situation? What solutions can I provide and how can I best co-ordinate my actions with others? This kind of thinking will help to make the Western involvement in Afghanistan more efficient and it will help put the Afghans one step closer to a better future. But although the thinking is good, it remains to be seen how effectively it can actually be implemented. In future engagements, it might help to avoid some of the missteps that have plagued the current ISAF mission. The best lesson of all, however, is that the West must be humble and recognise that our ability to change the world for the better is limited. In acknowledging this and setting realistic objectives, that are then properly resourced, we may ultimately be
able to make some small change for good.

Notes


2 BBC World Service Poll, conducted in conjunction with ABC News and ARD (Germany).