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## Opportunity structures affecting the MOLTs

An analysis of how internal and external features of the larger context affected the operational actions of the Military Observation and Liaison Teams during the Netherlands Provincial Reconstruction Team mission in Baghlan, Afghanistan.



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## Abstract

The aim of this study is to evaluate how the contextual opportunity structures in which the Dutch Military Observation and Liaison Teams (MOLTs), later Mission Teams (MTs) operated, affected the operational actions of the MOLTs during the Netherlands Provincial Reconstruction Team (1(NL)PRT) mission in the North-Afghan province Baghlan from 2004 till 2006. Although the PRT consisted of different elements, the focus is on the MOLTs, because these teams were seen as the primary carriers of the Netherlands PRT mission. They were the eyes and ears of the Netherlands PRT. The MOLTs operated in a larger structural context in which different contextual features hindered or facilitated the operational actions of the MOLTs. This 'affect' is explained in terms of mechanisms and processes to get a deeper understanding of how and why there was an 'affect'. Although the concept of opportunity structures is mainly focused on external factors that hindered or facilitated actions, this study shows also features that appear inside the MOLT or PRT organization hindered or facilitated operational actions. During the mission, a significant shift has taken place in how internal and external features of the opportunity structures affected the operational actions of the MOLTs.

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Finally, but not at the least I am sincerely thankful for my parents, who mentally supported me not only during this research, but during my whole study career. Without you I would never have come this far.

# Map of Afghanistan

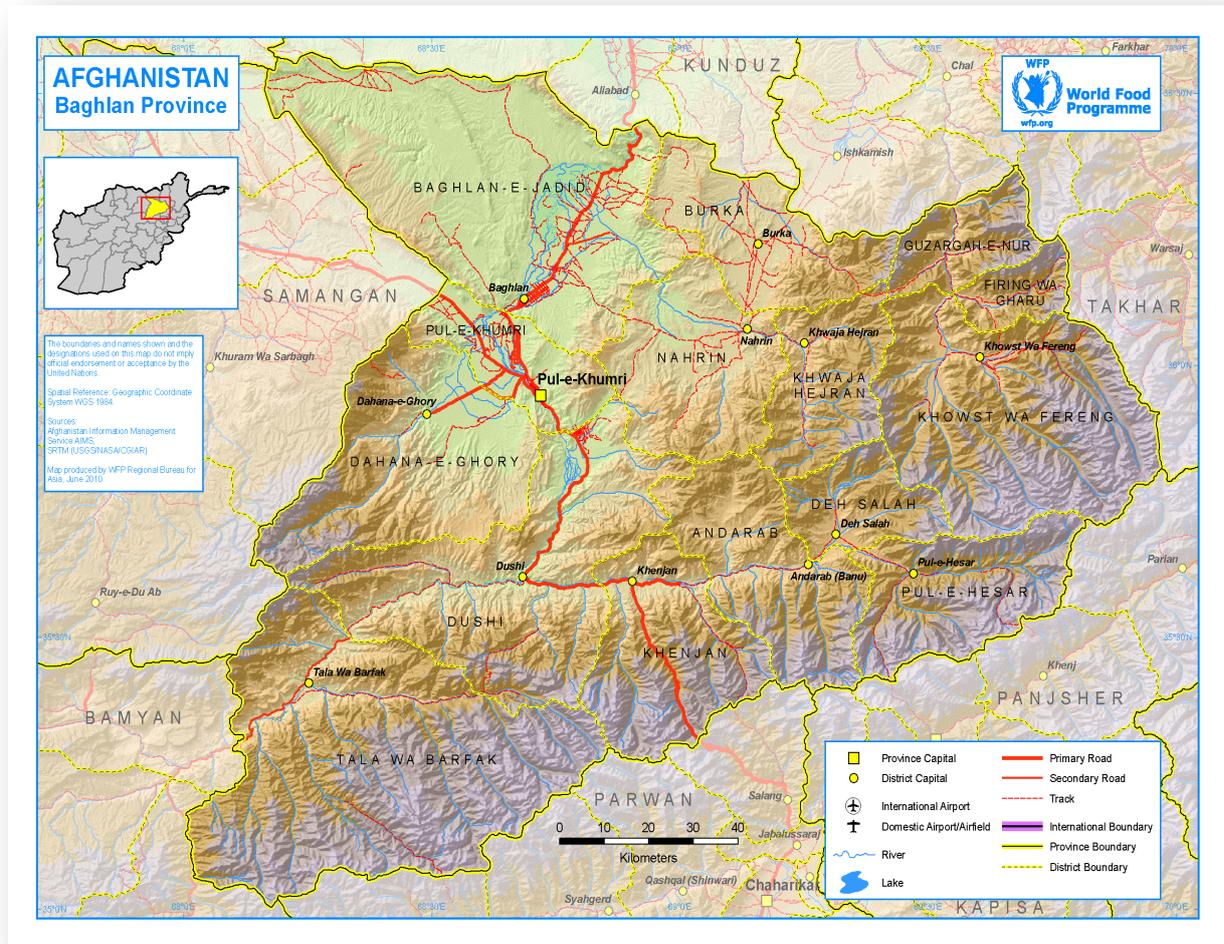


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# Map of Baghlan province

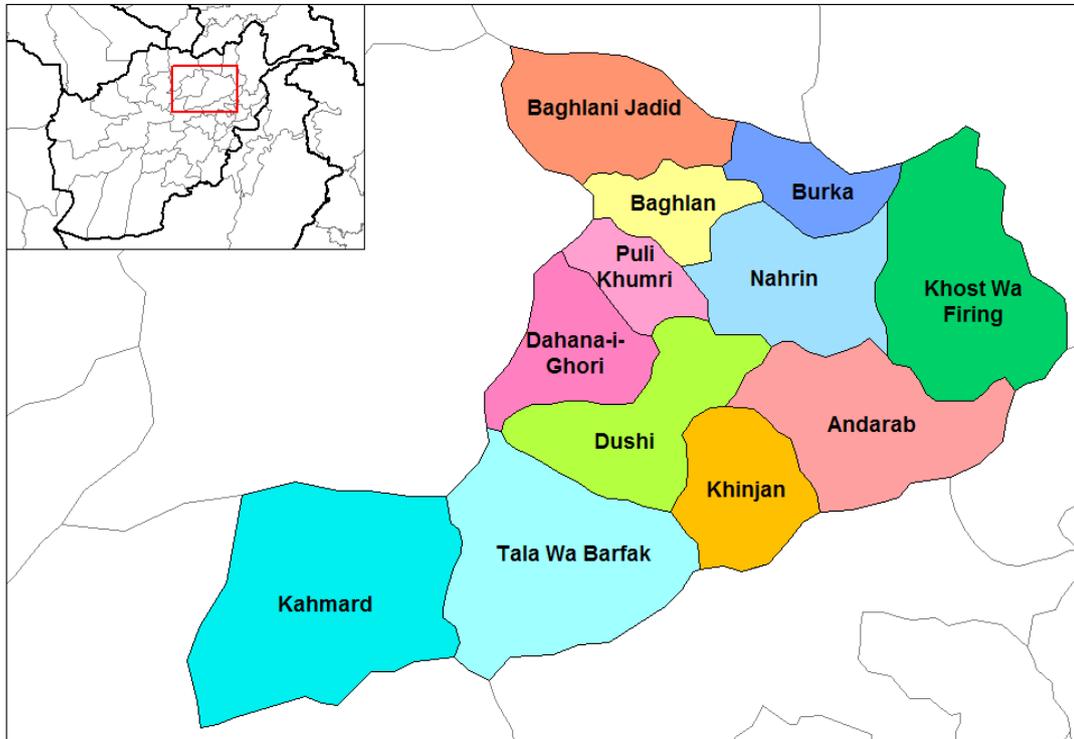


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## Map of districts of Baghlan province



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*"We realized that we could not make a difference in six months. In those six months we could only book little successes. Despite that you only see little progress, it was an essential piece we contributed to the entire PRT and ISAF mission. Finally the Afghan people need to do it themselves. We could only make them aware of how they can do things."<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> Int. Code: Eysinga, van (See Appendix 1 for Quoted informants).

## List of Abbreviations

1(NL)PRT	First Netherlands Provincial Reconstruction Team
3D	Defense, Diplomacy and Development
4wd	Four wheel drive
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
CIMIC	Civil Military Cooperation
CN	Counter Narcotics
DDR	Demobilization, Disarmament, and Reintegration.
DIAG	(Japan) Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups.
FP	Force Protection
FST/HUMINT	Field Support Team/Human Intelligence
H&M	Hearts and Minds
IDEA	Integrated Development of Entrepreneurial Activities.
IED	Improvised Explosive Devices.
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
LOA	Lines of Action
LtCol	Lieutenant Colonel
MOLT	Military Observation and Liaison Teams
MT	Mission Team
NATO	the North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIMH	Netherlands Institute for Military History
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OPCO	Operational Commando
PeK	Pol-e Khomri
POLAD	Political Advisor
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PSY OPS	Psychological Operations
QRF	Quick Reaction Forces
S3	Section 3 Operations
S5	Section 5 Planning/future operations
S9	Section 9 CIMIC
SASE	Safe and Secure Environment
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure

SSR	Security Sector Reform
TFU	Task Force Uruzgan
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 International involvement in Afghanistan

The roots of the presence of the Netherlands Provincial Reconstruction Team (1(NLD)PRT) in Baghlan, Afghanistan lie in the 'terrorist' attacks of 11 September 2001.<sup>5</sup> Since this day the western world was involved in what George W. Bush declared as 'the war on terror' (Bont, 2011:35). Al-Qaida and the leader Osama Bin Laden were held responsible for these terrorist attacks. The Afghan extreme fundamentalist Taliban regime provided shelter for Al-Qaida. The international community insisted that the Taliban-regime would hand over Osama bin Laden and other Al-Qaida leaders. But the Taliban refused this request of the international community. This was the reason that the Taliban regime also became target of the American 'war on terror' (ISAF 2004: 9). Osama Bin Laden expected that the American military forces would begin a revenge operation and invade Afghanistan. This was indeed the case (Bont, 2011: 48).

Twenty-six days after 9/11, the United States (US) started Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) at 7 October 2001. This operation was in first instance for combating the military goals and facilities of the Taliban regime, and for combating the training camps of Al-Qaida (Ministerie van Defensie, 2007: 5). During the time, international support followed. But Afghanistan was a desolate and inhospitable country, where the Americans and other 'Western' countries did not know the way. It is a country where Osama bin Laden could choose thousands of places to hide and where the Americans and their European allies could not operate without local friends (Bont, 2011: 48).

The international community worked closely with the Afghan Northern Alliance. The Afghan Northern Alliance is a coalition of opponents of the Taliban regime. They took advantage of the air strikes of the international community and achieved great military

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<sup>5</sup> You can argue that we need to think critically about the use of the word terrorist, which related to terrorism. The word terrorism and terrorist are sometimes more employed as labels than definitions according to Tuman (2003: 3). The act of defining (often by the western world) provides an opportunity for a contrast between us and our enemies, or enemy: the outsider, the other. (Tuman (2003: 41) "...the drawing of this contrast is more important than the definition of terrorism itself." (Tuman (2003: 42) Terrorism succeeds because it creates a sense of fear of the unknown. (Tuman 2003: xvi) "If we understand how terrorism operates to affect us, we may approach a response to it that is not the product of our own fears but instead the result of reasoned and comprehensive thinking." (Tuman 2003: xvii) It is terrorists not about the violence, but they want to send a message and they often engage this in an act of violence. But by focusing on and defining the violence, it legitimizes fighting against it. "Terrorists are seen as playing outside the rules, without honor, attacking the innocent and weak, who cannot defend themselves." (Tuman 2003: 40) Does this mean that the response 'war on terror' with force of the USA in Afghanistan for example is moral? See Tuman, J. S. (2003) *Communicating Terror: the rhetorical Dimensions of terrorism*. SAGE Publications: Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi.

success faster than expected (Ministerie van Defensie, 2007: 5). Finally, the Taliban-regime collapsed, but the most important leaders of the Al-Qaida networks escaped (ISAF, 2004: 9).

After the ouster of the Taliban-regime, the focus of the military operations in Afghanistan changed to more future related goals of rebuilding and reconstructing Afghanistan (ISAF, 2004: 10). In order to overcome the rise of a political and security vacuum in Afghanistan, 'Western' countries argued that it was important to start as soon as possible with the rebuilding and reconstruction of the country (Ministerie van Defensie, 2007: 5). Afghanistan suffered at that time already more than twenty-two years of war and civil wars. Millions of Afghan people were displaced and the economic, infrastructural, social, and political structures were completely destroyed. All this, together with the large ethnic diversity and the many internal contradictions resulted in a precarious situation in Afghanistan that requires support of international communities (ISAF, 2004: 10).

In late November and early December 2001 a conference initiated by the United Nations (UN) took place in Bonn. This conference, chaired by the special representative of the secretary general of the UN, Lakhdar Brahimi, led to the establishment of the Bonn agreement on 5 December 2001 (Ministerie van Defensie, 2007: 5). One of the most important points of the agreement was reaching consensus on the political future of Afghanistan. There was need for a stable government that would be representative for the ethnic diversities in Afghanistan. This agreement laid down an intended democratic process for the next five years. This democratic process started with a 'Loya Jirga'. This was a meeting of all traditional leaders willing to provide democratic elections and to create a new constitution. After the establishment of a new constitution, the Bonn agreement stated that presidential elections should take place in October 2004 and should be followed by parliamentary and provincial elections in spring 2005. In the agreement it was also decided to create an interim government with Hamid Karzai as Prime Minister (ISAF, 2004: 10-11).

The Bonn agreement also stipulated the coming of an international peacekeeping force: the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). ISAF was formally created by the UN Security Council Resolution 1386 on 20 December 2001. The UN-mandated ISAF was active since the beginning of 2002. Initially, the operational area of the ISAF was focused on the capital Kabul and its surroundings. Since August 11, 2003, The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has the command of ISAF. The UN Security Council resolution 1510 of 13 October 2003 guaranteed UN mandate to assist the Afghan government also outside the Kabul area. Since 31 December 2003, four Northern provinces of Afghanistan, including Baghlan, fell also under ISAF control (Ministerie van Defensie, 2007: 7). The main goal of

ISAF was to assist the Afghan government in maintaining safety, security and stability. The responsibility of maintaining law and order lie with the Afghans themselves (ISAF 2004: 10-11).

Afghanistan is a partner country of the Netherlands. From 2001 till 2003 the Netherlands financially supported Afghanistan. The Dutch government argued that continuation and expansion of NATO-led military presence in Afghanistan was necessary in order to create a safe and stable country and to start reconstruction processes. The Dutch government decided to support ISAF also with military means. They hoped that this military support would contribute to the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan and therefore would support the international fight against terrorism. The Netherlands had a detachment of Apache Helicopters in Kabul, and next to that the Dutch government decided to contribute to ISAF by taking the command of a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in the North-Afghan province Baghlan (KST 27925, 2004: 4).

## 1.2 The Netherlands PRT Baghlan

In September 2004, Dutch military took command of a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in the North-Afghan province of Baghlan. The Netherlands were in command of a PRT for two years till October 2006 (Cate, 2007: 112). Why the Baghlan province? The province of Baghlan has an important strategic position. The round way of Afghanistan passes Baghlan and the Hindu-Kush mountains. This road divides Afghanistan in two parts. Baghlan lies on the border of these two sides and forms therefore the connection between the Afghan-capital Kabul and northern Afghanistan with the northern neighbors Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Therefore, the Baghlan province was an important area for the local Afghan authorities and representatives of the UN in Afghanistan (ISAF, 2004: 17-22).

The Dutch compound was situated near the provincial capital Pol-e Khomri (PeK). In the two years of Dutch command, six detachments were subsequently deployed in Baghlan. Each detachment consisted of military out of different Operational Commandos (OPCOs). The first three detachments were under command of the Dutch Air Force, and the last three detachments were under command of the Dutch Navy. The Dutch command Land Forces proved the Force Protection (FP), and the Royal Military Police trained the local police. The organizational concept of the PRT was based on a combination of the PRT commander and his staff, the Political Advisor (POLAD) and three Military Observation and Liaison Teams (MOLTs). Other elements of the PRT were a Force Protection unit (FP), Operation Center and

support platoons of logistic, medical and transport units. One detachment consisted of approximately 150-180 military (Ministerie van Defensie, 2007: 8).

The operational concept of the PRT was based on assisting and facilitating the Afghan central government to increase its influence in the rest of the country in order to create a safe and stable environment. The primary working methods were monitoring, reporting and influencing. Initially, reconstruction was not part of the mission. Nevertheless, it was expected that when the mission progressed, reconstruction activities needed to take place (Missie evaluatie team, 2004).

The MOLTs were seen as the primary carriers of the Netherlands PRT because they were the teams who always operated outside the compound (Missie evaluatie team, 2004). A MOLT consisted in essence of a MOLT commander and a second in command, which were supported by an interpreter, a medic and a minimum of four soldiers responsible for the safety of the team (Force Protections - FP).<sup>6</sup> The MOLTs were supported by functional specialists from Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC), Human Intelligence (HUMINT) and Psychological Operations (PSY OPS) (Missie evaluatie team, 2004). The PRT commander, MOLT commanders and POLAD were deployment for a period of six months. The other military within the PRT were deployed for a period of four months (Berlijn, 2005).

The MOLTs had hardly any preparation for this mission due to the limited time between the decision of the Dutch government to take command of a PRT, and the actual deployment. There was very limited information about the province Baghlan and there was unfamiliarity with the PRT concept because it was a relatively new concept at that time (Hoof, 2005). In the beginning the MOLTs had to pioneer and search what to do, where to go, what to look at, and who they could approach. They had to build the PRT concept from scratch. The MOLTs were small teams. One informant argued that they could not create safety and stability with a little team. However, some MOLT and PRT members argued that they were successful, although it maybe was a drop in the ocean.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Int. Code: Maanen, van

<sup>7</sup> Int. Code: Gerritjan; Int. Code: Anonymous 01; (Hoof, 2005)

## 2 Research design

### 2.1 Research question

In August 2006 Dutch soldiers took command of the Task Force Uruzgan (TFU) mission in the southern province Uruzgan, Afghanistan (KST 27925, 2007). “When the mission in Uruzgan became a fact, the political and media attention for the mission in Baghlan was completely gone. This was sometimes difficult for the morale within the PRT. Why was this mission not considered to be important?”<sup>8</sup>

After an academic literature and document research, it became clear that the mission in Baghlan, besides the political and media fields, also remained an underexposed topic in the academic field. This was a reason for the Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie (NIMH) ‘the Netherlands Institute for Military History’ to propose an internship to execute this research on the PRT in Baghlan. What happened and what went on during the PRT mission in the province Baghlan? This study will therefore contribute to a better understanding of what happened during the mission in Baghlan. One of the interviewed former MOLT commanders said: “Hopefully this knowledge will contribute to improvements for future missions.”<sup>9</sup>

In accordance with the NIMH, this study is focused on the MOLTs due to time limits. The MOLTs were seen as the primary carriers of the Netherlands PRT mission because they were the ones who operated outside the compound (Missie evaluatie team, 2004). They were the eyes and ears of the Netherlands PRT.<sup>10</sup> Therefore the MOLTs will be the important focus of this study.

This study will not only describe how the MOLTs operated during the PRT in Baghlan, but the MOLTs also had to deal with features in the larger context that had influence on their operational actions. This study will therefore place the operational actions of the MOLTs within a larger context of opportunity structures. In chapter three, the analytic frame will identify the concept opportunity structure more in detail. Examining these contextual opportunity structures can help explain how specific contextual features affected the operational actions of the MOLTs. In order to gain more insight in how the context in which the MOLTs operated affected the operational actions of the MOLTs, the main research question is formed accordingly: *How did the contextual opportunity structures that each rotation*

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<sup>8</sup> Int. Code: Eysinga, van

<sup>9</sup> Int. Code: Eysinga, van

<sup>10</sup> Int. Code: Scherpenzeel, van.

*found itself operating in comparatively affect the operational actions of the Netherlands MOLT teams during the Netherlands PRT in the North-Afghan province Baghlan from 2004 till 2006?*

The evaluative analysis will be a comparison of different periods of the whole PRT mission in Baghlan. The mission in Baghlan took place from September 2004 till October 2006. Two years as one period is too large to evaluate at once. In these two years many changes and developments took place within the context and many features influenced the operational actions of the MOLTs. To gain more insight in important changes, developments and the most important key features, this study will compare different periods of time.

The two-year mission period is divided in four time periods according the rotation of the MOLT commanders which is every six months. The first period can be identified as the period that ran from September 2004 till March 2005, the second period ran from March 2005 till September 2005, the third period ran from September 2005 till March 2006, and the fourth period ran from March 2006 till October 2006. Each period has one or two weeks overlap because of the handover/takeover time. This study will evaluate and analyze each period and compare them in the final conclusion in order to answer the question how the context 'comparatively affected' the operational actions.

Every core chapter of this thesis, that represents one period, has the same structure, which makes it easier to compare the different periods at the end. Each core chapter or period answers the following question: *How did the contextual opportunity structures, in which (first, second, third, or fourth) rotation MOLT found itself operating in, affected the operational actions of the Netherlands MOLT teams during the (First, second, third, fourth period) of the Netherlands PRT in the North-Afghan province Baghlan?* To answer this question for each chapter or period, each chapter will answer some sub-questions. What are the most important features of the opportunity structure in which the MOLTs operated? To which process are the MOLTs supposed to contribute? What are the (re)actions of the MOLTs to these features of the opportunity structure? Why did this 'affect' (hindered or facilitated) took place in terms of mechanisms?

The chapters will start with identifying the context or opportunity structure in which the MOLTs operated with the most important features of this opportunity structure. Then the (re)actions of the MOLTs are described. Did the features hinder or facilitate the actions in order to contribute to a process? Finally the chapters will identify the mechanisms that explain why there was an 'affect' or why features hindered or facilitated the operational actions of the MOLTs. Every core chapter will end with a chapter conclusion. The final conclusion of this thesis brings all periods together and answers the above mentioned main

research question. Before the empirical chapters start, this research will be placed in an analytic frame of opportunity structures and mechanisms. The next chapter helps to understand the most important concepts like opportunity structure, mechanisms and processes. First this chapter will highlight the used methods and data collection techniques.

## 2.2 Data collection

After a long period of research preparation this research is finally conducted during a three-month internship at the Netherlands Institute for Military History (NIMH), which is a specialized knowledge and research department of the Dutch Ministry of Defense. Dutch military history is the field of expertise of the NIMH. The NIMH provided useful literature, reports, and other documents. Next to that the NIMH provided contact information of important informants for this research.

I started my research with a document research. I read many available articles, documents and reports of for example NATO, ISAF, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRT, and other important evaluation reports of the PRT mission in Baghlan. These documents and reports helped me gain more insight in the PRT and MOLT missions. I picked the information that seemed most relevant to me, such as important events, incidents, goals, tasks, plans of action, organizational aspects, operational aspects and other MOLT related information.

Based on all this information, I developed my first interview questionnaire. It was impossible to interview all MOLT members who operated in Baghlan, therefore I chose to contact some of the former MOLT commanders and deputy commanders for interviews. I made sure that I contacted and interviewed MOLT members from all four periods described in this thesis, so I gained an overview of the different periods. This research is a qualitative research. This study is not focused on numbers or statistical formulae, but this research is mainly based on the narratives, experiences and analyses of mainly the MOLT members who operated during the PRT in Baghlan.

The interviews were in-depth and semi-structured. The choice for semi-structured interviews was to limit the interviews as much as possible to the structured themes in the questionnaire. At the same time I wanted to have room for additional questions to take a closer look at the given answers. The data of this thesis is based on seventeen interviews. The interviews gave me more detailed information about operational actions and important events and features which I could not find in the available documents. The interviews could

also clarify some information out of the document research more in detail. Twelve interviews with MOLT commanders and deputy commanders were conducted, which could give me detailed information about the operational actions and influencing factors. The other five interviews were with S5 (planning and future operations), S3 (Operations), CIMIC, and a PRT commander. These informants, who cooperated with the MOLTs, could give me information about the MOLTs and important events and decisions seen from another perspective. This gave me a broader view of the context in which the MOLTs operated.

For the interviews with the MOLT commanders and deputy I had the same questionnaire. For the interviews with the other PRT members I made a specific and more suitable questionnaire. When I recognized that I received the same information over and over again or when I recognized that some questions did not work well, I skipped some questions, added some other questions or asked questions in another way. This was possible because I analyzed the information out of the interviews directly after the interviews so that I had constantly insight in the received information.

I was aware of the fact that as a qualitative researcher I have a subjective stance. Being objective is almost impossible because as a researcher I also made choices in what to write down and what is most important. In this study I tried to identify the most important features of the opportunity structure in which the MOLTs operated. The 'most important features' written down in this thesis are based on the information out of the document research and out of the interviews with my informants. Given the word limit of this thesis, I could not mention all features that 'affected'. I compared the interviews with the information out of the documents and based my choice on that.

### 3 Analytic Frames

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the most important concepts that underlie this study. Although this study seems a very practical description and evaluation of how the operational actions of the MOLTs were affected by the context in which the MOLTs operated during the PRT mission in Baghlan, this study can be placed in an analytic framework of opportunity structures. Identifying the opportunity structures can help explain how the operational actions of the MOLTs were affected. This explanation will be done in reference to 'mechanisms' and 'processes'. This chapter will identify the concepts of 'mechanism' and 'process'. First the concept of 'opportunity structure' will be identified. Due to the opportunity structures, the operational actions of the MOLTs were hindered or facilitated. What do we exactly mean with the concept opportunity structure?

#### 3.1 Opportunity structures

'Opportunity structure' is a well-established concept in the studies of social movements and contentious politics. The use of the concept 'opportunity structure' in this study creates a deeper understanding of the context and the operational actions of the MOLTs. The movements or social group in this case are the MOLTs, later MTs, which operated in Baghlan during the PRT.

In this study, 'opportunity structure' will be defined as the larger environment of political, social, cultural, economic, discursive opportunities that hinder or facilitate collective actions. (Koopmans 1999; Giugni 2009; Tilly and Tarrow 2006) In other words, you can argue that 'opportunity structure' is the context in which collective actions are hindered or facilitated. Opportunities refer to those aspects or features, of the larger structural context, that hinder or facilitate the operational actions. In this study we search for the most important features of the context (opportunity structure) that hindered or facilitated the operational actions of the MOLTs. The relevant features of the context in which the MOLTs operated are identified throughout the core chapters.

According Koopmans (1999: 96) features of the larger environment of opportunities are not necessarily political as traditional scholars like Tilly and Tarrow (2006) stated, but can almost be anything. You can think of characteristics of political systems, behavior of allies, adversaries, and the public, but also societal moods, economic structures and developments, cultural myths and narratives, and more. (Koopmans 1999: 96) However, Koopmans (1999:

96 -97) argued, just like other scholar in the social movement studies and contentious politics, that all features can affect actions, as long as it is outside the movement.

The features of a larger opportunity structure can appear at different levels such as local, regional, national or international level. (Tilly 2006: 176) In other words, Giugni (2011: 281) speaks of multilayered opportunity structures. He argues that the context of mobilizing, in this case the context in which the MOLTs operated, is not only a local or national one, but transcends the national borders. In other words this means that the operational actions of the MOLTs can be hindered or facilitated by opportunities that can appear at different levels. On the other hand, not all levels necessary provide the same kind of opportunities that hinder or facilitate actions, but exert a specific influence on actors within the context. (Giugni 2011: 281)

The core chapters of this study will describe the most important features of the context or opportunity structure in which the MOLTs operated and changed to it. The chapters will also describe the operational actions of the MOLTs to this larger context. However this study will be brought to a higher level of analysis and is not only about describing a structural context and operational actions. The main research question implies that there is an 'affect' between the context and the operational actions, in other words there is an 'influence'. In order to understand the 'affect' or why something affected or influenced, we need to move away from only describing the structural context and operational actions to it. To translate opportunities into actions and understand how and why opportunities affected actions, this study will be brought to a higher level of explanatory analysis. To do this, this study involves the concepts of 'mechanisms' and 'processes' which will help explain how the operational context influenced operational actions. What do we mean by mechanisms and processes?

### 3.1.1 Mechanisms and processes

In order to bridge the gap between the abstract opportunity structure and the actual actions, we will move away from only the search for features and conditions and focus instead on mechanisms and processes. Instead of only describing features or conditions and the (re)action to it, we will use a more dynamic perspective focusing on causal mechanisms which will explain how and why the larger context affected or influenced operational actions. It will bring the concept of opportunity structure closer to the people for whose actions it is supposed to account, in this case the MOLTs (Giugni 2011: 281).

Charles Tilly (2007: 215) describes 'mechanisms' as "events... that contribute to significant shifts in the location, character, or consequences of contention." Charles Tilly (2007) speaks of mechanisms as 'contributing to significant shifts', or in other words mechanisms contribute to significant changes or (trans)formations. More specific, Charles Tilly (2006: 29) describes mechanisms as "...events that change relations among specified sets of elements..." This study will therefore identify events that influenced or changed (hindered or facilitated) the relation between the structural context and the operational actions of the MOLTs.

Mechanisms can compound into processes, or in other words a process is a combination of mechanisms. "By processes, we mean regular combinations and sequences of mechanisms that produce similar (generally more complex and contingent) transformations of those elements." (Tilly 2006: 29) The larger context or opportunity structure in which the MOLTs operated can show processes caused by combinations of mechanisms.

In order to answer the main research question how opportunity structures affected the operational actions of the MOLTs, the core chapters will start identifying the most important features of the opportunity structures and the (re)actions of the MOLTs to it related to their operational actions. The MOLTs take actions in order to contribute or achieve specific goals. These processes of achieving specific goals can be hindered or facilitated because of the (changing) relationship between the features of the opportunity structure and the operational actions of the MOLTs. Mechanisms will be identified to explain how it is possible that the features of opportunity structures affect (hinder or facilitate) the operational actions of the MOLTs that contributed to a process of for example achieving specific goals.

This study will show how the opportunity structure affected the operational actions. However it is good to mention and to keep in mind that it is not always only the structure that affects actions. Giugni (2011: 281) for example argues that the structural context and individual- or collective actions should not be considered as necessarily opposed to each other, in fact it is more complex. Opportunities are not necessarily structural, but can also be the cause and a consequence of individual- or collective actions. This means that also the operational actions of the MOLTs can affect or change the opportunity structure. Giddens (1979) argues that the interaction between structure and agency is important in describing and analyzing the complete picture of the context.

Although the awareness of the agency of individuals, this thesis focuses on the structure affecting the operational actions. The limited research time and word limit of this thesis made it difficult to take both aspects into account. However, individual actions of the

MOLTs will be mentioned throughout the core chapters, but the 'affect' will not be analyzed in terms of mechanisms.

## 4 Period 1 Deployment

*“We had to do something called PRT. In the preparation for the mission, the PRT concept was explained but never executed it in practice before. You could say that nobody within the mission had a clear view on what it entailed. We had some ideas what to do, but in the beginning we operated mainly reactive. We went outside the compound and identified the essentials. Along the way, we gained more experience and based on that, we further developed the PRT concept and other PRTs continued on this.”<sup>11</sup>*

The first period of the PRT period can be described as the deployment period in which there was unfamiliarity with PRT concept and the concept had to be developed. This chapter will evaluate how the contextual opportunity structures, in which the first rotation MOLT commanders found itself, affect the operational actions of the MOLTs in the first period of the PRT mission in Baghlan. This first period ran from September 2004 till March 2005.

### 4.1 The context

From October 1, 2004, the first Dutch military were operational in the capital of province Baghlan, Pol-e-Khomri (PeK) (Missie evaluatie team, 2004). The main goal of the PRT, formed by the Dutch government, was to assist and facilitate the Afghan central government in promoting stability and safety, and to enable the Afghan central government to extend its authority and influence on a country-wide basis. It was believed that by increasing the safety and stable situation in the province Baghlan, the climate for reconstruction could be improved. This process of creating a safe and stable situation enables organizations to develop reconstruction activities (KST 27925, 2004: 8).

For the process towards a safe and stable environment, “we had to improve the living standards of the local population, identify the deficiencies of the local population, and identify the local situation and what is going on in the environment.”<sup>12</sup> A feature of this period was the presidential elections. With the presidential elections approaching, the accent and tasks changed to the monitoring of the presidential elections on 9 October 2004. During the elections, the MOLTs gave mainly logistic support, and they had to take care of an orderly conduct of the elections, and they had to overcome manipulations. They had to take

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care of a safe and stable conduct of the elections (Casteleijn, 2005). After the elections, the MOLT continued their tasks of mapping the province and building contact networks.<sup>13</sup>

Although these formulated goals and tasks, it was not clear what this in daily practice meant for the MOLTs who operated in the field outside the compound. Another feature of the opportunity structure of this period is that there was no clear plan of actions formed for the MOLTs so that they could operate proactive in order to achieve these goals. When the PRT mission started the actual deployment, the military were hardly prepared due to the limited time between the decision of the Dutch government to take command of a PRT, and the actual deployment. Next to the limited preparation time, there was also very limited information about the province Baghlan and there was unfamiliarity with the PRT concept because it was a relatively new concept at that time. There was little knowledge about establishing and running a PRT (Hoof, 2005).

Koopmans (1999: 96-97) argued that many features can affect actions, as long as the features appeared outside the movement, in this case outside the MOLTs or PRT organization. This study will contribute to this by showing that features of the opportunity structure also appeared inside the movement (PRT/MOLT organization), and affected actions of the MOLTs. Having no clear plan of action is an internal feature of this context.

The plan of actions was not very concrete and clear, however an advantage for the MOLTs was that they had no major threats or hinder from the external context. The teams operated in a so called 'permissive environment'. This permissive environment was another feature of the opportunity structure in which the MOLTs operated and can be described as an environment which is no longer in state of war and in which the local people tolerate the MOLTs. This status of permissive environment was favorable for the MOLTs who always operate outside the compound. The MOLTs could operate outside the compound easily because there were no major threats. This made it easier for the MOLTs to execute their tasks outside the compound (Hoof, 2005). The attitude of the local population towards the MOLTs could be described as follows: "In the beginning people kept distance, soon though they became curious (in couple of days), after that they became more interested. They were hospitable and friendly. Criminals were also friendly. They were not stupid. They could better be on friendly terms with the MOLTs instead of rubbing against them the wrong way. Otherwise the MOLTs would keep a closer look on them."<sup>14</sup>

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Initially, there were no major security threats against the MOLTs. Nevertheless, aggressive elements, non-stable and rapidly changing situations had to be taken into account. Main risks for the MOLTs were mines and/or IEDs, and furthermore the teams acted themselves as a target of opportunity. The MOLTs were described as a target of opportunity because they were the ones who moved and operated outside the compound. Therefore the MOLTs had more risk to become the target of mainly mines and IEDs (Hoof, 2005). Although the external environment did not form major threats for the MOLTs, it were more the internal features that hindered the operational actions of the teams.

In the whole PRT mission, the MOLTs had to operate according a comprehensive approach. Therefore they had to integrate and cooperate with functional specialists like Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) and Psychological Operations (PSY OPS) because they had to operate according a comprehensive approach.<sup>15</sup> This comprehensive approach meant that multiple departments, in this case military and civil departments, should work closely together in order to achieve the same end goals (Matthijssen 2014: 228). The functional specialists arrived in the deployment area after two months. The MOLTs were therefore forced to integrate CIMIC in the mission. This resulted in difficulties in the beginning. There were some frustrations. Not only were military not used to cooperate with civil components, military also had their own priorities and CIMIC had their own priorities. Next to this, the logistic footprint of the MOLTs had to become bigger with the integration of functional specialists. There was need for more vehicles, Force Protection (FP), and interpreters. This resulted in shortages of personnel and equipment.<sup>16</sup>

Not only had the integration of functional specialists resulted in shortages of personnel and equipment. The logistic support from and coordination with the Netherlands was also very poor. Many means and resources had not yet arrived. This resulted in shortages of personnel, means and resources. The PRT and also the MOLTs had to operate with the means and resources they did receive (Keij, 2005). However it is argued that the equipment for the MOLTs was not appropriate. The MOLTs did not have the right weapons

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<sup>15</sup> In the NATO CIMIC doctrine (2003) CIMIC is defined as: "The co-ordination and co-operation, in support of the mission, between the NATO Commander and civil actors, including national population and local authorities, as well as international, national and non-governmental organizations and agencies. Source: NATO (2003) AJP-9 NATO CIMIC doctrine. Available at: <http://www.nato.int/ims/docu/ajp-9.pdf> (21-07-14, 7:27)

PSYOPS or Psychological Operations is described as: "Planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals. The purpose of psychological operations is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behavior favorable to the originator's objectives. Source: U.S. Department of Defense. Available at:

[http://www.military.com/ContentFiles/techtv\\_update\\_PSYOPS.htm](http://www.military.com/ContentFiles/techtv_update_PSYOPS.htm) (21-07-14, 7:29)

<sup>16</sup> Int. Code: Heesbeen

and ammunition, they did not have the right equipment for in the cars during the mission and they did not have good quality vehicles (Hoof, 2005).

Specifically for the PRT mission, Toyota Prado vehicles were delivered. The reason for choosing these four wheel drive (4wd) vehicles was that these vehicles looked less aggressive. The Prado's looked more like civilian vehicles. With a less aggressive looking car, it should be easier to make contact with the local population. Soon it became clear that the cars were perfect for an asphalted road, but not suitable for the harsh Afghan landscape. The rough Afghan landscape created difficult circumstances for the vehicles and some areas were not even accessible. This resulted in broken cars, apart from that there were not enough spare tires. A shortage of vehicles arose and hindered the number of patrols.<sup>17</sup> These shortages of sufficient and the right equipment and personnel was also a feature of the opportunity structure in which the MOLTs operated in this first period.

A few features of the context or opportunity structure of this first period in which the MOLTs operated were identified above. These features hindered or facilitated the operational actions of the MOLTs. How did the MOLTs (re)act to these features of the context? This will be analyzed in the next section of this chapter. The next section will also analyze why these features 'affected' operational actions.

## 4.2 Operational (re)actions

The MOLTs were seen as the eyes and ears of the PRT because they were the ones who moved and operated outside the compound.<sup>18</sup> The successes of the whole PRT mission depended therefore almost entirely on the MOLTs at that time. The MOLTs had the best knowledge of the local political, administrative and economic situation. The operational actions of the MOLTs changed during this period, but in general it comes down on reactive operational actions. The actions of the MOLTs were mainly focused on exploring the area and routes; mapping the province on different elements and getting in contact with local authorities, police and local population (Hoof, 2005).

During the presidential elections, the tasks changed to monitoring of the elections and taking care of an orderly, safe and stable conduct of the elections. Monitoring the elections facilitated the actions of the MOLTs in contributing to the process of creating a safe and stable environment. "The elections gave us the opportunity to get more insight in where

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people lived and where we could reach the major part of the population. We visited all polling stations, so that we could reach the major part of the population. Most people lived at walking distance from the polling stations. Because of all this the elections were good for building contact networks, receiving insight in demographics and showing our visibility.”<sup>19</sup>

How was it possible that the presidential elections facilitated actions, like showing visibility and building contact networks, which contributed to the process of creating a safe and stable environment? A mechanism for this can be the monitoring of the elections which resulted in more insight in the local population. The MOLTs had the opportunity to get in contact and reach the major part of the population, and at the same time they got more insight in the demographic structures of the province. The presidential elections gave the MOLTs the opportunity to visit all polling stations. At the polling stations the MOLTs could show their visibility and they could talk to the people who visited the polling stations and therefore they could build their contact networks. Most people lived at walking distance from the polling places and because of that the MOLTs received more insight in the demographic structures of the province. They had more insight in where they could visit and reach the major part of the population in the province Baghlan.

After the elections, the MOLT continued their tasks of mapping the province and building contact networks. During conversations, the MOLTs tried to get more insight in the local power relations, in sensitivities and concerns of the local population, and they tried to bring more clarity about ISAF and increase name recognition for ISAF.<sup>20</sup> Although theoretical the mission was called a reconstruction mission, reconstruction was not really a focus yet in this period. The MOLTs first needed to look around and inventory the local situation before they could focus on reconstruction. In this way, the MOLTs could identify opportunities for reconstruction projects. “You can come and interrupt the people by telling them that we are going to build a school, but maybe they do not need a school. Therefore it is important for the MOLTs to first look around and take stock of opportunities.”<sup>21</sup> The MOLTs had initially solely a Hearts and Minds (H&M) role. In this way they hoped to gain confidence of the population by shaking hands and being within the local communities. The MOLTs tried to create circumstances for the Afghan people in which they could help themselves (Hoof, 2005).

A concrete or clear plan of action to execute these tasks missed. The MOLTs had no clear plan of action of how to act because the limited preparation time and unfamiliarity with

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<sup>19</sup> Int. Code: Heesbeen

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the PRT concept and the Baghlan province. LtCol van Keulen argued that “We had to do something called PRT. In the preparation for the mission, the PRT concept was explained but never executed it in practice before. You could say that nobody within the mission had a clear view on what it entailed. We had some ideas what to do, but in the beginning we operated mainly reactive. We went outside the compound and identified the essentials...”<sup>22</sup> The MOLTs could not operate proactive according a plan of action in order to contribute to the process of creating a safe and stable environment, but the MOLTs had to pioneer and act on what they found locally. In the beginning of this period, the MOLTs had for instance no idea who they could approach within the province. Most knowledge had therefore necessarily been gained by ‘trial and error’ (Baal, 2004). The PRT commander gave them also all the freedom to do that.

Why did the feature of having no clear plan of action hinder proactive actions of the MOLTs? Mechanisms that explained this connection between these elements were the unfamiliarity with the PRT concept, unfamiliarity with the Baghlan province, and limited preparation time. Without a clear plan of actions, it was difficult for the MOLTs to operate proactive outside the compound in order to achieve the goals towards a safe and stable environment. The MOLTs had no clear view on what a PRT concept entailed, they were unfamiliar with the province, and they also had limited preparation time. Because of this there was little knowledge about how to establish and run a PRT, which made it difficult to come with a clear and concrete plan of action. The operational actions of the MOLTs were therefore mainly reactive.

An advantage for the MOLTs was that they operated within a permissive environment and therefore they could operate outside the compound quite safely. The reason for this is that within this permissive environment there were no major threats against the MOLTs. This mechanism explains why the permissive environment facilitated the reactive operational actions of the MOLTs. The MOLTs could execute their tasks they wanted in order to create a safe and stable environment. Pioneering and ‘going outside and see what comes’, or in other words operating reactive, was possible in this environment.

However, the MOLTs as target of opportunity had to take into account some risks when they went outside the compound. The MOLTs were a target of opportunity because they operated in the field. Most mines and IEDs were therefore directed against the MOLTs. Because of this, the MOLTs took some precautions. In the first place they prevented that the mission was known in advance among the population. The MOLTs also introduced safety

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related procedures like only missions in daylight, security during overnights in the districts, practicing contact drills, defensive driving and the use of familiar roads (Hoof, 2005). At the end of this first period, “we could say that there were no major threats and no major incidents.”<sup>23</sup>

In this first period, the MOLTs found more hinder from internal features. Earlier the feature of missing a concrete plan of action was already mentioned. Another feature of the opportunity structure is the shortages of personnel, resources and equipment. These shortages hindered the patrols of the MOLTs and therefore also hindered the achievement of goals. As told earlier, the MOLTs had to operate according a comprehensive approach and therefore they had to integrate functional specialists like CIMIC and PSY OPS in their mission. The integration of CIMIC and PSY OPS changed the way of operating for the MOLTs. There was need for multi-day missions to let everybody do their tasks. Bringing extra members of CIMIC and PSY OPS resulted in need of more FP, more vehicles, and more interpreters. The logistic footprint of the MOLTs became therefore bigger.<sup>24</sup> Because of the de-escalating tasks (a PRT mission is not a fighting mission) the numbers of FP-personnel was as such that it was not always possible to make missions bigger. Normally, only four FP-personnel joined a mission, with the integration of functional specialists more FP was needed. In this first period, CIMIC or PSY OPS members did not join the MOLTs very often on the trips through the province because of the shortages and unfamiliarity how to work within the district and who was to contact.<sup>25</sup>

The poor logistic supply from the Netherlands also resulted in shortages of personnel and resources. Next to that, the MOLTs did not always receive the right weapons, uniforms and other equipment and resources, but they had no other choice than operating with the means and resources they did receive. The MOLTs were the eyes and ears of the PRT because they were the ones who went outside the compound and therefore they were also seen as the heart of the PRT. If there was one box of plasters, it was for the MOLTs. However, the logistic supply was a limited factor for the operational actions of the MOLTs (Keij, 2005). “If they do not give us the right and enough means, we can also not establish the defined goals.”<sup>26</sup> The shortage of vehicles and often broken vehicles limited for example the number of patrols of the MOLTs.

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<sup>23</sup> Int. Code: Keulen, van

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Next to this shortage of vehicles, there were internally also shortages of interpreters, connection means, financial means and time.<sup>27</sup> There was almost no contact with the Netherlands because of the bad connection means. On the other side if the PRT reached the Netherlands, there was also no coordination from the Netherlands because they had no idea what should be done. Because of the bad connection and cooperation with the Netherlands, there was no logistic supply to the shortages.

The MOLTs tried to resolve most problems within the local context. Because of the shortage of vehicles, the MOLTs introduced foot patrols or social patrols. An advantage of these foot patrols was that the MOLT members could establish more contacts with the local environment.<sup>28</sup> The foot patrols were an opportunity for the MOLTs to stay in contact with the local population and show their visibility. There was also a shortage of interpreters. The number of patrols depends on the number of interpreters.<sup>29</sup> "When we had a shortage, local interpreters were picked up from the street. This did not mean that the problems were solved. Some other problems arose... We had good and bad interpreters. The problems with the interpreters were that you had no idea if the translation was right, whether the interpreter had enough knowledge of PRT goals, and the fact that some interpreters followed their own plans... These problems with the interpreters remained during our whole period, but we tried to manage the shortage of interpreters as well as possible... The Dutch government did not resolve the shortages of means, resources and equipment."<sup>30</sup>

These shortages of personnel, resources and equipment were a feature of the opportunity structure and hindered the operational actions of the MOLTs. The functional specialists could not always join the MOLTs during a mission because of the shortages of FP for example. The number of patrols decreased because the number of patrols often depended on the available personnel or equipment. Because the MOLTs did not have the right and enough personnel and equipment, it was difficult to establish the defined goals and contribute to the process of creating a safe and stable environment. How is it possible that the shortages hindered the operation actions of the MOLTs? The mechanisms for this seemed to be the poor logistic supply from the Netherlands, lack of coordination with Netherlands, and the integration of functional specialist which resulted in a larger logistic footprint.

The integration of functional specialists resulted in a larger logistic footprint and need for more personnel, equipment, and resources. However, the numbers of for example FP

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<sup>27</sup> Int. Code: Heesbeen

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members were as such that it was not always possible to make the teams bigger. Next to that the poor logistic supply from the Netherlands and the lack of coordination with the Netherlands, resulted in almost no logistic supply to the shortages. Although the PRT and the MOLTs asked for more personnel and better vehicles, the asked equipment and personnel could not always be delivered.

### 4.3 Conclusion

This study shows that not only the external features of the opportunity structure affected the operational actions of the MOLTs, but also features that appeared inside the PRT or MOLT organization affected the operational actions of the MOLTs. In short, the goal of the PRT mission is to create a safe and stable environment. The MOLTs tried to contribute to this process of creating a safe and stable environment. Features of the opportunity structure hindered or facilitated the operational actions of the MOLTs and therefore can also hinder or facilitate the contribution to this process.

The presidential elections and the permissive environment were both external features of the opportunity structure that facilitated the operational actions of the MOLTs in showing their visibility and building contact networks. The mechanism that explains this 'facilitation' is the monitoring of the presidential elections. Therefore the MOLTs received more insight in the local population and demographic structures. Because of the permissive environment there were no major threats against the MOLTs and therefore the MOLTs could easily operate outside the compound and was it possible to operate reactive.

It were mainly the internal features of the opportunity structure that hindered the operational actions of the MOLTs. There was a lack of a concrete or clear plan of action and there were shortages of personnel, resources and equipment. The lack of a clear plan of action hindered the MOLTs in operating proactive in order to achieve goals. The mechanisms that explained this 'hinder' were the unfamiliarity with the PRT concept, unfamiliarity with the Baghlan province, and the limited preparation time. Shortages of personnel, resources, and equipment resulted in a decrease of the number of patrols, and the functional specialist could not always join the MOLTs. This 'hinder' of the operational actions can be explained with the mechanisms of poor logistic supply from the Netherlands, lack of coordination with the Netherlands, and the integration of functional specialists which resulted in a larger logistic footprint.

## 5 Period 2 The execution of the mission I

*“In some area’s we could not even show our visibility because we could not reach these area’s with those vehicles. The cars were a big obstruction.”<sup>31</sup>*

Also in this period some features of the opportunity structure that affected the operational actions of the MOLTs can be identified. The focus of this chapter is on the second period which is the period that ran from March 2005 till September 2005. The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate how the contextual opportunity structures, in which the second rotation MOLT commanders found itself, affect the operational actions of the MOLTs in the second period of the PRT mission in Baghlan.

### 5.1 The context

In March 2005 a new group of commanders took over the command of the MOLTs. In the hand-over-take-over period of two weeks, the predecessors shared their experiences and information. This information was largely about daily activities and practical information like how to report. “Our predecessors developed plans and procedures from scratch to bring structure in the mission. They developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in which they mapped the province on twelve different aspects like religion, safety, power structures, political organization and more. They had to pioneer because there were no clear guidelines and tasks to achieve the goals. Our task was to build on and expand this structure of our predecessors.”<sup>32</sup> “The predecessors made the fundament of how to work in this mission. They mapped many elements in the province. “We found our bed made for us.”<sup>33</sup>

The first period of the PRT mission was based on building the compound, building contact networks, and mapping the province. “...We needed to implement this collected information and build further on this. Also ISAF, located in Kabul, gave more structure at this time. Now we had more objectives to work on. We had to focus on issues in the full width. We had to look at the judicial device and judicial power, we had to support local authorities, we had to collect information in order to contribute to a safe environment for civilians and authorities, we had to train and advise the Afghan National Army (ANA), we had to do some reconstruction work, and we had to provide disaster and emergency aid.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Int. Code: Baksteen

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All these tasks contributed to the overall goal or process towards a safe and stable environment in the province Baghlan.

Although there was a fundament laid by the predecessors and there were more objectives to work on, there was still no concrete plan of action for the MOLTs. The reason for this, mentioned in this period, was that there was no backward planning. How to do things and how to acts was not always clear. “We did not have clear and set goals, and what we needed to do to reach the goal if the goal was clear. Therefore we were more or less forced to operate reactive, instead of operating proactive and reaching our goals. We picked up the work of our predecessors were they left off; all of us not being clear what was expected from the MOLTs.”<sup>35</sup> Just as in the first period, not having a plan of action was a feature of the opportunity structure in which the MOLTs operated. Although the MOLTs built further on the work of their predecessors, the focus of the mission changed in some ways.

A change from the first period is that the emphasis of this period was more placed on the DDR (Demobilization, Disarmament, and Reintegration) program, later DIAG (Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups) program. The DDR program was not or incomplete finished in Afghanistan. Many armed groups still needed to be disarmed. Therefore the DIAG program was established with Afghanistan itself as Lead Nation. The MOLTs supported the Afghan government in the search for weapons and ammunitions to finally create a safer and more stable environment, but the MOLTs did not have enough mandates to actually do something in removing or destroying weapons and ammunition (Rikken, 2005: 7). The MOLTs executed other tasks that contributed to this process. The MOLTs had contact with the local warlords, or power brokers, Khalil, Mustafa, Khan, Amir Gul and Jalal. These local warlords had large weapon arsenals. The PRT promoted the DIAG program and in conversations the MOLTs tried to encourage the warlords to hand in their weapons and ammunition (Casteleijn, 2005).

Since October 2004 the MOLTs had conversations with the warlord Jalal in order to build the interrelationship and strengthen the mutual trust. At the end of April 2005 there was an incident with large explosions in the village where Jalal lived. Many people died, including relatives of Jalal, when ammunition exploded in his village and houses (Berlijn 2005). The MOLTs achieved a huge success when warlord Jalal decided to hand in his weapon arsenal after this explosion.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Int. Code: Maanen, van

<sup>36</sup> Int. Code: Eijk, van

Reconstruction and Hearts and Minds projects became also an important focus within this second period. The MOLTs gave the local population for example things like stuffed toys, paper, pencils, hundreds of foot- and volleyballs obtained from the Johan Cruyff foundation, and ISAF newspapers.<sup>37</sup> The MOLTs gave more attention to reconstruction and H&M projects, because they believed that by doing little projects, they could take care of their own safety. One of the informants explained that “you will get more support from the local population when you are friendly and try to win their hearts and minds, rather than using a more robust way of operating. This was noticeable because it seemed the local population appreciated the presence of the MOLTs. The local population was friendly and more willing to warn us for threats.”<sup>38</sup>

Although the PRT had this goal of rebuilding and reconstructing the Baghlan province, only little was done to actually reconstruct the province. The PRT including the MOLTs started only little projects mainly focused on winning the Hearts and Minds of the local population via so-called “Quick Wins”. The PRT was poorly supported by the Dutch government. Although the PRT was tasked of reconstruct the Baghlan province it was severely lacking financial means to do so. The Dutch government formed an obstruction for reconstruction projects because they did not give enough financial means.<sup>39</sup> “The Dutch government tried to organize what the MOLTs had to do in the province Baghlan. They did not look at the local context and how the situation was in the field. If the Dutch government wants us to place 150 wells, they also need to give us the money for it.”<sup>40</sup> The lack of enough financial means from the Dutch government was one of the shortages the MOLTs experienced this period.

This second period was also characterized by shortages of personnel and resources that hindered the operational actions of the MOLTs. These shortages had to deal with a change in the organizational concept. The organizational concepts in the first period were mainly focused on the three MOLTs. In the second period not only the MOLT, but also more specific missions were deployed like CIMIC and PSY OPS. In the first period the MOLTs were already searching how to integrate CIMIC in the mission, but because of shortages of for example vehicles, interpreters and FP, and unfamiliarity with CIMIC elements, it was difficult to add CIMIC specialists to the mission. The MOLTs in the first period were more focused on collecting information, ‘looking around’, and mapping the province. Large

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<sup>37</sup> Int. Code: Dankers

<sup>38</sup> Int. Code: Baksteen

<sup>39</sup> Int. Code: Maanen, van

<sup>40</sup> Int. Code: Baksteen

amounts of information were collected and the MOLTs did analysis of the different districts in the province. In this second period much of this information was collected, and therefore it was time to increase the effectiveness of the mission by executing the mission according a comprehensive approach. The collected information out of the first period needed was used to execute missions (Rikken, 2005: 7).

In this second period, the emphasis was placed on H&M and small reconstruction projects. It was therefore required to expand the mission of the MOLTs with additional capabilities. Functional specialists, CIMIC specialists and PSYOPS teams were added to the MOLTs in order to support the MOLT missions. CIMIC members had more knowledge of reconstruction projects, and the MOLTs had knowledge of the local situation. Adapted to the mission, in other words dependent on the tasks that needed to be executed, the MOLTs added for example CIMIC specialists in their teams when they went outside the compound.<sup>41</sup>

In general the cooperation between CIMIC and the MOLTs went well, but in some cases it led also in this period to frustrations. "Everybody had his or her own ideas about for example possible projects. Functional specialists who were specialized in one subject had different views. The first specialist had an idea that was put aside by his successor while his idea was better. This led to frustrations, with the MOLTs and the local population; every time we visited an area the MOLTs and the local population were confronted with "new" ideas, there was no clear choice and continuity. Next to that the functional specialists needed to see a situation with their own eyes, but nine out of ten times the MOLTs had all necessary information available and we were able to do the specialist work half of the time."<sup>42</sup>

Next to that, the MOLTs became also frustrated because in their opinion some CIMIC members did not have understanding of the local situation. This resulted in projects that did not work well. CIMIC members for example arranged newspapers and handed them out, but almost nobody could read. Another example is that CIMIC members handed out Frisbees for the children to play with, but people used the Frisbees as a plate for food. The MOLTs were frustrated that the CIMIC specialists did not use the cultural knowledge gained by the MOLTs and followed their own plans.<sup>43</sup>

The frustrations of the MOLTs regard to the cooperation with functional specialists like CIMIC did not directly affected the operational actions of the MOLTs. The deployment of functional specialist like CIMIC affected the operational actions of the MOLTs for another reason. With the addition of CIMIC members, the MOLTs became bigger and therefore also

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<sup>41</sup> Int. Code: Maanen, van

<sup>42</sup> Int. Code: Maanen, van

<sup>43</sup> Int. Code: Anonymous 02

their logistic footprint because they had to bring more personnel, equipment and vehicles.<sup>44</sup> The problem was that the deployment of CIMIC and other functional specialists led also in this second period to shortages of not only financial means, but also equipment, resources, and personnel. The functional specialists also needed interpreters, FP and vehicles, and therefore shortage of these personnel and resources arose. Just like the financial means, the Dutch government did not give enough equipment and resources. This internal feature of the context had a negative impact on the number of patrols of the MOLTs.<sup>45</sup>

It seemed that also in this period it were mainly the internal features of the opportunity structure that hindered the operational actions of the MOLTs, and external features that formed an advantage for the MOLTs. The MOLTs operated in a permissive environment in which there was no sense of threat or insecurity. This feature of the context facilitated the operational actions of the MOLTs. Major van Eijk for example explained that: “We had the feeling that we could go outside the compound safely.”<sup>46</sup> Another informant argued: “We were accessible. The local people welcomed us with open arms and they came to us to give information.”<sup>47</sup>

Although the situation was not very exciting, there was definitely danger. The MOLTs had some attacks and incidents in this second period.<sup>48</sup> The main risks for the MOLTs were mines and IEDs, traffic accidents and the MOLT as target of opportunity (Rikken, 2005: 7). On the 26<sup>th</sup> of May the MOLTs had an IED explosion and on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July the MOLTs were involved in a shooting incident. Later, a MOLT convoy was involved in a traffic accident. The incidents had no fatalities for the Dutch military, but some involved military were injured. Most of time there was mainly material damage of vehicles and equipment (Zwieten, 2005). Although these incidents, most MOLT members argued that the threat was low and they could operate outside the compound safely. “Because the threat was low, we had more space to move and take actions in the environment.”<sup>49</sup>

Different external and internal features of the opportunity structure of this second period were mentioned above. These features affected, either hindered or facilitated, the operational actions of the MOLTs. The next section of this chapter will analyze how the MOLT members (re)acted to these features of the operational context, and why these features ‘affected’ operational actions.

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<sup>44</sup> Int. Code: Maanen, van

<sup>45</sup> Int. Code: Eijk, van

<sup>46</sup> Int. Code: Eijk, van

<sup>47</sup> Int. Code: Maanen, van

<sup>48</sup> Int. Code: Baksteen

<sup>49</sup> Int. Code: Baksteen

## 5.2 Operational (re)actions

In order to work according a comprehensive approach and execute missions more effective, the MOLTs had to integrate functional specialists in the missions. The three MOLTs became three Mission Teams (MTs). The MOLTs in the first period were mainly focused on collecting information and mapping the province. The MTs in this second period were focused on the execution of the mission and implementing the information collected in the first period. Depending on the mission or tasks that needed to be executed, specialists like CIMIC were added to the MTs. Table 1 provides an overview of the difference in composition between the MOLT and MT (Rikken, 2005: 7).

Figure 1

Composition MOLT first period	New Composition MT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MOLT Commander</li> <li>- Deputy Commander MOLT</li> <li>- FP (4 men)</li> <li>- Medic</li> <li>- Interpreter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MT Commander</li> <li>- Deputy Commander MT</li> <li>- Depending on mission a mix of Police Liaison officer, PSY OPS, FST(Field Support Team), and CIMIC.</li> <li>- Depending on the size of the mission addition of: FP, Medic, and Interpreter.</li> </ul>

The table shows that the MOLTs became bigger with the addition of specialists. In the beginning, MOLTs were eight till ten persons big. Dependent on the mission that needed to be executed, the MOLTs became bigger with the addition of specialists and extra FP, interpreter, or other elements. The transformation of MOLTs to larger MTs resulted is a change in the organizational concept, but the tasks and objectives did not change.<sup>50</sup>

With the deployment of functional specialists like CIMIC and PSY OPS outside the compound, there was need for more interpreters, FP and vehicles. There was not always enough personnel which resulted for example in shortages of interpreters. These shortages hindered the operational actions of the MTs. The number of patrols was dependent on the number of interpreters.<sup>51</sup> Therefore the amount of patrols of the MTs decreased. The only

<sup>50</sup> Int. Code: Keulen, van

<sup>51</sup> Int. Code: Heesbeen

thing the MTs could do in this situation was being visible. They could drive around or walk around in foot patrols to show their presence in the different districts of the province. If there were no interpreters available for the MTs, they could not be interactive with the local population.<sup>52</sup>

The vehicles formed also a major obstruction for the operational actions of MTs. The logistic footprint of the MT missions increased. Instead of two or three vehicles, the MT drove now with a convoy of five, six or even more vehicles.<sup>53</sup> The MTs needed more vehicles when they went on mission. "...We also had to bring more equipment and material in the vehicles which presented new challenges as result of the poor load capacity of the vehicles...<sup>54</sup> Next to that, the Toyota Prado's were often broken, there were little spare tires and the cars did not have enough load capacity. This also resulted in a decrease of patrols for the MTs.<sup>55</sup>

In the first period the MTs went outside the compound four or five days a week. <sup>56</sup> Later in this second period the MTs were about three days a week outside the compound. "We reached remote areas by bringing extra spare tires. When reaching a critical minimum number of tires (because of flats) the decision was made to return to base. After a modification to make the cars more terrain suitable, the cars were still too heavy, which resulted in problems with the load capacity."<sup>57</sup> The MTs should be self-supporting, but because of the poor load capacity of the vehicles they could not bring everything they needed, no extra water or other equipment. Overloading the vehicles hindered the patrols of the MTs outside the compound. In the rough Afghan terrain the MTs sometimes had to detour or they got stuck faster.<sup>58</sup> "In some area's we could not even show our visibility because we could not reach these area's with those vehicles. The cars formed a big obstruction."<sup>59</sup>

Shortages of equipment and personnel and also the poor quality of vehicles were a feature of the opportunity structure and hindered the operational actions of the MTs because it decreased the number of patrols of the MTs and therefore the MTs were less visible and less interactive with the local population. The shortages made it difficult for the MTs to reach their goals and contribute to the process of creating a safe and stable environment. How was

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<sup>52</sup> Int. Code: Eijk, van

<sup>53</sup> Int. Code: Eijk, van

<sup>54</sup> Int. Code: Maanen, van

<sup>55</sup> Int. Code: Eijk, van

<sup>56</sup> Int. Code: Jansen

<sup>57</sup> Int. Code: Eijk, van

<sup>58</sup> Int. Code: Dankers

<sup>59</sup> Int. Code: Baksteen

it possible that the shortage of equipment and personnel hindered the number of patrols of the MTs? Also in this period the mechanism seemed to be the integration of functional specialists that resulted in a larger logistic footprint and at the same time also the poor logistic supply from the Netherlands. The available equipment and personnel like interpreters, FP and the vehicles had to be divided among the various missions including more members. There was not enough personnel and equipment for all the MTs and specialist who went outside the compound. The number of patrols was dependent on the available equipment and personnel and therefore the number of patrols decreased.

Despite of the shortages, the MT members searched for other possibilities. “Khost wa Firing was one of the districts I could not reach by car. I arranged a German helicopter so that we could go to this district to talk with these people, to inventory the situation, to search for weapons and ammunition, and to show our visibility.”<sup>60</sup> “Showing our visibility was a very important thing we could do. Therefore we tried to go outside the compound as much as possible. When we had not enough vehicles we did foot patrols in the surrounding area.”<sup>61</sup> “We also had a tent in the front of the compound where local people could visit us. There was always one MT present at the compound to help en listen to these local people.”<sup>62</sup>

Next to the shortages of equipment and personnel, there was also a lack of financial means. Although reconstruction was one of the tasks of the MTs, the MTs mainly did H&M projects in this second period. “Why did we not do more to the R, of Reconstruction?”<sup>63</sup> A mentioned reason for this was that the MTs did not have enough financial means for large reconstruction projects. This feature hindered the MTs in doing reconstruction projects. “We often came with a big group and empty hands because we had not enough financial means to actually do something. This is not what we wanted to look like. It could give the local population a wrong impression.”<sup>64</sup> Why did the lack of financial means hinder the execution of reconstruction and H&M projects and activities? The mechanism that explained this is the insufficient financial support from the Dutch government.

The MTs could not execute the projects and activities because of the shortage of financial means and they also did not receive enough financial means from the Dutch government to execute the projects and activities. On the one hand it was decided to make the MOLTs bigger with functional specialists so that they could focus more on doing

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<sup>60</sup> Int. Code: Dankers

<sup>61</sup> Int. Code: Eijk, van

<sup>62</sup> Int. Code: Baksteen

<sup>63</sup> Int. Code: Baksteen

<sup>64</sup> Int. Code: Maanen, van

reconstruction and H&M projects, and on the other hand the Dutch government did not give the financial means to actually execute these projects and activities. This made it difficult for the MTs to actually do some projects and activities which had to contribute to a safer and secure environment. The MT had only little money to do projects. Despite of this, the MTs tried to outsource most projects locally so that they also could stimulate the employment and economic reconstruction.<sup>65</sup>

The shortages formed a major obstruction for the operational actions of the MTs. Another internal feature that affected the operational actions is the lack of a concrete or clear plan of action. As told earlier, the MTs had no concrete plan of action because there was no backward planning. The argument that there was no backward planning can be seen as the mechanism that explains why the lack of a concrete plan of actions affected the operational actions of the MTs. The MTs tried to operate proactive, but without backward planning this is difficult. If you do not plan backward, like this is what we need to achieve and we need to execute these tasks to achieve that specific goal, it is difficult to come with a concrete plan.

Next to that the MTs could also not always follow the commands that were given because they were dependent on the presence of the right people in the field. "Imagine for example that our task was to find the local chief of police in the district and discuss certain topics with him. If the local chief of police was not present, our task was not feasible at that moment. We did not make appointments with local people. Once we did make an appointment which, we think, resulted in an IED attack. Because of this incident we did not make appointments in advance anymore, although the IED attack could have been a coincidence."<sup>66</sup>

There was no backward planning and it was also difficult for the MTs to make appointments with local people. The MTs therefore operated more reactive. "Our tasks were more reactive. If there was a flood for example, our task was to go there and investigate the situation."<sup>67</sup> "On the other hand, the return of the weapon arsenal of warlord Jalal became a more structured process. There was a more preconceived plan behind this because we clearly knew what we had to do and wanted to achieve. This is contrary to the way we did business normally."<sup>68</sup>

An advantage for the MTs was that they operated in a permissive environment. Within the permissive environment there was no sense of threat or insecurity, and the MTs

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<sup>65</sup> Int. Code: Anonymous 02

<sup>66</sup> Int. Code: Eijk, van

<sup>67</sup> Int. Code: Maanen, van

<sup>68</sup> Int. Code: Maanen, van

could go outside the compound safely. "...we maybe reached a safer environment, but because we had no clear tasks, it was difficult to measure what we achieved. However, the amount of locals carrying weapons decreased and it seemed that the province became calmer."<sup>69</sup> The MT commanders decided, together with the PRT commander to take of the shard vests and helmets in conversations. Taking of the shard vest during conversations built trust among the local population. Negotiating with a shard vest did not work. The MT members were also allowed to leave the vehicle in the field (Rikken, 2005: 7).

"Maybe it is a little naïve, but we had an open way of approaching the local population. We observed cultural norms and values and adapted easily to their culture. In conversations we were careful not being to direct and straightforward. We started conversations with general topics like the weather (not about women) before talking about serious business. Once you build a solid relationship based on mutual trust, we received more and more pieces of information... Showing our visibility was an important task too. We showed our visibility by executing foot patrols and having our vehicles cleaned at local cleaning spots near the river (and paying in US Dollars). We built trust the Dutch way, with respect to local culture and habits."<sup>70</sup>

The permissive environment is an external feature of the opportunity structure that facilitated the MTs to operate easily outside the compound, to operate according an open and respectful approach. The mechanism that explains this 'facilitation' is that there were was no sense of threat or insecurity in the environment. Because of this the MTs could operate outside the compound easily and they had the opportunity to operate according an open and respectful approach.

Although there were no major threats, the situation was sometimes difficult and the military had to remain alert as target of opportunity. In this second period, the MTs were involved in some incidents. This hindered the missions at that moment. In the first place some military were injured and they also had material damage of vehicles and equipment. After the IED attack and a shooting incident, safety rides were introduced. These safety rides controlled the environment and roads before the MTs went outside the compound.<sup>71</sup> "We were prepared to show a more robust posture, but that was not necessary in this environment. Showing authority was enough."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Int. Code: Maanen, van

<sup>70</sup> Int. Code: Eijk, van

<sup>71</sup> Int. Code: Dankers

<sup>72</sup> Int. Code: Eijk, van

### 5.3 Conclusion

In this period the MTs tried to contribute to the process of creating a safe and stable environment. The focus became more on reconstruction, H&M projects and the DIAG program that had to contribute to the process of creating a safe and stable environment. Features of the opportunity structure hindered or facilitated the operational actions of the MTs and therefore could also hinder or facilitate the contribution to this process.

The permissive environment was an external feature of the opportunity structure that facilitated the operational actions of the MTs. They could safely operate outside the compound and they could operate according an open approach. This was possible in the environment because there were no major threats against the MTs in the environment.

In this second period it were mainly the internal features of the opportunity structure that hindered the operational actions of the MTs. Internal features described in this chapter were the lack of a concrete plan of action, shortages of personnel and equipment and the shortage of financial means. The lack of a concrete plan of action hindered the proactive way of operating and therefore the MTs operated reactive. The mechanism that explained this hinder, is that there was no backward planning.

The shortage of personnel and equipment hindered the number of patrols of the MTs. The integration of functional specialists that resulted in a larger logistic footprint and the poor logistic supply from the Netherlands are the mechanisms that explain this 'hinder'. Another feature was the lack of financial means, which made it difficult for the MT to execute reconstruction or H&M projects and activities. The mechanism that explained this 'hinder' in that there was insufficient financial support from the Dutch government. This made it difficult for the MTs to actually do some reconstruction or H&M activities from which they believed it contributed to a safer and secure environment.

## 6 Period 3 The execution of the mission II

*“The demonstrations and incidents that followed after the printed cartoons were directed against us because we are ‘the West’. The local population does not see differences between the Western countries.”<sup>73</sup>*

Some external features arose in this period that influenced the operational actions of the MTs in a negative way. This chapter will evaluate how the contextual opportunity structures in which the third rotation MT commanders found itself, affect the operational actions of the MTs in the third period of the PRT mission in Baghlan. The third period is the period that ran from September 2005 till March 2006.

### 6.1 The context

The third period characterized some significant shifts and developments in the context compared with the two previous periods. An important change in this period is that the Dutch Navy took over the command of the PRT. When the Marines were in command in second year of the PRT mission, the local situation became turbulent, and the general stability in the country decreased. Although the Marines had a differing way of operating than the Air Force, the restless situation was probably related to external features which will be explained in this chapter. The focus of this period was mainly on reconstruction, security (Security Sector Reform) and return of weapons. The focus on these aspects was to help the Afghan government promoting a safe and stable environment. Especially security became an important focus for the PRT and MTs in this period.<sup>74</sup> This focus on security relates to the fact that the general situation in the province became restless and insecure. This will be explained more in detail.

One mentioned reason why the situation became insecure and restless was the launch of the Danish cartoons. The Danish cartoons were posted on 30 September 2005 by the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten. The newspaper printed cartoons that portrayed Muhammad in a controversial way. These cartoons showed images of the prophet with for example a bomb nestled in his turban. Muslims all over the world felt offended by these religious insults. These cartoons resulted in worldwide anger among the Muslims against the ‘Western’ countries, and with an almost entirely Muslim populated Afghanistan this finally

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<sup>73</sup> Int. Code: Scherpenzeel, van

<sup>74</sup> Int. Code: Baksteen

also resulted in demonstrations at the gate of the compound on 6 February 2006 (S5, POLAD, 2005). “The demonstrations and incidents that followed after the printed cartoons were directed against us because we are ‘the West’. The local population does not see differences between the Western countries.”<sup>75</sup>

The posted Danish cartoons were a feature of the opportunity structure in which the MTs operated and affected the operational actions of the MTs that will be explained later this chapter. Both Tilly (2006) and Giugni (2011) argued that features of the larger opportunity structure can appear at multiple levels. They do not only appear at local or national level, but transcend the national borders. Although most features in this whole PRT mission appeared at local or national level, the posted Danish cartoons is an example of a feature that appeared at international level.

One of the informants argued that in the period after the Danish cartoons people became aggressive and violent. There was a big demonstration at the gate and the MTs experienced more IED attacks and threats.<sup>76</sup> The attitude of the local people changed in a more distant and hostile attitude towards the MTs, but people with whom the MTs had trusting relationships did not directly change their attitudes.<sup>77</sup> Not only the posted Danish Cartoons caused a change in the local situation and attitudes, but also counter narcotics in the province is mentioned as a cause for this turbulent situation.

Counter narcotics became an interesting and important topic in this period and is also a feature of the opportunity structure in which the MTs operated. The United Kingdom (UK) was the lead nation of the poppy eradication teams that removed poppy fields. They also removed poppy fields in the province Baghlan. The problem was that these eradication teams worked independently and often the MTs did not know that the eradication teams had removed poppy fields.<sup>78</sup> “Through intel we heard that the UK eradication teams burned some poppy fields. They did not leave behind a sign or plate that they had operated in the province.”<sup>79</sup> When the eradication teams removed poppy fields in the province, the local population in those areas had suddenly an aggressive attitude towards the MTs, while the MTs had no idea where this attitude came from.<sup>80</sup> “We were confronted with the

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<sup>75</sup> Int. Code: Scherpenzeel, van

<sup>76</sup> Int. Code: Dijk, van

<sup>77</sup> Int. Code: Gerritjan

<sup>78</sup> Int. Code: Dijk, van

<sup>79</sup> Int. Code: Bocken

<sup>80</sup> Int. Code: Dijk, van

consequences of the removal of the poppy fields, while we had no influence on the UK eradication teams.”<sup>81</sup>

Poppy was and still is a sensitive topic in Afghanistan. One of my informants argued that poppy is not good, but you cannot take the whole income of people if you do not give them alternatives. Alternatives could be for example the cultivation of roses or saffron, but unfortunately tasks of MTs stayed with small projects and they could not apply these alternatives on larger scale. This removal of the poppy fields and lack of applying alternatives for the local people could be a reason that the situation became restless and insecure in the province Baghlan.<sup>82</sup>

Although the operational context became restless and insecure, the MT members considered the environment still permissive. This permissive environment is also in this period a feature of the larger context that facilitated the operational actions of the MTs. The situation was considered permissive enough to execute the mission.<sup>83</sup> “We had IED attacks, incidents, and demonstrations. But you cannot call the environment non-permissive, because we still could move in small groups outside the compound without armor.”<sup>84</sup>

Despite the local situation became insecure and turbulent, internal organizational features developed more in this period. Since the first period of the PRT mission, the MT commanders had a lot of freedom in their operational actions. Often the MTs experienced this as positive because it was therefore easier to respond and react quickly on specific situations in the field. They did not necessarily miss the coordination of the PRT commander, but what they missed was a concrete plan of action so that they could operate more proactive.<sup>85</sup> The operational concept developed more when the Masterplan was established.

With the coming of the Masterplan, developed by the PRT, in September 2005, the MT missions became more structured. This Masterplan was an internal feature of the opportunity structure that facilitated the operational actions of the MTs by structuring the tasks and objectives. The plan broadly corresponded to the tasks and objectives of the predecessors. The MT commanders had less freedom, because they had to operate according this plan which gave clear guidelines and was limited to specific goals and tasks. The Masterplan resulted in tighter activities, more military hierarchy and proactive missions

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<sup>81</sup> Int. Code: Dijk, van

<sup>82</sup> Int. Code: Dijk, van

<sup>83</sup> Int. Code: Anonymous 03

<sup>84</sup> Int. Code: Gerritjan

<sup>85</sup> Int. Code: Eijk, van; Maanen, van

instead of reactive.<sup>86</sup> Everything the MTs did outside the compound needed to contribute to the mission, tasks and goals described in the Masterplan.<sup>87</sup>

The Masterplan included four lines of actions (LOAs). These LOAs are Safe and Secure environment (SASE), Security Sector Reform (SSR), Governance, and Reconstruction. All these LOAs finally contributed to the main goal of assisting and facilitating the Afghan government in promoting a safe and stable situation. Each LOA is linked to an end state what needed to be achieved. SASE was focused on the maintenance of the safety in the province Baghlan. SSR involved five sectors. The first and second were the creating of a reliable, capable, integrated and respected Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan National Army (ANA). The third was the earlier mentioned DIAG program in which the illegal militias must be dismantled and illegal weapons and ammunition must be collected. The fourth sector is focused on Judicial Reform and the creation of a reliable, capable, integrated and respected Judicial Power. The last sector is focused on Counter Narcotics (CN). Governance related to a representative government with sufficient influence in the key areas.

As told earlier, the tasks of the MTs were in this period mainly focused on reconstruction, safe and stable environment and the return of weapons (DIAG). When the environment in which the MT operated became restless and insecure, the MTs found threats from the aggressive and violent attitude of the local population and more IED threats and attacks. The safety awareness of the MTs changed.<sup>88</sup> The MTs became aware that they did not only do reconstruction, but that they also had to ensure, especially their own, safety. "Safety and reconstruction are intertwined. You cannot create safety without development and reconstruction, and you cannot do development and reconstruction without safety."<sup>89</sup>

An improvement in this period relates to the organizational concept of the MTs. In the first place, the functional specialists were more integrated in the missions. The cooperation with CIMIC, PSY OPS and IDEA (Integrated Development of Entrepreneurial Activities) was good. One CIMIC member argued that the cooperation with the MTs was pleasant and she never felt tensions. The MTs and CIMIC shared information back and forth. "The MTs had a broader area than CIMIC. The MTs went to areas further away to collect information. I did not go to these far away areas. Most organization and departments of the government we worked with were concentrated in PeK. It was therefore more efficient for

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<sup>86</sup> Int. Code: Putten, van

<sup>87</sup> Int. Code: Anonymous 03

<sup>88</sup> Int. Code: Gerritjan

<sup>89</sup> Int. Code: Putten, van

CIMIC to stay in PeK. In order to operate efficient, CIMIC and the MTs had their own tasks. ... Healthcare, infrastructure, gender and education were areas where CIMIC focused on, ordered by the Dutch government.”<sup>90</sup> CIMIC and IDEA had specific tasks and the MTs gave them space to execute these tasks. <sup>91</sup>

A feature of the context of this period is that the integration of functional specialist was possible and easier because the MTs received enough equipment and better vehicles. In the first two periods we saw that the Toyota Prado vehicles were a big obstruction for the operational actions of the MTs. In this third period, new vehicles, Landcruisers and Mercedes Benz, were requested. In the meantime the MTs rented local cars.<sup>92</sup>

Despite the feature of improvements of better integration of functional specialist, better vehicles and more equipment, at the same time it is argued that there were still scarce capacities of material and personnel. “We received most information out of Multiple-day missions. To receive as much information as possible out of these multiple-day missions, it was necessary to take all functional specialists, but this was not always possible because of shortages of interpreters, FP, guards, financial means or cars.”<sup>93</sup> “We asked the Dutch government for extra FP and we also received extra FP, but not enough. However, later this period we received more financial means for projects. This resulted in more activities and projects, which, in turn, resulted in a need of more FP, interpreters and other equipment and resources which we did not have. Whether or not we had enough resources, personnel and equipment is always the question. What is enough? We always had scarce capacities.”<sup>94</sup>

This section of the chapter showed different external and internal features of the context that affected, either hindered or facilitated, the operational actions of the MTs. The next section of this chapter will analyze how the MT members (re)acted to these features of the operational context, and why these features ‘affected’ operational actions.

## 6.2 Operational (re)actions

A significant shift of in the context of this period is that the Dutch Navy took over the command of the PRT. This not necessarily hindered or facilitated the operational actions of the MTs, but it changed the way of operating. The Marines had a different way of operating than the Air Force. The Marines found many operational actions of the Air Force too soft and

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<sup>90</sup> Int. Code: Bocken

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<sup>94</sup> Int. Code: Putten, van

therefore they wanted everything tighter. They wanted a clear approach with more order and discipline. In the field, the Marines were also more focused on the showing of force and bringing order. They operated also more militarily.<sup>95</sup>

“Sometimes showing of weapons was important. We should not always be soft, because then the local population will laugh at you and will not take you serious. We therefore showed our flag and force. These local people are used to carry weapons for years already; therefore they need a tougher approach...The local key players respected us because of that.”<sup>96</sup> “The way of operating changed to more showing of force, and showing of our teeth when necessary.”<sup>97</sup> “Why should we not use our weapons? You do not need to shoot with the weapons, but you only need to show that you are serious and want to do business. I understand that you did not know the reaction of the local population. But you never know that.”<sup>98</sup>

After the Marines took over the command of the PRT, the way of operating changed to more showing of force and more order and discipline. Why this change took place can be explained with the argument that the Marines found the way of operation of the Air Force too soft, and at the same time the Marines were also more militarily and wanted everything tighter with more order and discipline.

The local situation in which the MTs operated became turbulent and insecure. A mentioned cause for this turbulent situation was the launch of the Danish cartoons. Because of the posted Danish cartoons, local people became more violent and aggressive. This hindered the MTs, because the MTs who acted themselves as target of opportunity had to deal with a big demonstration, changing attitudes and later also an increase of IED threats and attacks. “During the big demonstration in front of the compound, the compound was bombarded with stones. We tried to de-escalate this by using respectively light-, smoke-, and pressure grenades. This had only a short term result. We did not want to act more robust with harder ammunition. Therefore we asked the local Afghan military to assist in resolving these aggressive demonstrations. In the meantime we could only wait and stay away. The Afghan military finally came and after a while the situation became calmer.”

After these demonstrations the PRT deployed more guards to protect the compound.<sup>99</sup> In the field, the demonstration became a new topic to talk about in

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conversations. The MTs tried to propagate a positive message on behalf of 'the West'.<sup>100</sup> The focus of the MTs became more on creating a safe and stable environment. "This aggressive and violent situation created the awareness that we did not only do reconstruction, but that we also had to guarantee our own safety. You are more alert and safety becomes a priority."<sup>101</sup> "We not only had to ensure our own safety, but the local population also needs to feel safe in the environment where we were."<sup>102</sup>

Because the situation in general became restless and aggressive, the MTs sometimes had to cancel their missions outside the compound. Later, the MTs tried to conduct more patrols in the restless areas, and they also patrolled at night to show that the local population could not scare of the MTs.<sup>103</sup> In this third period one of the MT members argued that his team went outside the compound six days a week.<sup>104</sup> After an IED attack the MTs also had to take more safety measures. "We introduced clearings patrols at the road where the IED attacks took place and we had to wear helmets and shard vests. These safety measures only applied to the specific route where the IED attacks took place, not for the whole province."<sup>105</sup> The MTs also brought more FP when they went outside the compound.<sup>106</sup>

The launch of the Danish cartoons hindered the operational actions of the MTs because they had to deal with more IED threats and attacks, and changing attitudes (more violent, distant, and aggressive) of the local population. This brought the MTs further away from the contribution towards a safer and more stable environment. The MT members had to be more alert and sometimes missions were cancelled. The operational actions of the MTs were more focused on safety. How is it possible that the launch of the Danish cartoons 'hindered' and 'changed' the operational actions of the MTs at that moment? A mechanism that can explain this is the emergence of worldwide anger among the Muslim population and its forthcoming threats and attacks against 'the West', and at the same time the Dutch military in Baghlan that were considered as 'the West'. This resulted in violent attitudes towards the Dutch military, and because the MTs acted themselves as target of opportunity because they were the ones who operated outside the compound, they were more likely to become target of the (IED) threats and attacks.

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<sup>104</sup> Int. Code: Gerritjan

<sup>105</sup> Int. Code: Putten, van

<sup>106</sup> Int. Code: Anonymous 01

A cause of the turbulent local situation can be related to the posted Danish cartoons. Another mentioned cause is counter narcotics and especially the removal of poppy fields by independent eradication teams of the UK. The removal of poppy fields by the UK eradication teams hindered the operational actions of the MTs. When the eradication teams of the UK removed poppy fields in the province Baghlan, the MTs had to deal with aggressive, hostile or distant attitudes of the local population because the MTs and PRT in first instance were held responsible for these actions. The removal of the poppy fields sometimes took away the whole income of families especially when there are no alternatives applied. These attitudes often changed suddenly in the eyes of the MT members, because the MTs had no idea when the eradication teams visited the province. "The MTs were not tasked to give meaning to counter narcotics because it could bring the MTs and PRT in danger (Counter narcotic operations influenced local business and income). The only thing the MTs could do was talking about the negative impact of drug (-trade) with the local population, and mapping of poppy fields and smuggling routes."<sup>107</sup>

Dependent on the threat assessment, the MTs sometimes had to take security measures. The poppy eradication teams worked independently and no alternatives were applied for the local people. These mechanisms explain why counter narcotics 'hindered' the operational actions of the MTs. The eradication teams took away the income of people and the MTs could not give them alternatives. This resulted in violent and aggressive attitudes towards the MTs and more attacks and threats because they were held responsible. At the same time they acted themselves as target of opportunity and therefore the MTs were also more likely to become target of threats and attacks.

Although the security measures of the MTs, the MTs had to be careful that the show of force and weapons and more armor and shielding does not lead to a threat spiral downwards. When the MTs are more armored and shielded, carry more weapons, helmet, shard vests, and remain in the vehicles, the local population sees this too and this can result in less contact and distant attitudes. In the worst case it can lead to more violence. The MTs had to keep in mind that more weapons, armor and shielding does not bring them closer to the population.<sup>108</sup> Colonel van Putten argued the following: "During execution of a mission, like the PRT-mission, too much of FP can be a disadvantage. You need to be easy accessible in the field and it is important not to create distance with local authorities and people. Of course, you do not have to be naïve with regards to safety and security, but in some

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situations being accessible (and by doing so, being in a better position to talk to people and to gather information from the population) can be a better form of FP than operating armored with great distance to the people.”<sup>109</sup>

It is argued that the situation became restless and insecure, but despite of this the MT members considered the local environment still as permissive which facilitated the operational actions of the MTs. The environment was considered permissive because the MTs could still execute their mission and they could move outside the compound in small group. “We received a lot of information during conversations, and we could easily walk around local markets and talk to people. Although we had to take security measures, we tried to have a lot of interactions with the local population and we tried to be physically present instead of sitting in the vehicles. We for example ate local food to show some respect.”<sup>110</sup> The environment could be called permissive because the local people tolerated the presence of the MTs in the field.<sup>111</sup>

Most interviewed informants who operated in the previous periods (the first and second period) argued that the mechanism, that explained why the permissive environment facilitated the operational actions of the MTs, was that there were no major threats and no sense of insecurity. Remarkable is that this explanation is not directly mentioned in the interviews with informants who operated in this third or fourth period. Captain Gerritjan argued earlier that they had some attacks and incidents, but that you also cannot call the environment non-permissive. <sup>112</sup> The mechanism in this period that explains why the permissive environment facilitated the actions of the MTs outside the compound seemed to be that the MTs were tolerated. Although the MTs sometimes had to take security measures, they could still execute their mission, be interactive with the local population, and walk around local markets to show their visibility.

Some external features mentioned in this chapter caused a more turbulent and insecure situation, which brings the MTs further away from the goal of promoting a safe and stable environment. However, some internal features developed more and contribute to a more structured mission. The military in the first period were searching and pioneering. They missed a clear plan of actions and the cultural awareness had to grow. The military in the second period also missed a concrete plan of action. In the first two periods, the military mission grew and became clear and uniform. But there was still lack of further guidelines for

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<sup>109</sup> Int. Code: Putten, van

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the execution of the mission. Therefore they still operated reactive. With the coming of the Masterplan, structure and direction was brought to the mission (Putten, 2006). The Masterplan was based on the work, knowledge and cultural awareness of the predecessors and intelligence.<sup>113</sup> An example is that the first two periods gathered much information about possible CIMIC and H&M projects. In these periods many project proposals arose. In this third period many project proposals became concrete project assignments (1(NL)PRT, 2005: 3).

A change in the operational actions is that the military in this third period operated more proactive instead of reactive. Everything the MTs did outside the compound have to contribute to the mission described in the Masterplan. Targets were established for the MTs of what they needed to do to reach a specific goal.<sup>114</sup> This backward planning and setting of targets is what the MTs in the first and second periods missed. This mechanism explains why the establishment of the Masterplan facilitated a more proactive way of operating for the MTs. The goals were described in the Masterplan and tasks were based on achievement of these goals. Targets were set for the MTs and everything the MTs did outside the compound have to contribute to the described goals in the Masterplan. The MTs operated more proactive because they went outside the compound with a clear task that contributed to a specific goal.

Another internal feature that facilitated the operational actions of the MTs is there were enough equipment, better vehicles, and more financial means. These are improvements compared with the first two periods. These improvements resulted in a better and easier integration of functional specialists like CIMIC. More attention could be given to reconstruction and H&M projects which contributed to the process of promoting a safe and stable environment. The mechanism that explains why enough equipment, better vehicles, and more financial means facilitated the integration of functional specialists is the better logistic supply from the Netherlands. The MTs received more and better equipment and vehicles so that it was possible to make the teams bigger with functional specialists.

On the other hand it is also argued that there were still scarce capacities of material and personnel. The MTs did receive equipment and personnel, but was it enough? Multiple-day missions, more activities and projects automatically resulted in a need for more

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<sup>113</sup> Int. Code: Polet

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equipment and personnel. “The best thing we could do was making choices and set priorities.”<sup>115</sup>

### 6.3 Conclusion

In this third period it were mainly external features that hindered the operational actions, and the internal features that more developed and facilitated the operational actions. An important characteristic of this period is that the Marines took over the command of the PRT and therefore also the MTs. The way of operating of the MTs changed towards more showing of force and more order and discipline, because the Marines found the way of operation of the Air Force too soft, and at the same time the Marines were also more militarily.

Features of the opportunity structure that appeared inside the MT and PRT organization are the establishment of the Masterplan and sufficient equipment and better vehicles. The Masterplan structured the MT mission and gave the teams clear guidelines and tasks so that they could operate proactive. The actions of the MTs were facilitated because there was backward planning that resulted in clear tasks that contributed to the achievement of goals described in the Masterplan. Furthermore, there was better logistic supply from the Netherlands. This resulted in sufficient equipment, better vehicles and more financial means that facilitated the integration of functional specialists in the mission.

External features of the opportunity structure were the launch of the Danish Cartoons, counter narcotics, and the permissive environment. Because of the Danish cartoons the MTs sometimes had to cancel their mission and they had to take security measures. This ‘hinder’ can be explained with the emergence of worldwide anger among the Muslim population and its forthcoming threats and attacks against ‘the West’, and at the same time the Dutch military in Baghlan that were considered as ‘the West’. Counter narcotics hindered the MTs in the same way. This hinder was because of the independently working eradication teams and that no alternatives were applied for the local population. The MTs as target of opportunity had to deal with aggressive and violent attitudes. However the environment was still considered permissive and facilitated the MTs to execute their missions, be interactive with the people, and walk around local markets. This was possible because the MTs were tolerated by the local population.

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<sup>115</sup> Int. Code: Dijk, van

## 7 Period 4 Redeployment

*“When we came it was pretty safe, but it became more and more unsafe. The reason was that the Taliban came back to the North which resulted in more attacks and threats.”<sup>116</sup>*

In the previous period it was already argued that the general situation in the province became restless and insecure because of mainly external features. This chapter will focus on the last period of the PRT mission in Baghlan. The purpose is to evaluate how the contextual opportunity structures in which the fourth rotation MT commanders found itself, affected the operational actions of the MTs in the fourth period of the PRT mission in Baghlan. This period ran from March 2006 till October 2006.

### 7.1 The context

The MT members of this period were deployed in a turbulent period because of the consequences of the released Danish cartoons.<sup>117</sup> However, also in this period, the MTs considered the environment still permissive. The permissive environment was also in this period a feature of the larger opportunity structure. The security situation in Baghlan was quiet, but not stable (Harder, 2006). You could still speak of a permissive environment, because the Baghlan province was no longer in state of war, and the local people tolerated the MTs. The MTs could still operate outside the compound. For this reason the environment was still considered permissive, but the MTs had to take into account aggressive attitudes, and non-stable, rapidly changing situations (Harder, 2006).

Later this mission, the MT members felt that the situation became more and more insecure. One of the informants argued that the reason for this was that Taliban influences came back to the Northern Province Baghlan, which resulted in more attacks and IED threats.<sup>118</sup> Why did Taliban influences grew in the Northern Province Baghlan? Some of the MT members related this to the start of the Task Force Uruzgan (TFU) mission in the southern Afghan province Uruzgan, which is another feature of the larger context in which the MTs operated.

In August 2006, Dutch military took command of the Task Force Uruzgan (TFU) mission in the southern province Uruzgan, Afghanistan. They exerted pressure on the Taliban in order to fight against the Taliban (KST 27925, 2007). For this reason Taliban moved

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<sup>116</sup> Int. Code: Scherpenzeel, van

<sup>117</sup> Int. Code: Eysinga, van

<sup>118</sup> Int. Code: Scherpenzeel, van

to the Northern provinces like Baghlan. "Because of the pressure in the south, Taliban influences returned in different outside areas in the Northern Province Baghlan."<sup>119</sup>

This increase of Taliban influences in the province Baghlan hindered the operational actions of the MTs. The MTs experienced more IED attacks and threats, riots and demonstrations, and shooting incidents (Harder, 2006). The route between Pol-e-Khomri (PeK) and Kabul had IED code red. This meant that at this route there were many (every three days) IED attacks and threats. The IEDs were not always directed against the MTs, but also against the local police for example. The MTs acted themselves as target of opportunity because they operated outside the compound, therefore they were more focused on threats and possible IED attacks.<sup>120</sup>

Just like the previous period, creating a safe and stable environment also seemed to be the main focus during this period. The MTs tried to create a safe and stable environment by patrolling together with the Afghan National Army (ANA), by doing various reconstruction projects, and by supporting a good relationship with the local authorities (Harder, 2006). In the previous period mainly external features were identified that resulted in a turbulent and more insecure local situation. This hindered the operational actions of the MTs in contributing to the process of creating a safe and stable environment. In this period another external feature, the start of the TFU mission in Uruzgan, was mentioned and also resulted in a more insecure situation which hindered the operational actions of the MTs. All these features made it difficult for the MTs to contribute to the process of creating a safe and stable environment.

However, the previous period and also this period mainly characterized some internal improvements that facilitated the actions of the MTs. The organizational and operational concept of the mission seemed to develop more and more. In the first place CIMIC was very well integrated in the MTs, because the MTs had more and better resources and personnel. Secondly, the plan of action and tasks were clearly described and specified in the revised Masterplan. Just like the previous period, the Masterplan also in this period structured the mission. "We were aware of the Masterplan. The plan coordinated chaos in your head. You could divide all tasks among the pillars described in the Masterplan. If you did this, you could see if you followed the right perspective and if you were on the right

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<sup>119</sup> Int. Code: Scherpenzeel, van

<sup>120</sup> Int. Code: Scherpenzeel, van

track. It was a must to understand the Masterplan if you wanted to reach the described goals.”<sup>121</sup>

The establishment of the Masterplan, which is also in this period a feature of the larger context, structured the mission and gave the military a clear plan of action and clear guidelines. This was a positive development, because in the beginning of this PRT mission, the military were unfamiliar with the PRT concept. Finally, the military in Baghlan developed the PRT concept as such that you can recognize the 3D approach. “In Baghlan we did what we now call 3D (Defense, Diplomacy and Development). We were diplomatic because we built relationships with local authorities and tried to assist and facilitate the central Afghan government, we had military presence and executed military tasks like creating safety and stability, and we tried to create circumstances in which reconstruction activities could take place and circumstances in which the Afghan people could help themselves. This is what we did in cooperation with functional specialist like CIMIC, development organizations, and NGOs.”<sup>122</sup>

However one of the informants argued: “The Masterplan was complete, but I think we would never have reached these goals. The reason for this is that we simply had not enough time to reach the goals, and we finally had to leave the province to its fate.”<sup>123</sup> Another reason is that the MTs did not have enough mandate and capacity to actually do something. They did not have enough FP and enough weapons and ammunition to operate more robust if they needed to. The permissive environment becomes therefore disputable. “We were not there to fight, but if something went wrong we had nothing to protect ourselves, even less we were able to create a safe and stable environment for the local population. You cannot create safety with a little team and without enough equipment.”<sup>124</sup>

Above some features of the opportunity structure were mentioned. Different external and internal features affected, either hindered or facilitated, the operational actions of the MTs. The next section of this chapter will analyze how the MT members (re)acted to these features of the operational context, and why these features ‘affected’ operational actions.

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<sup>121</sup> Int. Code: Eysinga, van

<sup>122</sup> Int. Code: Heesbeen

<sup>123</sup> Int. Code: Scherpenzeel, van

<sup>124</sup> Int. Code: Scherpenzeel, van

## 7.2 Operational (re)actions

It is argued that the environment became more and more insecure. However, a feature of the larger opportunity structure in which the MTs operated was that the environment was still considered permissive. Could the environment still be considered permissive with a more and more insecure and turbulent situation? This is disputable. At the beginning of this period, the environment was still considered permissive. The MTs could still operate outside the compound and they could execute their work.

The mechanism that explains why the permissive environment facilitated the MTs to operate outside the compound is that the Baghlan province was no longer in state of war, and the local people overall tolerated the MTs (Harder, 2006). Although the environment became more and more insecure and the threat and attacks of IEDs increased, one of the informants argued that they still could go outside the compound pretty well. They had some attacks and explosions, but they still could do their work outside the compound because they had good and structured Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) with the Afghan National Army and Police and SOPs for their own safety.<sup>125</sup>

Another informant questioned the permissive environment. He argued that the MTs were a sitting duck. This means that they were an easy target. "If something goes wrong, nobody could help us. The areas where we operated in were not accessible. The Quick Reaction Forces (QRF) could never reach us on time... We operated with about ten members and five vehicles, and we were lightly armed. We had no robust equipment to protect ourselves. If something had gone wrong, it was really wrong. There was nobody who could release us. I could call F16s, but they also needed to fly one hour before they reached us."<sup>126</sup> Whether the environment is permissive or not is disputable. Despite the risks and the MTs who acted themselves as target of opportunity, the MTs still went outside the compound.

However, the general situation became insecure and turbulent because of the start of the Task Force Uruzgan mission in the Southern province Uruzgan, which put pressure on Taliban in the south. This mechanism explained why this was possible that the operational actions of the MTs were hindered. The pressure in the south resulted in an increase and move of Taliban influences in the Northern Province Baghlan. This resulted in more threats and attacks in the province Baghlan. "Sometimes I was not allowed to come in specific areas because of Taliban treats and attacks."<sup>127</sup> Force Protection and security measures were

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<sup>125</sup> Int. Code: Eysinga, van

<sup>126</sup> Int. Code: Scherpenzeel, van

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considered on the basis of threat assessments. On the basis of these threat assessments MT patrols were planned or minimized. In this period they also had to take care of threats from unexpected sources. The MTs had to take care of good security of the vehicles and personnel. At risk routes, clearance patrols were conducted before the MTs went outside the compound (Harder, 2006).

Although the situation was turbulent and insecure, the MTs used an open approach and a low profile of violence. They operated according an open attitude, they took into account local habitats, norms and values, and they introduced themselves vulnerable and polite.<sup>128</sup> “It was important for us to be there and be present in the communities. It was also important to be approachable for the local population and being vulnerable.”<sup>129</sup> If you do this in combination with Hearts and Minds projects, you have less enemies and that reduces risks on incidents.<sup>130</sup>

“Our approach was to go as much as possible outside the compound, so that we could show our visibility and we got more insight in local moods. If you do this, you can better anticipate on specific situations and you get less surprised.”<sup>131</sup> “We always had IED threats. We had to develop a sense to recognize these IEDs, this is only possible when you are outside the compound very often because then you can recognize deviations from normal patterns. I always wore shard vests, helmet and weapons. In dangerous situations, my weapons were loaded. In contact I took off my helmet, but I kept the shard vest. This was no issue, because the local people understood why we did this. I told everybody to keep their shard vests on, if I would have taken it off, it would be a bad signal for rest of team. If I always wear a shard vest, it is also getting normal for the local people. They got used to it.”<sup>132</sup>

The Masterplan facilitated the MTs to operate more proactive. The MTs could operate proactive because of the backward planning which resulted in a clear plan of action. The intention of the MTs was to operate according the guidelines described in the Masterplan. They were sent on missions with targets. However operating proactive was still not always the case. “In the field, we had quite own freedom to do what we wanted to do. This freedom was good because we could respond easily on what happened in the field. Sometimes the PRT staff came with specific targets for the MTs. These targets did not always match with our ideas. We knew how the situation was in the field. We had the feeling that they did not

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<sup>128</sup> Int. Code: Scherpenzeel, van

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<sup>132</sup> Int. Code: Eysinga, van

listen to us, while we were the eyes and ears of the PRT and we were always outside the compound. We were the ones who had the knowledge about what was going on in the province.”<sup>133</sup> Therefore the MT members sometimes deviated from the Masterplan. “We sometimes made our own plans and we moved the Masterplan to the background. Our operational actions were related to what lived in the environment and how the situation was at that time. We operated not fully proactive, but it was more a combination between reactive and proactive.”<sup>134</sup>

### 7.3 Conclusion

The most important external feature of the opportunity structure of this third period is the start of the Task Force Uruzgan mission in the southern province Uruzgan. The start of this mission hindered the operational actions of the MTs. The MTs were hindered by more threats and attacks, demonstrations and shooting incidents. Sometimes the teams could not reach specific areas because of the increase of Taliban influences and the move of Taliban to the Northern Province Baghlan. More pressure was put in the south and therefore the Taliban came to the North. This mechanism explains why the start of the TFU mission hindered the operational actions of the MTs.

Another external feature was that the environment was still considered permissive and facilitated the MTs to execute their work outside the compound. This was possible because the local people tolerated the MTs and the province was no longer in state of war. However, the permissive environment became disputable when the environment became more and more insecure.

The revised Masterplan was an internal feature that facilitated the MTs to operate proactive. The mechanism that explains this ‘facilitation’ is that there was backward planning which resulted in a clear plan of action and tasks.

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## 8 Conclusion and Discussion

This thesis has examined how the opportunity structures in which the MOLTs, later MTs, found itself during the Netherlands PRT mission in Baghlan, affected the operational actions of the MOLTs. This conclusion will bring the four divided periods of the PRT mission together in a comparative analysis. The most important features of the opportunity structures are identified, and their 'affect' on the operational actions are explained in terms of mechanisms. The purpose of this conclusion is not to make generalizations about the whole of the PRT, nor to draw conclusions on whether or not the military in Baghlan operated successfully or effectively. Instead, this conclusion will give an in-depth explanatory and analytical understanding of how contextual opportunity structures affected the operational actions of the MOLTs, explained in terms of mechanisms.

The main goal of this PRT mission was to assist and facilitate the Afghan central government in promoting stability and safety and enable the Afghan central government to extend its authority and influence on a country-wide basis. The MOLTs tried to contribute to this process of creating a safe and stable environment. This process was the same for each period. The MOLTs had many tasks in order to contribute to this process of creating a safe and stable environment. Features of the opportunity structure hindered or facilitated these tasks or operational actions of the MOLTs and therefore the contribution towards the process of creating a safe and stable environment was sometimes hindered or facilitated. The combination of all mechanisms mentioned in this thesis should contribute the process of creating a safe and stable environment as long as they positively 'affect' the operational actions. However some mentioned mechanisms resulted in hinder or negatively 'affect' of operational actions, and therefore could form an obstruction for the contribution to the process of creating a safe and stable environment.

This study is not just an empirical analysis of the MOLT missions in Baghlan, but also contributes on a theoretical level to the concept of opportunity structure at a certain point. Koopmans (1999: 96-97) argued that many features can affect actions, as long as the features appear outside the movement. This means that only features that appeared outside the MOLT or PRT organization could affect the operational actions of the MOLTs. This study contributes to this by showing that features of the opportunity structure that appear inside the movement (PRT/MOLT organization), also affected the actions of the MOLTs. In other words, external features as well as internal features can affect the operational action of the MOLTs. In the first two periods it were mainly the internal features of the opportunity

structure that hindered the operational actions of the MOLTs and it were mainly the external features of the opportunity structure that facilitated the operational actions.

The first external feature of the opportunity structure is the presidential elections in October 2004 that facilitated the showing of visibility and building of contact networks. These actions, which contribute to the process of creating a safe and stable environment, of the MOLTs were facilitated because the MOLTs monitored the presidential elections. They visited polling stations and this gave the MOLTs the opportunity to get in contact with the majority of the population and at the same time they received more insight the demographic structures.

Another external feature is the 'permissive environment' in which the MOLTs operated and facilitated the actions of the MOLTs outside the compound. The MOLTs could safely operate outside the compound, it was possible to operate reactive, and they could operate according an open approach. The mechanism that explains this 'facilitation' is that there were no major threats in the environment.

The first internal feature is the lack of a clear plan of action that hindered the MOLTs in operating proactive in order to achieve the goals. The mechanisms that explain this 'hinder' are the unfamiliarity with the PRT concept, unfamiliarity with the Baghlan province, the limited preparation time, and lack of backward planning. This all made it difficult to come to a concrete plan of action in order to achieve goals.

Shortage of personnel, resources, and equipment is also an internal feature and resulted in a decrease of the number of patrols. It also hindered the MOLTs to bring functional specialist on mission. This 'hinder' of the operational actions can be explained with the mechanisms of poor logistic supply from the Netherlands, lack of coordination with the Netherlands, and the integration of functional specialists which resulted in a larger logistic footprint.

Another internal feature was the lack of financial means. This lack made it difficult for the MOLTs to execute reconstruction or H&M projects and activities. The mechanism that explains this 'hinder' in that there was insufficient financial support from the Dutch government. This made it difficult for the MOLTs to actually do some reconstruction or H&M activities from which they believed it contributed to a safer and secure environment.

Based on the gathered data from this research, in the third and fourth period a remarkable shift can be recognized in how the features of the opportunity structure affected the operational actions of the MOLTs. In the third and fourth period, the opposite seems to

be the case. It were mainly external features that hindered the operational actions, and the internal features that more developed and facilitated the operational actions.

An internal features is that the Marines took over the command of the PRT and therefore also the MOLTs. This not directly hindered or facilitated the operational actions of the MOLTs, but the way of operating of the MOLTs changed towards more showing of force and more order and discipline. This change took place because the Marines found the way of operation of the Air Force too soft, and at the same time the Marines were also more militarily.

A second internal feature is the establishment of the Masterplan which structured the MOLT mission and gave the teams clear guidelines and tasks so that they could operate proactive. The actions of the MOLTs were facilitated because there was backward planning, what the teams missed in the first two periods, and resulted in clear tasks that contributed to the achievement of goals described in the Masterplan.

Another internal feature is that the MOLTs had sufficient equipment, better vehicles and more financial means that facilitated the integration of functional specialists in the mission. This was because the better logistic supply from the Netherlands.

The first external feature is the launch of the Danish cartoons, which hindered the MOLTs because sometimes they had to cancel their mission and they had to take security measures. This hinder can be explained with the emergence of worldwide anger among the Muslim population and its forthcoming threats and attacks against 'the West', and at the same time the Dutch military in Baghlan that were considered as 'the West'. The MOLTs as target of opportunity were more likely to become target of these threats, attacks and violent attitudes.

Counter narcotics is another external feature that hindered the MOLTs in the same way. This hinder was because of the independently working eradication teams and that no alternatives were applied for the local population. The military were held responsible for taking away business and income without alternatives. The MOLTs as target of opportunity had to deal with aggressive and violent attitudes.

A third external feature is the start of the Task Force Uruzgan mission in the southern province Uruzgan. This mission put pressure in the south and therefore Taliban came to the North. This mechanism explains why the MOLTs were hindered by more threats and attacks, demonstrations and shooting incidents. Sometimes the teams could not reach specific areas. Taliban influences increased in the North because of the pressure in the south.

Some informants considered the environment still as permissive, because the MOLTs could still execute their missions, they could still be interactive with the people, and they could walk around local markets. The mechanism that explains why the permissive environment facilitated these actions is that the MOLTs were tolerated by the local population and the province was no longer in state of war. Remarkable is that another mechanism is mentioned then the mechanism of no major threats or no sense of insecurity in the first two periods. This probably relates to the environment which became more and more insecure. The permissive environment therefore became disputable. In the last two periods the situation became turbulent and insecure, and the MOLTs definitely had more threats and attacks. Some informants argue that the MOLTs became an easy target of these threats and attacks and some areas were not even accessible.

A remarkable finding in this study is that during the time the environment in which the MOLTs operated became increasingly insecure, while the operational and organizational concepts became more and more structured and clear. The other way around it is remarkable that in the first periods of the PRT mission the situation was calm and safe because there were no major threats and no sense of insecurity against the MOLTs, while at the same time the internal operational and organizational concepts hindered the MOLTs. This hinder was because of the limited preparation time, lack of backward planning, unfamiliarity with the Baghlan province, poor logistic supply from the Netherlands, lack of coordination with the Netherlands, and insufficient financial support from the Netherlands.

During the mission, the environment became more insecure and turbulent because the growing external features which negatively impacted the MOLTs. The emergence of worldwide anger of the Muslims against 'the West', the pressure put on the Taliban in the south, and the independently working eradication teams of the UK and the fact that no alternatives were applied for the local people, resulted in a turbulent local situation. At the same time the operational and organizational concepts developed more and more because of the use of backward planning and better logistic supply from the Netherlands.

Some of the informants argued that what the PRT and MOLTs reached in Baghlan was a drop in the ocean because the environment became more and more insecure and brought the military further away from the process towards a safe and stable environment. However, the military had to build the PRT concept from scratch and developed this concept more and more towards what we now call a 3D approach.

## 9 Recommendations

This study gives opportunities for further research. In the first place, this study analyzed how the opportunity structure affected the operational actions. However, this 'affect' is probably more complex. It is not always only the structure affecting the actions, but the actions or agency of individuals can also affect the structure. Opportunities are not necessarily structural, but can also be the cause and a consequence of individual- or collective actions. Therefore, further research can be done on how the operational actions affected the opportunity structures, or more on the dialectical process between structure and agency.

Secondly, one of my informants argued that what they did in Baghlan, was what we now call a 3D approach. The emergence of the 3D approach during the PRT in Baghlan can be researched more in-depth in future researches.

Thirdly, more research can be done on the PRT in Baghlan in general. During an academic literature and document research, it became clear that this mission in Baghlan, besides the political and media fields, also remained an underexposed topic in the academic field. Because of the limited research time, I had to choose one specific element to focus on. This resulted in a focus on the MOLTs, later MTs. As set out in the introduction, the PRT consisted of more elements like the FP, POLAD, CIMIC, and more. You can also think about the cooperation between different elements of the PRT, or the cooperation between the different Operational Commandos which were integrated in this PRT mission.

Finally, but not at least, some informants I interviewed came up with valuable ideas and suggestions on how this PRT mission in Baghlan could have been improved. I think it is important to list these improvements so that more research can be done on these possible improvements. Below some of the ideas are listed:

- Making the MOLTs bigger with standard CIMIC members for better cooperation and continuity.
- The establishment of PRT/MOLT houses. Helicopters can drop a larch team in the local communities and this team can stay there for a week. In the evenings the MOLTs often had good conversations. It is important to use these valuable moments. The creating of PRT/MOLT houses in some areas brings the military closer to the local population. The military can go outside and do social patrols from these houses. This is a better idea than driving back and forth. Conversations will not be superficial, more in depth.

- The integration of Afghan local people into the PRT or MOLT. If you want to rebuild the province, and Afghan people need to do it themselves, why should we not add Afghans in the PRT? The PRT or MOLTs can integrate Afghan people like local governors etc. Local people have more knowledge about the areas and networks, which leads to more spread of projects. It will also be easier to come with plan and talk about it. The military have western glasses, and that does not always work. The involvement of local people creates not them and we, but we.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Int. Code: Maanen, van

## An impression

### The country



### The people



### The roads and vehicles





The conversations





The projects and activities



DIAG program



Poppy fields



The compound



Incidents



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#### Interview transcripts

Interview transcripts of MOLT commanders and deputy commanders, context and actions of the MOLTs as case study. (2014) Data collected at different Defense Departments, the Netherlands, March-April. (Full list of informants available in the Appendix).

Interview transcripts of PRT members (CIMIC, S5, S3, PRT commander), context and actions of the MOLTs/PRT as case study. (2014) Data collected at different Defense Departments and KLM Schiphol, the Netherlands, March-April. (Full list of informants available in the Appendix).

#### Visual sources

All photographic material, the front page as well as the photo gallery, are primary sources offered by the some interviewed informants inter alia: Bocken; Dankers; Dijk, van; Maanen, van; Polet; T. Brocades Zaalberg (NIMH). Data collected at different Defense Departments. (Full list of informants available in the Appendix).

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## Appendixes

### Appendix 1: Quoted Informants

<b>Interview code</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Int. Date</b>	<b>Function in PRT</b>	<b>PRT Period</b>
Anonymous 01	-	20-03-2014	-	PRT 4 + 5
Anonymous 02	-	26-03-2014	-	PRT 3 + 4
Anonymous 03	-	17-04-2014	-	PRT 4
Baksteen	Male	25-04-2014	MOLT Commander	PRT 2 + 3
Bocken	Female	29-04-2014	CIMIC	PRT 5
Dankers	Male	07-04-2014	MOLT Commander	PRT 2 + 3
Dijk, van	Male	29-04-2014	S3 (Operations)	PRT 5
Eijk, van	Male	18-04-2014	MOLT Commander	PRT 2 + 3
Eysinga, van	Male	18-03-2014	MOLT Commander	PRT 5 + 6
Gerritjan	Male	17-04-2014	MOLT deputy commander	PRT 4 + 5
Heesbeen	Male	14-04-2014	S3 (Operations)	Advance Party/PRT 1
Jansen	Male	01-04-2014	MOLT deputy commander	PRT 1 + 2
Keulen, van	Male	01-04-2014	MOLT Commander	PRT 1 + 2
Maanen, van	Male	31-03-2014	MOLT deputy commander	PRT 2 + 3
Polet	Male	24-03-2014	MOLT Commander/S9 (CIMIC)	PRT 2 till 5
Putten, van	Male	16-04-2014	PRT Commander	PRT 4 + 5
Scherpenzeel, van	Male	28-03-2014	MOLT Commander	PRT 5 + 6