

In Plans and in Practice

The effectiveness of the Provincial Reconstruction Team
in Baghlan

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Abstract

The post-Cold War period is characterised by international peace interventions. The increasingly humanitarian oriented character of these operations resulted in additional humanitarian tasks that were required of the military, while they were entering the same field of work as non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Scholars and politicians worldwide elaborated on the possibilities and challenges of NGO-military cooperation. In this context, the new concept of the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) was introduced by the United States. In 2004, the Netherlands deployed a PRT in Baghlan, Afghanistan. The PRT in Baghlan was the first civil-military integrated mission executed by the Netherlands. By examining parliamentary papers and governmental reports and analysing conducted interviews with military personnel, political advisors and representatives from NGOs this study answers the question: *To what extent was the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Baghlan successful as the first Dutch civil-military operation?*

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Introduction

After the Cold War, the nature of international conflict changed. With the end of the worldwide ideological struggle, a sense of optimism arose and some believed world peace was within reach.¹ However, it soon became clear that international conflict would remain as the 1990s were dominated by civil conflicts in fragile states. Where the traditional use of the military was focused on national security, military activity in the post-Cold War period was characterised by foreign peace interventions. Over the years, peacekeeping in intrastate security conflicts evolved into post-conflict peacebuilding operations. The increasingly humanitarian character of these operations resulted in additional humanitarian tasks that were required of military personnel as a part of such operations. The military was now taking on tasks that were formerly executed exclusively by aid workers from non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Simultaneously, the expertise of NGOs became increasingly recognised by the international order. NGOs at this time were offered a seat at the table in the preparation and execution of peace operations. The role of NGOs in post-conflict peacebuilding increased in scope and became more extensive. These parallel developments led to challenges in the cooperation between NGOs and the military.

Several researchers elaborated on the nature of these challenges. Political scientist Francis Kofi Abiew argues that a large part of the problem is related to the mutual lack of familiarity and the new roles that both the military and NGOs had started to play.² The unfamiliarity with each other's roles resulted in ignorance of the military of the capacities of NGOs on the one hand, and unrealistic demands of NGOs about military operations on the other hand.³ Other complicating factors in cooperation are, for example, the differences in cultures and attitude.⁴ Conflict and Security scholar Volker Franke describes that these cultural differences lead to discrepant mutual expectations and even negative perceptions.⁵ Franke presents these differences in a table of factors affecting civil-military cooperation distinguishing cultural, organisational, operational and normative factors.⁶ Social anthropologist Donna Winslow underwrites the notion of complicating differences between NGOs and the military in her publication 'Strange Bedfellows: NGOs and the Military' from 2002. Winslow argues

¹ Fukuyama, F., 'The End of History', *The National Interest*, No. 16, (Summer 1989), 3-18.

² Abiew, F. K., 'NGO-Military Relations in Peace Operations', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 10 No. 1 (2003), 24-39.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Franke, V., 'The Peacebuilding Dilemma: Civil-Military Cooperation in Stability Operations', *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 5-25, 13.

⁶ Ibidem, 16.

that there are various points of tension that reoccur over and over again in various peace operations.⁷ In this research, four categories of friction are formulated and elaborated on: differences in organisational structure, different timeframes, goals and methods of accomplishing them and lastly mutual misunderstanding.⁸ Another fundamental aspect of the complicated relationship is neutrality. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for example has stated since its founding in 1863 that humanity, impartiality, neutrality and universality are the foundations of humanitarian aid.⁹ These conditions would safeguard the main goal of the NGO: helping those in need without discriminating the wounded and the suffering.¹⁰ The possible loss of neutrality of NGOs as a result of siding with the military organisations, which are evidently a political instrument in any conflict, is accompanied by the risk of politicising and militarising humanitarianism.¹¹ Therefore, cooperation with the military could result in a more dangerous work environment for NGOs. After all, when the lines between military personnel and aid workers blur, everyone becomes a target.

However, NGO-military cooperation and an integrated approach of peace operation became increasingly significant in post-conflict situations. This was also the case in 2004, when the Netherlands deployed troops to Baghlan, Afghanistan with the formation of a civil-military Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in which the Dutch armed forces and local and international civil actors worked together to establish security and stabilisation in the province. The PRTs were originally established as part of the US Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) campaign of 2001, but were handed over to International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) control in that same year and were ran by various countries of that coalition. The ISAF started out with the deployment of 5000 troops with the assignment to ensure security in Kabul.¹² It is important to note that ISAF was dissimilar to the US anti-terror mission Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), which was a reaction to the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001. Both campaigns were initially different in nature and goal.¹³ Over time, however, ISAF and OEF grew to be more and more interconnected.¹⁴ In 2003, NATO took over ISAF and expanded its area of responsibility beyond Kabul. With NATO taking over, the PRTs became the main tool in the

⁷ Winslow, D., 'Strange Bedfellows: NGOs and the Military in Humanitarian Crises', *International Journal of Peace Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2, (Autumn/Winter 2002), 35-55.

⁸ These categories are deduced from the publications of Abiew, Franke, Winslow and some of the conducted interviews.

⁹ Chandler, D., 'The Road to Military Humanitarianism: How the Human Rights NGOs Shaped a New Humanitarian Agenda', *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 3, (2001), 678-700, 679.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

¹¹ Franke, V., 'The Peacebuilding Dilemma: Civil-Military Cooperation in Stability Operations', *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 5-25, 19.

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ Chiari, B., 'Searching for the Right Audience: the Military's ISAF Experience', in: *From Venus to Mars? Provincial Reconstruction Teams and the European Military Experience in Afghanistan, 2001 – 2014*, (2014), 11.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

attempt to stabilise Afghanistan. The teams existed in almost all Afghan Provinces.¹⁵ They consisted of military personnel and a civilian Political Advisor (POLAD) and were primarily aimed at creating legitimacy for the Afghan government among the Afghan population, by initiating reconstruction projects, providing food and security and funding local aid projects.¹⁶ The concept of the PRT was based on civil-military cooperation. However, in reality there were more military personnel deployed than civilians.¹⁷ This meant that the PRTs did not operate as an integrated unit, as planned. Military historian Bernhard Chiari argues that although the PRTs were primarily meant as a civilian instrument for reconstruction, over time they became more and more dragged into the military mission in Afghanistan.¹⁸ With the limited civil-military base of the PRT, an overarching strategy focused on the shared efforts of civil and military personnel to stabilise Afghanistan was missing. Due to the lack of a general and clear strategy, the execution of the PRTs was determined by individual actors and their conceptions.¹⁹ Subsequently, the priorities of the countries coordinating the PRT influenced their character to a large extent.

Although the overarching goal of all the PRTs was to support the new government of Afghanistan, every PRT operated differently because of the coalition partner's own interpretation of the mission.²⁰ Before the Dutch PRT in Baghlan, the Dutch military had been active in the field of Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC), but only in small projects supporting NGOs in Cambodia, Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq. They were however not actively engaged in reconstruction. Before the PRT, CIMIC was used for a military goal: to 'win the hearts and minds' of the local population. The military performing humanitarian tasks without direct military goals was something unheard of. This explains why, initially, Dutch ministers were not too eager to establish provincial reconstruction with military personnel.²¹ However, due to international political arguments, Minister of Defence from 2002 until 2007, Henk Kamp, ordered to examine a possible contribution in Afghanistan in March 2004 and deployed the Dutch troops in Baghlan in October of the same year.²² Although there was initially some reluctance in the Netherlands about deploying military personnel to perform reconstruction activities, looking back on the mission, military historian Erwin van Loo stated that in general the Dutch PRT in Baghlan raised

¹⁵ Mack, H. H., 'Preface', in: *From Venus to Mars? Provincial Reconstruction Teams and the European Military Experience in Afghanistan, 2001 – 2014*, (2014), 9-10.

¹⁶ Chiari, 'Searching for the Right Audience', 11.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Ibidem, 12.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ Loo, E. van, 'Dutch Forces in Pul-e Khumri, 2004-2006', in: *From Venus to Mars? Provincial Reconstruction Teams and the European Military Experience in Afghanistan, 2001 – 2014*, (2014), 177.

²² Ibidem.

little controversy in the Netherlands and was overall considered successful.²³ This outcome was rather different from the initially hesitant reaction to the civil-military approach of the PRTs by the Dutch government. With the primary focus on provincial reconstruction without a direct military goal, the PRT in Baghlan was a new operational concept, which resulted in new ways of cooperation between the armed forces and civilian organisations, especially NGOs, in the Netherlands.²⁴

The introduction of the concept of a PRT and the deployment of the PRTs in Baghlan is a key moment in the development of NGO-military cooperation and civil-military operations. In this period of changing roles of NGOs and the armed forces in conflicts after the Cold War, PRTs largely shaped the international and Dutch view on NGO-military cooperation as it introduced an entirely new approach to military missions. It will be an important contribution to this debate to research the impact of NGO-military cooperation on the effectiveness of the PRT in Baghlan. Therefore, this research aims to answer the question: *To what extent was the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Baghlan successful as the first Dutch civil-military operation?*

Although the PRT in Baghlan was the first formal Dutch civil-military operation, the research which has been performed concerning the functioning of the operation and the roles of NGOs and the Dutch armed forces in its effectiveness is limited. Despite the fact that the international scholarly debate concerning civil-military cooperation is extensive and includes literature about the PRTs in Afghanistan, hardly any publication concerns the Dutch PRT in Baghlan.²⁵ Military scholar Erwin van Loo even states that the Dutch deployment in Baghlan is largely forgotten, as the operation was overshadowed by two much larger deployments in Iraq (2003-2012) and Uruzgan (2006-2010).²⁶ Aside from Van Loo's article 'Dutch Forces in Pul-e Khumri, 2004-2006' and military scholar Sebastiaan Rietjens' articles 'Managing Civil-Military Cooperation: Experiences from the Dutch Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan' and 'Understanding the Performance of Civil-Military Cooperation: A Case Study of the Dutch Provincial Reconstruction Team', little research has been done

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ Loo, E. van, 'Dutch Forces in Pul-e Khumri, 2004-2006', 177-194.

²⁵ Aall, 'NGOs, conflict management and peacekeeping', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (2000), 121-141. Abiew, 'NGO-Military Relations in Peace Operations', *International Peacekeeping*, 24-39. Abiew, 'From Civil Strife to Civic Society: NGO-Military Cooperation in Peace Operations', *Occasional Paper*, No. 39, (2003), 3-27. Berge, 'Best & Bad Practices on Civil-Military Interaction', *Civil-Military Cooperation Centre of Excellence*, (June 2014). Franke, 'Peacebuilding Dilemma: Civil-Military Cooperation in Stability Operations', *International Journal of Peace Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2, (Autumn/Winter 2006), 5-25. Rollins, 'Civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) in crisis response operations: The implications for NATO', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 8, No. 1, (2001), 122 – 129. Chiari, *From Venus to Mars? Provincial Reconstruction Teams and the European Military Experience in Afghanistan, 2001-2014*, (2014), 177-194.

²⁶ Loo, van, 'Dutch Forces in Pul-e Khumri', 177-194.

on the Dutch experiences during the PRT in Baghlan.²⁷ In his article Van Loo focusses on the Dutch approach of the concept of the PRT, comparing this with the other lead nations of the PRT's in Afghanistan.²⁸ He studies the operation in Baghlan as an intermediate step for the deployment of Dutch troops to Uruzgan in 2006 and touches upon the military challenges that the Dutch team in Baghlan encountered.²⁹ In his first article, Rietjens studies the PRT in Baghlan from a management perspective, analysing the cooperation between military and civilian actors.³⁰ He researches eight partnerships between the Dutch PRT and local and international civilian actors and formulates the successive steps of the civil-military cooperation process in Baghlan.³¹ His second publication assesses the outcome of these eight partnerships between the PRT and local and international civilian actors.³²

Neither of the studies by Van Loo or Rietjens focuses on the political process leading up to the Dutch deployment in Baghlan nor do the authors use the formulated parliamentary goals to measure the effectiveness of the operation. Rietjens and Van Loo do use some interviews with military personnel, this research, however, provides different point of views by interviewing people involved with the PRT from the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and representatives of NGO's. Furthermore, Van Loo approaches the PRT in Baghlan as the intermediate step for deployment in Uruzgan, while this study assesses the function of the PRT in the broader context of civil-military and NGO-military cooperation. Rietjens studies eight specific partnerships from a management perspective and subsequently measures their effectiveness and impact, while this study researches the overarching goals formulated by the Dutch government and aims to measure the general effectiveness of the operation. Therefore, this research is a valuable contribution in the debate concerning the first Dutch civil-military operation and the international development towards a more integrated approach of peace operations. In addition to the contribution to the historical debate concerning civil-military cooperation, this study is also valuable with respect to current and future peacebuilding operations. The interviews performed during this research showed that cooperation between NGOs and the

²⁷ Rietjens, 'Managing Civil-Military Cooperation: Experiences from the Dutch Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan', *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 34, No. 2, (January 2008), 173-207. Rietjens, 'Understanding the Performance of Civil-Military Cooperation: A Case Study of the Dutch Provincial Reconstruction Team', *The Pearson Papers*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Spring 2008), 42-67. These articles were published in conjunction with Rietjens' dissertation: *Civil-Military Cooperation in Response to a Complex Emergency: Just another Drill?*, (March 2006). Loo, van, 'Dutch Forces in Pul-e Khumri', 177-194.

²⁸ Loo, van, 'Dutch Forces in Pul-e Khumri', 178.

²⁹ Ibidem.

³⁰ Rietjens, 'Managing Civil-Military Cooperation', 173-207.

³¹ Ibidem, 173-174.

³² Rietjens, 'Understanding the Performance of Civil-Military Cooperation', 42-67.

military in contemporary post-conflict situations is still not without friction.³³ The functioning of the Dutch PRT in Baghlan can offer lessons that are still relevant today.

In order to answer the proposed research question, chapter 1 of this study examines the development of the roles of NGOs and the military in peacebuilding missions in the post-Cold War era and the complications which resulted from it. This is fundamental, as it is not possible to adequately study the dynamics of the military and NGOs during the civil-military operation in Baghlan without fully understanding how their roles have changed since the end of the Cold War: comprehending the *Zeitgeist* which affected the Dutch approach of the PRT concept is crucial. Chapter 2 elaborates on how the Dutch policy concerning the PRT was formulated in relation to the changing nature of international conflict. This research will focus on the goals of this civil-military mission. It discusses how the Dutch government initially perceived the mission in Afghanistan and examines the early ambitions of the PRT. The Dutch policy papers concerning the PRT in Baghlan are the central sources of this chapter. By clarifying the formulated goals of the PRT, the effectiveness of the operation can be measured by comparing these goals with evaluation reports and the experiences of the parties involved. This is the focus of the third chapter. This chapter analyses the effectiveness of both NGOs and the military in Baghlan. Were the Dutch actions in Baghlan effective? Were the formulated goals realised? What were the experiences of aid workers from NGOs, military personnel and officials and Political Advisors (POLADs) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the operation in Afghanistan? Through the research conducted in the three chapters, the research question of this study can be adequately answered.

The research is partly based on secondary literature, but also on archival primary sources from the collection of the Netherlands Institute for Military History (NIMH). These sources have been used for earlier research concerning the PRT, but they have not yet been examined with the focus on civil-military effectiveness.³⁴ These sources primarily consist of transcripts of meetings, reports and evaluations from during and shortly after the mission. Furthermore, parliamentary papers and reports will be analysed in order to clarify the formulated goals of the Dutch government. These formulated goals will be used to measure the effectiveness of the operation in Baghlan by then comparing them with the experiences of the different parties involved in the PRT in Baghlan. To research and familiarise with the work field of peacebuilding operations and NGO-cooperation in the past and present, several

³³ Gwenda Nielen – Military personnel of the PRT in Uruzgan and later Chief Operational Communication and Civil Outreach in Afghanistan (interview on 27-10-2018). Sebastiaan Rietjens – Professor of Intelligence and Security at Netherlands Defence Academy (NLDA) (interview on 10-11-2018). Ad Beljaars – Senior Security Advisor of the Red Cross (interview on 21-11-2018). Jorrit Kamminga – Policy Officer of Oxfam Novib (interview on 2-11-2018). Pim Kraan – Chief Executive Officer of Save the Children Netherlands (interview on 6-12-2018).

³⁴ These primary sources vary from official correspondence concerning the PRT and evaluation reports of the missions. Some of these sources were also used in Erwin van Loo's publication 'Dutch Forces in Pul-e Khumri, 2004-2006: Learning on the job in Baghlan Province'.

interviews were conducted with current policy advisors on Security and Defence policy from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.³⁵ In this same light, a yearly NGO-military training with several experts was attended.³⁶ Subsequently, a variety of interviews served as the primary sources for this research. The interviewees were Political Advisors (POLADs), Commanders and military personnel serving in the Dutch PRT in Baghlan.³⁷ Additionally, a selection of aid workers from NGOs was interviewed, among which the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Save the Children, which were involved in reconstruction work in Afghanistan in this period.³⁸ Their experiences, in combination with several evaluation reports, will be used to measure the effectiveness of the operation by comparing them with the initially formulated goals of the Dutch government.

Oral history is sometimes criticised for being subjective and unreliable, which can be a pitfall. It is argued that even when one assumes that people are trying to be completely honest, memories always fade and colour with the passing of time. However, using interviews as a key source in this research is a conscious choice, as oral history is eminently fit to study complications based on cooperation and relations. Only personal experiences can describe complexities, such as the challenges of working together with other people, as this subject is in essence subjective and it is important to acknowledge that. Additionally, the conducted interviews provide interesting insights about the impact and the aftermath of the PRT, as the interviewees were now able to look back on their experiences in the context of the events that happened afterwards.

A final consideration is that this research is limited to NGO-military cooperation during post-conflict peacebuilding operations. The conclusions of this research will therefore not be necessarily representative of any other example of NGO-military cooperation in situations like disaster relief after earthquakes, tsunamis and other natural disasters. Furthermore, this research only focuses on the Dutch armed forces, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NGOs within the mission of the PRT in Baghlan. The conclusions of this study will thus not be per definition similar to other examples of NGO-military cooperation in international conflicts or even other PRTs. Nevertheless, this research will be a valuable addition to the general debate about NGO-military cooperation. Each example of NGO-military

³⁵ Sander van der Sluis – Strategic Policy Advisor Security and Defence policy and UN peacekeeping (interview on 19-09-2018). Wouter van de Staaïj – Policy Officers Security Policy Afghanistan (interview on 19-09-2018).

³⁶ Gezondheidszorg in Ontwikkelingslanden (GOLAMA) training, part of military master program (6-11-2018), representatives from NGO's present that day: Martine Flokstra – Artsen zonder Grenzen, Willem van der Put – HealthWorks, Jan Lamberink – ZOA, Arjan Hehenkamp – Stichting Vluchteling.

³⁷ Emiel de Bont – Political Advisor PRT Baghlan in 2006 (interview on 31-10-2018). Erik de Feijter – Political Advisor PRT Baghlan in 2005 (interview on 6-11-2018). Yvonne Stassen – Political Advisor PRT Baghlan in 2004-2005 (interview on 30-10-2018). Robbert Dankers – Head of MOLT-team PRT Baghlan (interview on 1-11-2018). Gwenda Nielen – Military personnel of the PRT in Uruzgan and later Chief Operational Communication and Civil Outreach in Afghanistan (interview on 27-10-2018).

³⁸ Ad Beljaars – Senior Security Advisor of the Red Cross (interview on 21-11-2018). Jorrit Kamminga – Policy Officer of Oxfam Novib (interview on 2-11-2018). Pim Kraan – Chief Executive Officer of Save the Children Netherlands (interview on 6-12-2018).

cooperation differs from another, but lessons can be drawn from the Baghlan case, which will increase our understanding of the challenges of NGO-military cooperation and eventually help to overcome them.

Chapter 1: Changing Roles

The Cold War changed the world order fundamentally and simultaneously changed the nature and perception of conflict. During the Cold War, the purpose of the military was obvious, as the ideological battle between capitalism and communism resulted in various wars around the world. It was clear to the Dutch military for example, that the main goal of the armed forces was to defend the NATO territory.³⁹ With the end of the Cold War, a sense of optimism arose.⁴⁰ Although some hoped or believed that wars would soon be something of the past, in the decennium after the fall of the Berlin Wall it became clear that international conflict would remain. The 1990s were dominated by conflicts between and within fragile states. These conflicts created the previously unknown risks of dangerous non-state actors, like terrorist groups, cross-border crime and piracy, while some of the Cold War threats like nuclear weapons did not cease to exist.⁴¹ These changes had a profound impact on the deployment of military personnel and the overall function of the military.

International responsibility

After the Cold War, the United Nations increasingly perceived international security as the responsibility of the international community.⁴² Initially, the concept of a peace operation seemed quite simple: the international community oversaw and assisted in the negotiating process with the consent of all parties involved.⁴³ After this, humanitarian organisations would come to the post-conflict region to assist in the reconstruction.⁴⁴ Yet the reality of the execution of such an operation turned out to be more complex.

The Security Council of the United Nations reacted to this reality by requesting the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, to write 'An Agenda for Peace: Preventive diplomacy, peace-making and peace-keeping' in 1992. Boutros-Ghali was asked to research the opportunities of strengthening the capacity of the UN for preventive diplomacy, peace-making and peacekeeping by examining the nature of conflict and giving recommendations for more effective policy and approach.⁴⁵ His report stated that in post-Cold War conflict the UN needed to promote international peace and security, secure justice and human rights, promote social progress and

³⁹ Homan, K, 'De Nederlandse krijgsmacht in transformatie', *Clingendael Magazine*, (2011), 151-172, 152.

⁴⁰ Fukuyama, 'The End of History', 3-18.

⁴¹ Homan, 'De Nederlandse krijgsmacht in transformatie', 151.

⁴² Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 'An Agenda for Peace: Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping', 31 January 1992.

⁴³ Dorssen, F.J. van, 'Post-conflict stabilisatie en wederopbouw', *Militaire Spectator*, Vol. 4, (2006), 176-184, 176.

⁴⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁵ Boutros-Ghali, 'An Agenda for Peace', 31 January 1992.

improve standards of life in larger freedom globally.⁴⁶ The report was written in cooperation with various international actors like NGOs and elaborates on cooperation between both parties.⁴⁷ Peacekeeping in this report is defined as:

[T]he deployment of a United Nations presence in the field, hitherto with the consent of all the parties concerned, normally involving United Nations military and/or police personnel and frequently civilians as well. Peace-keeping is a technique that expands the possibilities for the prevention of conflict and the making of peace.⁴⁸

In this definition of peacekeeping, Boutros-Ghali specifically mentions civil-military cooperation. Closely linked to peacekeeping is post-conflict peacebuilding, stated Boutros-Ghali, which he defines as: '[A]ction to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.'⁴⁹ 'An Agenda for Peace' formulated that peacekeeping and peacebuilding requested for military cooperation with various civilian parties, amongst whom NGOs.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, confusion remained about the roles and the responsibilities of civilian and military personnel in operations in the 1990s, as the military accepted humanitarian tasks while it also continued to deliver armed personnel.⁵¹ This led to the growing wish to efficiently integrate civil-military cooperation in peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, especially in post-civil war context.⁵²

This multi-dimensional peacekeeping took place in a very complex environment.⁵³ Military personnel had to adjust to the new kind of tasks in the various aspects of reconstruction. Tasks they were not trained for and they were not familiar with, such as the stabilisation of good governance, reconstruction and CIMIC activities in which they needed to handle religious and ethnic sensitivities.⁵⁴ This created new challenges of cooperation, overarching strategies, unity and compromise.⁵⁵ It became

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, 'Definitions'.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, 'Definitions'.

⁵⁰ Aall, 'NGOs, conflict management and peacekeeping', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (2000), 121-141, 123.

⁵¹ Ibidem, 123.

⁵² Cammaert, Klappe, 'Fighting Peacekeepers, the use of force and UN Peacekeeping Operations', *Militaire Spectator*, Vol. 175, No. 1, (2006), 14-21, 14.

⁵³ Ibidem.

⁵⁴ *Good governance* is defined by the United Nations as: 'The process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented)', in: United Nations, 'What is good Governance?', Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, July 2009.

Dorssen, van, 'Post-conflict stabilisatie en wederopbouw', 178.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, 180-184.

very clear that purely military activities were not satisfactory to bring security and stability to peace operations.

The growing influence of NGO's

The changing of the international order not only influenced the armed forces of nation-states, but also other international actors, such as NGOs. Although NGOs were already offering relief in times of crises in the nineteenth century, globalisation in the twentieth century made NGOs influential actors in the international field. During the Cold War, NGOs became key players in the humanitarian aid in the aftermath of conflict in several areas all over the world. The development of their position can roughly be split up in two categories, which are closely related to the extent to which the NGO is willing to cooperate with the military. The first category of NGOs focuses on impartiality, neutrality and universality. However, in the late 1990s, the role of NGOs grew and the second category of NGOs introduced 'new humanitarianism'; a more pragmatic approach to the earlier core values.⁵⁶

The International Red Cross is an example of an NGO in the first category. The fundamental values of the International Red Cross and many other early NGOs have been and still are impartiality, neutrality and universality.⁵⁷ These values lay at the core of the earliest definition of humanitarian aid. In this definition, it is of great importance that aid workers should not discriminate against whom they assist and should not be politically involved in the crisis they are operating in.⁵⁸ Safeguarding these principles would protect the distinction between political, military operations and non-political humanitarian operations. In 1992, the president of the Red Cross, Cornelia Sommaruga stated that: 'Humanitarian endeavour and political action must go their separate ways if the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian work are not to be jeopardized.'⁵⁹ Many relief organisations felt that they filled the temporary humanitarian gap that arose after conflict and that this could not be met through the government of the concerning state.⁶⁰ Also the human rights organisation Amnesty International articulated the value of universality in its work on human rights and the liberation of 'prisoners of conscience' since its inception in 1961.⁶¹ It is especially this universalistic and non-political approach that made NGOs key players in the international field. These NGOs helped out where states could or did not. During the Cold War, they responded to the lack of international institutional organised

⁵⁶ Chandler, 'The Road to Military Humanitarianism: How the Human Rights NGOs Shaped a New Humanitarian Agenda', *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 23, (2001), 678-700.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, 679.

⁵⁸ Ibidem.

⁵⁹ Warner, D., 'The Politics of the Political/Humanitarian Divide', *International Review of the Red Cross*, No. 833 (1999), <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/article/other/57jpt3.htm>.

⁶⁰ Ibidem, 680.

⁶¹ Chandler, 'The Road to Military Humanitarianism', 680.

interventions by not taking a stand in the bipolar power struggle.⁶² While states were preoccupied with politics and power, NGOs put people before politics.

In the late 1990s, NGOs increasingly shaped the international humanitarian agenda. Human Rights scholar David Chandler argues that humanitarianism became the main focus of the international agenda.⁶³ He states that terms like ethical or moral foreign policy became integrated into strategic international policy in the decennium after the Cold War.⁶⁴ At this point, NGOs were regularly offered a seat at the table during the process of policymaking, seats that were previously only reserved for nation states. Chandler claims that there has been a shift in the core convictions of NGOs and that a 'new humanitarian' consensus arose. In his view, this new humanitarian consensus changed the position of NGOs fundamentally.⁶⁵ It introduced two new principles: the freedom of criticism and the right of intervention.⁶⁶ These new humanitarian principles clashed with earlier NGO-values such as neutrality: freedom of criticism implied the condemnation of the 'silence' of impartiality and the right of intervention made that military intervention was increasingly considered as legitimate.⁶⁷ These new humanitarian principles emphasised extensive involvement in the conflict and post-conflict areas with a focus on human rights. As NGOs became more involved in conflict and post-conflict situations, their role broadened. For some NGOs, this meant that they became more pragmatic in their operations and increasingly relied on the protection of the military.⁶⁸ The humanitarian operations of NGOs became more strategic with the intensification of their long-term involvement. Oxfam Novib and Save the Children are examples of these category NGOs with a more developmental approach and a long-term strategy.⁶⁹ In order to prevent the politicisation of their operation, NGOs chose a discourse of morals, ethics and human rights.⁷⁰ The way Chandler elaborates on how new humanitarianism broadened the role of NGOs, provides insight into the development of NGOs becoming extensively involved in (post-)conflict situations. This extended role led some NGOs to a more pragmatic way of operating and less emphasis on neutrality. The active involvement of NGOs in (post-)conflict situations made them important players in formerly exclusively military affairs.

⁶² Ibidem, 281.

⁶³ Chandler, 'The Road to Military Humanitarianism', 678-700.

⁶⁴ Ibidem, 678.

⁶⁵ Ibidem.

⁶⁶ Ibidem, 685.

⁶⁷ Ibidem, 678.

⁶⁸ Ibidem, 683.

⁶⁹ Ibidem.

⁷⁰ Ibidem.

This elaboration on the development of peacebuilding shows that in the first decennia after the Cold War it became clear that both the military and NGOs could play important roles in peace operations. Cooperation, however, turned out to be complicated. Various scholars have researched the friction between NGOs and the military; their conclusions about these frictions can be divided into four categories.

Firstly, there are differences in the organisational structure of NGOs and the military, which may result in frictions.⁷¹ The military has a very hierarchical structure, while aid workers tend to act more independently and do not follow a clear set of rules or operational orders like military personnel does.⁷² This leads to the military perception that NGOs do not provide professionally organised aid with the same quality as the military.⁷³ The organisational composition of gender, age and ethnicity of NGOs and the military is also dissimilar.⁷⁴

Secondly, both actors use very different time frames in their campaigns. NGOs commit to a region for a long time. This has an effect on how they define their goals and accomplishments. Ending human suffering in a specific region is a long-term mission.⁷⁵ The military formulates other goals and often deploys for a shorter period.⁷⁶ These differing timeframes can lead to misunderstandings and frustration. NGOs get a feeling of ‘We’ve got the time, but you’ve got a watch’, as military scholar Sebastiaan Rietjens mentions during his interview, concerning these different time frames during the PRT in Baghlan.⁷⁷

Thirdly, NGOs and the military differ in their goals and their respective methods of accomplishing them. The primary goal of the military is to restore order and security, so that afterwards humanitarian aid can be performed.⁷⁸ However, the performing of these humanitarian tasks is also the military’s responsibility in post-conflict peacebuilding operations. Often these humanitarian tasks remain limited to ‘Hearts and Minds’ (H&M) campaigns: humanitarian projects to win the trust of the local population. These activities have a military strategic purpose.⁷⁹ These hearts and minds campaigns are not popular by NGOs as their aid workers aim to offer non-political aid and see the diminishing of human suffering as their main goal, not as a tool.⁸⁰

⁷¹ Franke, ‘The Peacebuilding Dilemma’, 16.

⁷² Abiew, ‘NGO-Military Relations in Peace Operations’, 30.

⁷³ Ibidem.

⁷⁴ Winslow, ‘Strange Bedfellows: NGOs and the Military in Humanitarian Crises’, 39.

⁷⁵ Ibidem, 44.

⁷⁶ Ibidem.

⁷⁷ Sebastiaan Rietjens – Professor of Intelligence and Security at Netherlands Defence Academy (NLDA) (interview on 10-11-2018)

⁷⁸ Winslow, ‘Strange Bedfellows: NGOs and the Military in Humanitarian Crises’, 41.

⁷⁹ Ibidem, 42.

⁸⁰ Abiew, ‘NGO-Military Relations in Peace Operations’, 32.

Fourthly, there exist mutual misunderstandings and stereotypes that undermine effective cooperation. Both parties are not entirely aware of each other roles and potency. While military officials often view NGOs as unprofessional, incompetent and uncoordinated, NGOs have the tendency to mistrust the intentions of the military and have an inadequate understanding of the functioning and hierarchy in the military organisation.⁸¹ Although these perceptions are based on stereotypes, these stereotypes are built on previous experiences.⁸² However, to move further and cooperate more effectively in the future, these stereotypes need to be overcome and mutual understanding needs to be achieved.

Cooperation between NGOs and the military is challenging, but there is much that can be gained as conflicts and post-conflict situations have become increasingly complex. The PRT in Baghlan was set out to increase security and stability in the region and facilitate reconstruction activities in this particular period in which scholars and the international community increasingly emphasised the importance of cooperation between NGOs and the military. In the next chapter will be elaborated on how the goals of the PRT in Baghlan were formulated by the Dutch government and whether they incorporated the newly developed roles of NGOs and the military.

⁸¹ Ibidem, 29-30.

⁸² Interview with Rietjens.

Chapter 2: Dutch Ambitions in PRT Baghlan

In a period of scholarly and political debate about post-conflict peacebuilding and the changing roles of the military and NGOs, a new concept was introduced by the United States in 2002: the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). In February 2003, President George W. Bush of the United States and President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan formulated a joint statement expressing that: 'President Karzai strongly favours the creation by the United States and other coalition partners of a number of PRTs that will work closely with Afghan government ministries, UN agencies and NGOs in advancing common reconstruction objectives.'⁸³ The PRT consisted of a small civilian-military team, with the purpose of combining military and civilian expertise to enable civilian organisations to operate in dangerous environments.⁸⁴ This new form of peacebuilding was a product of its time building on the changing setting of post-conflict environments.⁸⁵ The PRTs in Afghanistan focused on extending the central Afghan government's authority on a provincial level.⁸⁶ The provincial focus and the civil-military approach should enable PRTs to have an entirely new mandate to improve security, support good governance and enhance provincial development.⁸⁷

The PRT concept arose in the context of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan in a period in which ISAF had difficulties expanding its reach beyond Kabul.⁸⁸ The Afghan population at this time had a better chance of receiving protection of ISAF forces in Kabul than in any other part of Afghanistan, which led to a large flux of citizens to the capital.⁸⁹ NGOs therefore, urged NATO to expand its leadership to the provinces by deploying Provincial Reconstruction Teams.⁹⁰ The first PRT was established by the United States in the Gardez Province in February 2003.⁹¹ The Gardez PRT was followed by several PRTs in other provinces, fourteen led by the United States as a part of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and several others led by different NATO member states as part of ISAF. In October 2004, there were five ISAF PRTs, led by the British (Mazar-e-Sharif, Maimana), the German (Kunduz, Feyzabad), and the Dutch (Baghlan).⁹² Other nations would

⁸³ NIMH, *Collectie Vredesoperaties*, PRT Baghlan: besluitvorming/voorbereidingen, 'Joint statement from Presidents Bush and Karzai', February 2003.

⁸⁴ United States Institute of Peace, 'The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq and Afghanistan', <https://www.usip.org/publications/2007/10/us-experience-provincial-reconstruction-teams-iraq-and-afghanistan>.

⁸⁵ As described in Chapter 1.

⁸⁶ United States Institute of Peace, 'The U.S. Experience with PRTs'.

⁸⁷ US AID, 'Provincial Reconstruction Teams', <https://www.usaid.gov/provincial-reconstruction-teams>.

⁸⁸ Rietjens, *Just Another Drill?*, (March 2006), 103.

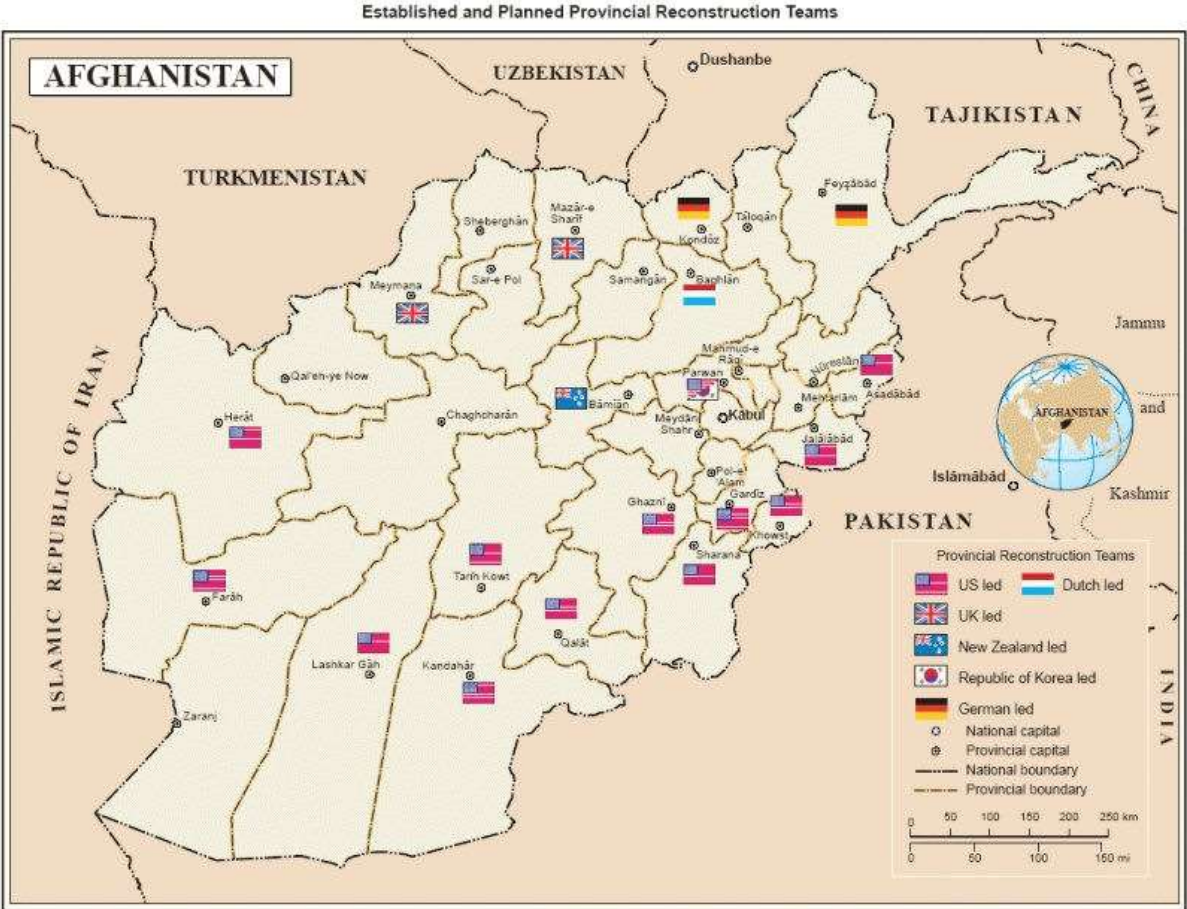
⁸⁹ *Ibidem*

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*.

⁹² *Ibidem*.

later also deploy their own PRTs and every lead nation approached the PRT concept in its own distinct way. The Figure 1 below shows the deployment of PRTs in 2004.



Source: UN: Department of Peacekeeping Operations Cartographic Section. Amended for Committee's use.

Figure 1: UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations Cartographic Section.

The Cabinet

In the Netherlands, the concept of a Provincial Reconstruction Team was first discussed in 2003. In April of that year, the board of Migration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs presented a policy paper to the Parliament concerning Afghanistan.⁹³ This paper introduced the PRT concept and formulated the purpose of the PRT as establishing safe enclaves and strengthening the position of the central government in Afghanistan.⁹⁴ It described how the formation of the American PRT consisted of military personnel and a representative of the American State Department who was responsible for the budget

⁹³ Directie Personenverkeer, Migratie en Vreemdelingenzaken, Afdeling Asiel- en Migratiezaken, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Algemeen ambtsbericht Afghanistan, April 2003.

⁹⁴ Directie Personenverkeer, Migratie en Vreemdelingenzaken, Afdeling Asiel- en Migratiezaken, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Algemeen ambtsbericht Afghanistan, April 2003, 2.3.2., 11.

available for reconstruction and humanitarian activities in cooperation with NGOs.⁹⁵ This paper showed that the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs were still hesitant about the effectiveness of the PRTs in the region and noted that NGOs were sceptical and reticent about cooperation.⁹⁶

With the deployment of multiple American PRTs however, gradually the pressure arose for other nations to get involved in this new kind of mission. Pressure from the international community is sometimes subtle, but can also be quite direct. The last was the case when the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs received a message from the United States Department of State on 28 April 2003.⁹⁷ In this message, the Pentagon requested the Netherlands to consider the deployment of a Dutch PRT.⁹⁸ It is argued in this message that: 'Countries who join in now can realise high political visibility with limited costs.'⁹⁹ It also stated that because of the declining Dutch profile in the region, with the decrease of humanitarian assistance and the end of the Dutch leading involvement in ISAF, it would be wise to consider the deployment of a Dutch PRT seriously.¹⁰⁰

Political visibility was an important argument in favour of deployment. This also showed from the decision not to deploy in Afghanistan under the German umbrella, but to deploy an independent PRT in Baghlan with the Netherlands as lead nation.¹⁰¹ These international political arguments largely persuaded Minister of Defence, Henk Kamp of the conservative-liberal party VVD, to make the eventual decision to urge the Parliament to consider the deployment of a Dutch PRT on 5 March 2004.¹⁰² He stated that the Dutch PRT should aim to create a secure environment to improve the chances of successful reconstruction and that Dutch deployment was important as NATO urged its member states to contribute to ISAF through the deployment of a PRT.¹⁰³ An examination on possible deployment was executed by the Dutch military and resulted in the proposal of Baghlan as a possible province for a Dutch PRT.¹⁰⁴ These sources show that strategic or humanitarian considerations concerning the situation in Afghanistan were accessory to the actual grounds for Kamp's decision for deployment: political visibility and anticipating the pressure from NATO and the United States to contribute. The grounds for deployment were thus primarily diplomatic.

⁹⁵ Ibidem.

⁹⁶ Ibidem.

⁹⁷ NIMH, Collectie Vredesoperaties, PRT Baghlan: besluitvorming/voorbereidingen, 'Betreft VS/Afghanistan: PRT's', United States Department of State, 28 April 2003.

⁹⁸ Ibidem.

⁹⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁰ Ibidem.

¹⁰¹ Loo, van, 'Dutch Forces in Pul-e Khumri', 180.

¹⁰² Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Kamerstuk 27925, nr. 119, Bestrijding internationaal terrorisme, vergaderjaar 2003-2004, 5 March 2004.

¹⁰³ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁴ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Kamerstuk 27925, nr. 133, Bestrijding internationaal terrorisme, vergaderjaar 2003-2004, 28 June 2004.

On 28 June 2004, the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs formulated the decision to deploy 120 to 150 people of Dutch military personnel.¹⁰⁵ The PRT would have the purpose of assisting the Afghan government to increase security and stability, to strengthen the central Afghan government's authority in the province and to facilitate reconstruction activities of the government and other actors.¹⁰⁶ Baghlan was selected as province on the grounds of (1) NATO asking the Netherlands to deploy troops here, (2) the strategic position of Baghlan in Afghanistan, (3) the fact that Germany asked the Netherlands to deploy troops in Baghlan, and (4) the possibility of quick deployment because of the relative short preparation time that was necessary in this region.¹⁰⁷ The roles of the PRT in Baghlan were somewhat specified in the parliamentary document of 28 June and were fourfold. Firstly, the elections were the first and foremost focus of the PRT. The PRT would oversee and assist in the process of the presidential and parliamentary election in Baghlan.¹⁰⁸ Secondly, the PRT would focus on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of this region.¹⁰⁹ Thirdly, the PRT in Baghlan was necessary as the human rights situation in Afghanistan was critical.¹¹⁰ Fourthly, offering humanitarian relief and assisting in reconstruction would be points of focus of the PRT in the Baghlan province. It was emphasised that the PRT would try to make a shift from providing aid to contributing to structural reconstruction, while not dismissing humanitarian needs.¹¹¹ In relation to this humanitarian aspect of the PRT, a Political Advisor (POLAD) from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, specialised in development cooperation would be deployed, who would coordinate these projects and cooperate with NGOs.¹¹²

To provide a more concrete overview to measure the effectiveness of the PRT, this study presents the Dutch ambitions in Baghlan, as formulated in the policy papers, in the following Figure 2. In this figure, two main goals and some sub-goals are distilled from the sources:

¹⁰⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁸ Ibidem, 4.

¹⁰⁹ Ibidem, 5.

¹¹⁰ Ibidem, 5-6.

¹¹¹ Ibidem, 6.

¹¹² Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Kamerstuk 27925, nr. 139, Bestrijding internationaal terrorisme, vergaderjaar 2003-2004, 26 July 2004, 7.

Increasing Security and Stability	Facilitating Reconstruction
Overseeing and assisting in the election process	Contributing to structural reconstruction
Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of the province	Offering humanitarian relief
	Improving the human rights situation

Figure 2: Index of formulated goals for the Dutch Provincial Reconstruction Team in Baghlan.

The Parliament

The Parliament was not unanimously in favour of the PRT. In reaction to the policy paper that introduced PRTs in the Netherlands, several parliamentary questions directed to the Minister of Defence Kamp and Minister of Foreign Affairs Jaap de Hoop Scheffer concerning the PRT-concept were formulated in a debate.¹¹³ This debate showed a reserved attitude in the Parliament towards the PRT-concept, in which the concept was not principally rejected, but many critical questions were raised. Several representatives called for more information about the PRT, and in reaction, the Minister of Foreign Affairs explained the purpose of the PRTs and emphasised that these teams would be essential in the creation of a stable environment and the coordination with aid organisations.¹¹⁴ He formulated that the activities of the PRT were focused on the solving of root causes of the instability of Afghanistan.¹¹⁵ These activities, he named, consisted of building up relations with local authorities, reconstruction of administrative infrastructure at a regional and local level, the monitoring of the development of the security situation, also in service of NGOs, supporting local authorities and assisting in civil-military reconstruction activities.¹¹⁶ Although there was not yet any consideration expressed about the deployment of a Dutch PRT at that time, there was a Dutch commitment to support the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Development Cooperation formally expressed in a policy paper that the Netherlands was committed to contribute to the NATO operation ISAF and possibly to the Operation Enduring Freedom on 25 June 2003.¹¹⁷

The Parliament elaborated with the involved ministers on the several official messages and reports concerning PRTs and the security situation in Afghanistan in a general debate on 24 July

¹¹³ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Kamerstuk 1364, Aanhangsel van de Handeling, Vragen gesteld door de leden der Kamer, met de daarop door de regering gegeven antwoorden, vergaderjaar 2002-2003, 28 April 2003.

¹¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹¹⁷ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Kamerstuk 27925, nr. 95, Bestrijding internationaal terrorisme, Brief van de ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken, van Defensie en voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, 25 June 2003.

2003.¹¹⁸ Some representatives, like Geert Wilders, of the conservative-liberal party *VVD*, expressed their enthusiasm about the potential of PRTs. Also representative Jules Kortenhorst, of the Christian-Democratic party *CDA*, argued that PRTs could improve the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, other representatives, like Tineke Huizinga-Heringa, of the orthodox Calvinist party *ChristenUnie*, questioned the effectiveness of small civil-military teams in a worsened environment in Afghanistan.¹²⁰ Also Bert Koenders, of the labour party *PvdA*, stated that deployed PRTs at that time were insufficient in obtaining the security that was needed to durably stabilise Afghanistan.¹²¹ In reaction to these notes of the representatives, the ministers explained again the purpose of PRTs and this time emphasised that these teams were fit to take on civil tasks but also stimulate economic reconstruction.¹²² The Minister of Foreign Affairs noted that it was difficult to conclude when the PRT would reach its end-state.¹²³ Nonetheless, the Minister mentioned the possibility of the deployment of a Dutch PRT.¹²⁴ It took Dutch Parliament some time to get behind the deployment of a Dutch PRT and the initial response to the PRT concept was reserved, yet it eventually did not protest the plans of the Cabinet and the Dutch PRT was deployed in 2004. Some parliamentarians saw the potential of this new concept, while others remained hesitant.

Interim conclusion

The fact that the deployment of a Dutch PRT in Baghlan was not undisputed in Parliament is not surprising. From the multiple policy papers, one can – with some effort – identify the general goals of the PRT (see Figure 2). However, the concrete steps that needed to be taken to accomplish these goals remained undefined. The question remained what ‘assisting the Afghan government to increase security and stability and to facilitate reconstruction activities of the government and other actors’ entailed in practice. Apart from the most concrete goal concerning the overseeing and assisting in the election process, even the sub-goals remained quite general and vague. How the DDR of the province would be achieved had not been clearly defined, nor was it specified what kind of humanitarian relief would be offered nor how the human rights situation in Baghlan would be improved. Additionally, it was also unclear, how would it be determined when these goals were actually fulfilled. When are security and stability realised? When will structural reconstruction be finished?

¹¹⁸ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Kamerstuk 27925, nr. 97, Bestrijding internationaal terrorisme, Verslag van een algemeen overleg, 24 July 2003.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹²¹ *Ibidem*.

¹²² *Ibidem*.

¹²³ *Ibidem*.

¹²⁴ *Ibidem*.

The vagueness about the end-state of the operation also raised questions by some representatives, who had sincere doubts about the mission in Baghlan. Yet the Parliament agreed to the deployment in Baghlan. From analysing the parliamentary documents about the deployment, it becomes clear that the strategic or humanitarian considerations concerning the situation in Afghanistan were accessory to the political motivation for deployment. It was important to Minister Kamp to contribute to ensure international political visibility in Afghanistan and to anticipate on the pressure from NATO and the United States. One can argue, therefore, that the Parliament reluctantly agreed the PRT to become the 'best student of the class' of the NATO and a good ally of the United States, diplomatic considerations that were crucial to Minister Kamp. This leads to the belief that the Dutch decision to deploy was mostly diplomatic in nature. Subsequently, the concerns expressed by representatives a year earlier, while debating the concept of PRTs, were not taken into consideration in the plans of deployment of the Dutch PRT in Baghlan. The fact that contributing to ISAF would be beneficial for the Dutch position in the international community seems predominant to every other reason to get involved in Baghlan. The actions that would lead to the realisation of the goals formulated for the operation, remained vague. The sources do not elaborate on how to convert these plans to practice. This resulted in persistent concerns in the Parliament, nonetheless about the cooperation with NGOs. How would the execution of reconstruction be coordinated with NGOs and how would they be able to cooperate with the military without blurring the lines between aid workers and soldiers, which would endanger NGOs?¹²⁵

Nevertheless, in July 2004 the Dutch PRT was deployed in Baghlan. History shows that plans formulated in policy papers are often not identical to their execution in practice. The PRT specifically, left quite some space for personal interpretation of the realisation of these goals for the personnel. This is why the next chapter elaborates on the experiences of military personnel, aid workers and political advisors from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in this period in Baghlan. Their experiences, accompanied by several evaluation reports, show how effective both the military and NGOs in Baghlan were in practice.

¹²⁵ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Kamerstuk 27925, nr. 142, Bestrijding internationaal terrorisme, vergaderjaar 2003-2004, 23 August 2004, 8.

Chapter 3: Effectiveness in Practice

The purpose assigned to the Dutch PRT in Baghlan was to assist the Afghan government in increasing security and stability and facilitating reconstruction activities of the government and other actors. This purpose was elaborated upon in several policy papers. In this study, the formulated goals are divided into two main goals with some sub-goals:

Increasing Security and Stability	Facilitating Reconstruction
Overseeing and assisting in the election process	Contributing to structural reconstruction
Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of the province	Offering humanitarian relief
	Improving the human rights situation

Figure 2: Index of formulated goals for the Dutch Provincial Reconstruction Team in Baghlan.

However, plans and practice are not always the same, particularly in a situation, as we have seen, where a practical elaboration of objectives was missing. By analysing evaluation reports from the Dutch government and NGOs and several interviews with military personnel, representatives from NGOs and political advisors from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this chapter researches the implementation of the formulated (sub-)goals of the PRT. This analysis is structured following the formulated goals of the Dutch government in 2003-2004 as presented in the table. Firstly, the aim to increase security and stability is discussed, thereby focusing on the formulated sub-goals; overseeing and assisting in the election process and the DDR of the province. Secondly, the facilitation of reconstruction and its sub-goals are examined. Did the PRT improve the human rights situation in Baghlan? Did the PRT offer humanitarian relief? And did it contribute to structural reconstruction?

It is important to note that the activities of the personnel of the PRT that are discussed in this part of the research were not formulated in the parliamentary papers and reports discussed in the previous chapter. The observations that are elaborated upon in this chapter are based on evaluation reports and experiences looking back on the operation in Baghlan after completion. In the process of the PRT more practical steps towards the formulated goals were taken. It is essential to not confuse this with an initial clear strategy, which was missing from the policy papers. Much of the interpretation of the operation has been done by the Generals, POLADs and other officials deployed in the PRT, as the Dutch government left much space for personal interpretation on how to realise the formulated goals. This is closely connected to the vagueness of the PRT concept in general. These matters are elaborated in the second part of this chapter. The second part of this chapter discusses the shortcomings and complications that limited the effectiveness of the military and NGOs in Baghlan in

general as described in the several interviews. These shortcomings and complications arose from experiences in the field during the operation. On the other hand, however, some interviewees were quite positive about the impact of the Dutch PRT. Therefore, this chapter also addresses the positive impact the PRT has had on Baghlan and NGO-military cooperation in general from the perspective of the people involved.

Increasing Security and Stability

The PRT aimed to eliminate the root causes of regional and local instability, in order to create an environment in which reconstruction activities could stand a chance.¹²⁶ To eliminate these root causes, the PRT focused on building relationships with local authorities and the Afghan population and monitoring the developments on security level in the province.¹²⁷ ‘Make contact. Build as many relationships in the region with as many parties as possible: the local police force, the municipality, juridical parties, schools, medical posts, et cetera. That was the method of getting an understanding of what was happening in the province and integrating into the region, which was necessary for accomplishing security and stability in the region’, explained the former head of one of the Military Observation and Liaison Teams (MOLT’s) in Baghlan, Robbert Dankers. He was deployed in Afghanistan in 2004 and was the commander of one of the three MOLT’s of the PRT. ‘We were very transparent, visible, maybe sometimes naïve in our approach to the Afghan population.’ During his time in Afghanistan, he and his team often performed patrols throughout the province. These patrols focused on disarmament and contributed to gaining the support of the Afghan population. Being visibly in control of the region was essential to demobilise and reintegrate the province with the central Afghan government.¹²⁸ This corresponds with the PRT assisting in the rebuilding of security and government structures through a security program called Security Sector Reform (SSR) in which disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration were the main points of focus.¹²⁹

One of the more concrete goals of the PRT was to oversee and assist in the election process. In both the presidential elections in September 2004 and the parliamentary elections in September 2005 the PRT team took on the responsibility to oversee the election process.¹³⁰ On this matter, Political Advisor (POLAD) Yvonne Stassen was interviewed. The function of the POLAD was multidimensional: he or she advised the commander about civil developments in the region and

¹²⁶ NIMH, Collectie Vredesoperaties, PRT Baghlan: evaluaties, ‘Eindevaluatie PRT Baghlan’, Ministerie van Defensie, 15 May 2007, 16.

¹²⁷ NIMH, ‘Eindevaluatie PRT Baghlan’, 16.

¹²⁸ Robbert Dankers – Head of MOLT-team PRT (interview on 1-11-2018).

¹²⁹ NIMH, ‘Eindevaluatie PRT Baghlan’, 17.

¹³⁰ NIMH, ‘Eindevaluatie PRT Baghlan’, 17.

cooperated with the CIMIC team of the PRT. Additionally, the POLAD had its own budget from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to spend on reconstruction and stabilisation of the region in cooperation with NGOs.¹³¹ Stassen in particular played an important role in the process of the parliamentary elections during her time as POLAD. She explained: 'My main focus was on social development, so I was mainly occupied with the parliamentary elections of 2005. It was important to educate the population before the elections took place, especially the women, who were mostly illiterate. But also the election candidates, who had never before prepared an election plan.'¹³² Both elections processes were completed peacefully and organised, which can therefore be considered as an accomplishment of the PRT.¹³³

Facilitating Reconstruction

During the Dutch deployment in Baghlan, several humanitarian relief activities took place. Though the PRT military personnel did not execute these relief activities, on occasion they supported them. Several NGOs were offering humanitarian relief in Afghanistan at that time. Save the Children and Oxfam Novib, for example, were already active in Afghanistan when the PRT in Baghlan was deployed. The projects run by these NGOs varied from facilitating education to promoting local communities.¹³⁴ The Red Cross had been deployed in Afghanistan since 1986 and is still present in Afghanistan today. During the deployment of the PRT, the Red Cross performed several humanitarian relief and reconstruction activities independent from the PRT. The organisation performed various field activities such as monitoring the conditions of detention, conducting mine action programmes, providing training in health care and performing surgical care, assisting the authorities with the provision of blood banks and laboratories, building water structures and hospitals and teaching in and promoting of the humanitarian law.¹³⁵ Red Cross Senior Security Advisor Ad Beljaars noted: 'The Red Cross has a very clear mandate: to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and to monitor and strengthen humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. This is what we did in Afghanistan, and what we continue to do worldwide.'¹³⁶

¹³¹ Erik de Feijter – Political Advisor PRT Baghlan in 2005 (interview on 6-11-2018).

¹³² Yvonne Stassen – Political Advisor PRT Baghlan in 2004-2005 (interview on 30-10-2018).

¹³³ NIMH, 'Eindevaluatie PRT', 6.

¹³⁴ Jorrit Kamminga – Policy Officer of Oxfam Novib (interview on 2-11-2018).

Pim Kraan – Chief Executive Officer of Save the Children Netherlands (interview on 6-12-2018).

¹³⁵ ICRC, 'Afghanistan update', <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/update/afghanistan-update-310805.htm>. ICRC, 'Mine action program Afghanistan', <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/misc/674f7w.htm>.

¹³⁶ Ad Beljaars – Senior Security Advisor Red Cross (interview on 21-11-2018).

Further to offering humanitarian relief, the PRT contributed to reconstruction in the region. A key role in this process was the POLAD. The POLAD's main responsibility was to coordinate the cooperation with NGOs and the execution of reconstruction activities. Military personnel occasionally assisted in these activities. The cooperation with NGOs was very valuable to the POLADs, Erik de Feijter, POLAD in 2005, stated: 'NGOs were very important, they largely executed our own projects in the region and in the meantime they were an essential source of intelligence. Additionally, they were of great value to us because we rotated a lot and NGO's were already longer active in the region, thus created a better understanding and feeling for the region.'¹³⁷ In the interviews, some examples of reconstruction activities came to the table. POLAD in 2006, Emiel de Bont, explained that the reconstruction activities in his period in Baghlan were mainly focused on education and infrastructure: 'We tried to provide access to areas in order to let children go to school. This called for the construction of bridges and walkways and the reconstruction of schools. So we worked together with NGOs and local authorities to realise that.'¹³⁸ Yvonne Stassen, POLAD in 2004-2005 also added: 'I tried to stimulate the local economy. There were three factories in Baghlan, but these were entirely destroyed by the war. During my time there we tried to reconstruct them. This was moderately successful, we did reconstruct one of the factories, but that did not "fix" the local economy.'¹³⁹ Furthermore, projects in the field of political reconstruction were installed, for example, the National Solidarity Programme (NSP). With this program 450 Community Development Councils were founded, which stimulated a more structured and proportional public participation.¹⁴⁰

However, what is the difference between these reconstruction activities as described by the POLADs and the Hearts and Minds (H&M) projects, which served a military purpose? H&M projects do not have a humanitarian goal but aim to win the support for the military presence in the region.¹⁴¹ As a result, H&M Projects had limited to no impact on structural reconstruction. How different were the POLAD's reconstruction activities from these projects? The CIMIC evaluation of the PRT by the Ministry of Defence explained on this matter that there was a distinction between H&M activities and long-term reconstruction projects.¹⁴² The evaluation formulated that the first category had a budget of 50.000 EU every six months. With this budget, approximately 280 H&M projects were conducted in

¹³⁷ Interview with De Feijter.

¹³⁸ Interview with De Bont.

¹³⁹ Interview with Stassen.

¹⁴⁰ NIHM, Collectie Vredesoperaties, PRT Baghlan: evaluaties, 'Twee Jaar Nederlands PRT in Baghlan', Emiel de Bont, 9 August 2006.

¹⁴¹ NIMH, Eindevaluatie PRT Baghlan, 18.

¹⁴² NIMH, Collectie Vredesoperaties, PRT Baghlan: evaluaties, 'Evaluatie CIMIC PRT PeK', F. J. Dorssen, 28 September 2006.

Baghlan.¹⁴³ The long-term projects – the reconstruction projects the POLADS speak about – were funded with a one-off budget of 500.000 EU and were not specifically defined by this funding, but were often projects in the field of water, electricity, bridges, roads and schools.¹⁴⁴ Sebastiaan Rietjens, Professor of Intelligence and Security at Netherlands Defence Academy (NLDA), who wrote his dissertation on civil-military cooperation in the PRT Baghlan in 2006, is critical about the impact of the long-term projects of the PRT: ‘In the case of a PRT, reconstruction should consist of long-term projects that do not serve a military purpose. I was astounded to find out what remained of the PRT long-term reconstruction projects after a year or two. They barely still functioned because fundamental aspects of reconstruction were inadequate anticipated. You cannot blame the military personnel involved, but you can blame the organisation.’¹⁴⁵ Rietjens’ statement can be substantiated with the CIMIC evaluation of the Ministry of Defence that admitted that many long-term projects turned out to be unrealistic or undesirable. The discrepancy between the long-term reconstruction ambitions and the disappointing accomplishment is due to the limited time available for the civil assessment that was executed in November 2004.¹⁴⁶ This limited time resulted in an inventory of possible long-term projects on the basis of what was possible, instead of what was achievable or more important; what was needed in the eyes of the local population and authorities.¹⁴⁷ In Rietjens’ view, this disappointing long-term impact made the operation unsuccessful. One could argue that as the Provincial Reconstruction Team did not provide structural reconstruction, the operation was insufficient. However, POLAD in 2006 Emiel de Bont saw this differently: ‘One can wonder how much long-term impact it has had, but maybe that transcends the purpose of a PRT.’¹⁴⁸ The former head of mission team Robbert Dankers agreed with this perception of the purpose of the PRT: ‘We did not perform any actual reconstruction, but we have created stability and earned the trust of the population. We did the pre-work for the NGOs.’¹⁴⁹ All three of these people were in Baghlan at the Dutch basis of the PRT and nevertheless perceived the core purpose of the concept quite differently. This dissonance is closely linked to the absence of a clearly formulated strategy of the PRT, which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

The final sub-goal concerning the facilitation of reconstruction focuses on human rights. The policy paper of 26 July 2004 formulated the human rights situation in the region as one of the reasons to

¹⁴³ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Rietjens.

¹⁴⁶ NIMH, Collectie Vredesoperaties, PRT Baghlan: evaluaties ‘Evaluatie CIMIC PRT PeK’, 28 September 2006.

¹⁴⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with De Bont.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Dankers.

deploy troops in Baghlan.¹⁵⁰ However, no interviewee or evaluation report specifically mentions human rights. One can argue that by improving the security and stability in the region and working on a safe environment to facilitate reconstruction the PRT also contributes to the human rights situation in general. Nevertheless, one must conclude that human rights did not have the priority in the Dutch PRT operation in Baghlan, considering it did not come up in the evaluation reports nor the interviews.

General complications that limited the effectiveness of the PRT

The formulated goals of the PRT in Baghlan were not easily accomplished. Why was it challenging to make the PRT effective? It became apparent from the interviews that this was partly due to shortcomings of the operation and complications in the field. These shortcomings and complications can be divided into four categories: the vagueness of the tasks and ambitions of the PRT, the too short deployment of the PRT, the too quick rotation of personnel and the suboptimal cooperation between NGOs and the PRT, especially the military.

Firstly, the vague and unstructured nature of the PRT operation was often discussed during the interviews. When the PRT in Baghlan was deployed, no overarching strategy for a PRT was formulated, which impacted the way the PRT was approached and executed. Rietjens described his first impression of the Dutch PRT the following: 'I remember clearly that I was quite shocked when I arrived at the PRT. I had all these expectations about how it would be in the field and was flabbergasted to see how disorganised and unstructured the operation actually was.'¹⁵¹ It is true that especially in the first year of the deployment period of the PRT, no clear operational orders were formulated.¹⁵² Rietjens and other interviewees speak about how the concrete vision on how to realise the formulated goals was absent. POLAD Yvonne Stassen explained: 'The end state of the PRT in Baghlan was unclear. I believe that there was too much space for the lead nation to interpret how to act. In order to be more effective, the PRTs should have been coordinated with a more general overarching strategy, instead of having immense differences between the PRTs of various lead nations.'¹⁵³ Not only was an overarching strategy for all PRTs missing, also the Dutch PRT in Baghlan in specific was short of a concrete and clear approach. There were no specifications about the steps that had to be taken to reach the end-state of the (sub-)goals. The goals remained vague as they were formulated in broad,

¹⁵⁰ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Kamerstuk 27925, nr. 139, Bestrijding internationaal terrorisme, vergaderjaar 2003-2004, 26 July 2004.

¹⁵¹ Interview with Rietjens.

¹⁵² NIMH Collectie Vredesoperaties, PRT Baghlan: besluitvorming/voorbereiding, 'Verslag werkbezoek IGK Afghanistan', 4 October 2004.

¹⁵³ Interview with Stassen.

general terms.¹⁵⁴ This vagueness also applied to the position of the POLAD. POLAD Erik de Feijter noted on the question about the purpose of the POLAD: ‘The goals of the POLAD were not formulated officially. You figured out your purpose in the conversations with your predecessor. One of the goals of the POLAD became to lead the PRT in the right direction. The PRT was an entirely new concept while there was still quite significant resistance against humanitarian military cooperation by the military.’¹⁵⁵

Secondly, an important shortcoming of the PRT was that it was a very brief operation of just two years. Rietjens stated: ‘The name “Provincial Reconstruction Team” appears to me as too ambitious and even misleading when you think of how short the Dutch involvement in the region was and how limited the resources were that were made available.’¹⁵⁶ De Feijter explained: ‘Our presence in Baghlan was too short and even when we were still deployed in Baghlan, we were already occupied with the preparation of Uruzgan. Everyone involved knew that we should have stayed longer if we wanted to have impact. I think we could have achieved more.’¹⁵⁷ The deployment of the PRT was too short, this can be concluded from the experiences, but also from the fact that initially, the Defence Staff had formulated that the PRT should be deployed for at least three years and preferably for five to seven years.¹⁵⁸ It was clear to the Ministries involved that deployment of two years would be too short to accomplish structural impact. However, the policy papers show that the diplomatic value of deployment in Baghlan was more important to the Dutch government than the actual impact on the ground.¹⁵⁹ The PRT in Baghlan would provide the Netherlands with international visibility without excessive costs.¹⁶⁰ Although the PRT fulfilled its diplomatic purpose, the short deployment limited the actual impact on the province. De Feijter concluded on this matter: ‘It is difficult to say how effective the PRT has been. In the period we were deployed, things went quite well. But after we left, everything collapsed quickly. As our impact was based on the relations that we built in the region, much of our progress there was lost when we transferred the PRT to the Hungarians. This makes you wonder: what was the long-term impact? Well, that is disappointing.’¹⁶¹

Thirdly, not only the two year-deployment of the PRT itself was too limited, but also the individual deployment of the PRT personnel was too short. Personnel rotated very quickly with

¹⁵⁴ NIMH Collectie Vredesoperaties, PRT Baghlan: evaluaties, ‘Bulletlijst Missie-Evaluatie 1NLD PRT PeK’, 20 December 2004.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with De Feijter.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Rietjens.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with De Feijter.

¹⁵⁸ NIMH, Collectie Vredesoperaties, Baghlan: besluitvorming/voorbereiding, ‘Vergaderverslag PRT planningsteam’, Defensie Staf, 27 May 2004.

¹⁵⁹ As described in Chapter 2.

¹⁶⁰ NIMH, Collectie Vredesoperaties, PRT Baghlan: besluitvorming/voorbereidingen, ‘Betreft VS/Afghanistan: PRT’s’, United States Department of State, 28 April 2003.

¹⁶¹ Interview with De Feijter.

deployments of just two to six months. PRT Commander in 2005, Theo Rikken, likewise expressed in his notes on the final evaluation of the missions that the lack of continuity, with a different General every six weeks, severely harmed the effectiveness of the operation.¹⁶² Rietjens underwrites this: 'People were deployed to the PRT for just four to six months maximum, so there was no time to become familiar with the operation or formulate a clear vision. The first General would say something and then the other would say something completely different. The short deployment of personnel limited the overall effectiveness of the operation.'¹⁶³

Fourthly, most interviewees described that the cooperation between NGOs and the military was not optimal, which limited the effectiveness of the operation. Chief Executive Officer of Save the Children Netherlands Pim Kraan states: 'To reach the desired humanitarian end-state in Baghlan, cooperation with NGOs was crucial. Because the cooperation was limited, the lasting impact of the mission was limited too.'¹⁶⁴ The cooperation remained insufficient due to several factors, for example, the differing timeframes of both parties. Rietjens described: 'Military personnel rotated so quickly, this gives them a short-term vision. They want to achieve something concrete before they have to leave again. NGOs have a long-term perspective. This difference in vision leads to mutual misunderstandings and annoyance.'¹⁶⁵ The former head of MOLT team Robbert Dankers commented on his experience with NGOs in Baghlan: 'NGOs had their own contacts, but the Ministry forced them to talk with the military personnel of the PRT. NGOs saw this as a required formality. They would ask for advice and would then act like suited themselves.'¹⁶⁶ De Bont stated: 'There were some very professional NGOs with whom I liked to cooperate with, but most NGOs came in like a bull in a China shop and an attitude of "We have ideals so we cannot do anything wrong" and had total disregard of other parties.'¹⁶⁷ The POLADs aimed to function as a bridge between the military personnel and the NGOs that were active in the region. De Feijter explained: 'The contacts with NGOs were not exclusively maintained by the POLAD, as military personnel also sometimes directly worked together with NGOs. However, I have noticed that aid workers of NGOs were more comfortable with the POLAD. As a POLAD you speak the same language.'¹⁶⁸ Speaking the same language as aid workers was not as easy for military personnel, Stassen explained: 'The challenge for military personnel in their relation to NGOs is their uniform. You

¹⁶² NIMH, Collectie Vredesoperaties, Baghlan: evaluaties, 'Analyse en Evaluatie 1(NL)PRT PeK', Defensie Intern, Kolonel Rikken, 1 June, 2005.

¹⁶³ Interview with Rietjens.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Kraan.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Rietjens.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Dankers.

¹⁶⁷ Interview with De Bont.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with De Feijter.

cannot execute reconstruction and development cooperation activities easily in uniform. The military is often blind to how their uniform comes across to NGOs and civilians in general.¹⁶⁹

Additionally, prejudices and stereotypes existed and still exist about both parties. Rietjens explained these notions: ‘These stereotypes did not just appear. They are based on facts about for example punctuality, attitude, professionalism, hierarchy and approach.’¹⁷⁰ One of the most important incompatibilities of the military and NGOs is their motivation. Ad Beljaars of the Red Cross stated: ‘Humanitarian and reconstruction activities of the Dutch military in Baghlan were Hearts and Minds projects. The Red Cross cannot endorse this strategic use of these activities. Even though we sometimes performed the same kind of actions, we per definition strive for something fundamentally different than the military.’¹⁷¹ Jorrit Kamminga, Policy Officer of Oxfam Novib states that he and other aid workers from Oxfam Novib were active in Afghanistan, also during the PRT in Baghlan, but never cooperated with the Dutch military there: ‘Oxfam did not cooperate with the PRT in Baghlan or the PRT in Uruzgan, actually Oxfam rarely cooperates with the military in general. This is not because of ideological incompatibility, it mostly is a pragmatic matter. Cooperation is often not established, possibly due to other priorities of the military.’¹⁷² Subsequently, representatives from NGOs formulated objections to cooperation with the military in general, Beljaars, stated: ‘The objections to cooperate with the military are not of a moral nature. To successfully accomplish our goals – to end human suffering and monitor humanitarian law – perception is crucial. We cannot safely operate in conflict zones and offer relief to both parties if we would be associated with the military.’¹⁷³

Positive impact

The PRT in Baghlan was an operation with challenges and complications. Yet, it also had a positive impact on both the province of Baghlan and NGO-military cooperation. The former head of MOLT-team Robbert Dankers stated: ‘Baghlan was a successful operation, I know that because I have concrete experiences from my time there which underwrite that. One day I visited a tailor in one of the villages. He told me “Thank you, because of you I can safely go outside, I can leave my backdoor open and I can leave my wife home alone.” You must know that the local population knew that they could come to the PRT for assistance. This happened several times and we always helped out as well

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Stassen.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Rietjens.

¹⁷¹ Interview with Beljaars.

Gezondheidszorg in Ontwikkelingslanden (GOLAMA) training, part of military master program (attended on 6-11-2018).

¹⁷² Interview with Kamminga.

¹⁷³ Interview with Beljaars.

as we could. We brought security, stability and reconstruction and this was enormously appreciated by the local population.¹⁷⁴ De Bont, too, described the operation as a success: 'It was a complex situation. In times like that, you have to be a soldier, a diplomat, an aid worker, an explorer, an anthropologist and a spy at the same time. We managed to be all that in Baghlan. If I would have to grade the PRT, I would grade it a 7. We did a lot better than other PRTs, like the ones of the United States, these I would grade with a 3. These PRTs were too militant and mainly focused on intel. We had a more cooperative and constructive attitude, which worked well in this environment. The Dutch PRT in Baghlan was appreciated, we had earned the trust of the Afghan population.'¹⁷⁵

The PRT in Baghlan introduced a new way of cooperation between civil parties like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NGO's and the Ministry of Defence. Although the plan and execution of the concept were not flawless, the deployment in Baghlan was the first step towards fully integrated operations and this had a positive impact on NGO-military cooperation in general. Rietjens stated: 'The most important impact of Baghlan on NGO-military cooperation is that everyone now knew that the military cannot do it alone.'¹⁷⁶ This realisation was already formalised on 22 March 2005, when the Ministers of Development Cooperation, Foreign Affairs, Defence and the Secretaries of State and Economic Affairs offered the Parliament the policy paper 'Reconstruction after armed conflict'.¹⁷⁷ This policy paper addressed already the lessons learnt from Dutch involvement in Burundi, Iraq, Sudan, Congo and Afghanistan. One of the matters discussed in this paper is the importance of highly integrated operations with integral cooperation with NGOs.¹⁷⁸ This was already applied in the preparation and execution of the Dutch PRT in Uruzgan, where a civil assessment was performed before deployment, NGOs were incorporated in the planning and execution of the operation and a Development Cooperation Advisor (OSAD) was added to the PRT personnel.¹⁷⁹ De Feijter underwrites the impact of the PRT in Baghlan on the later PRT Uruzgan: 'This was also the first time that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence worked together closely, which resulted in more mutual trust. After Baghlan, they started to involve each other more in their plans and policies. The PRT in Uruzgan was a direct product of this: a highly integrated operation.'¹⁸⁰ The PRT in Baghlan introduced a new approach to future reconstruction operations, De Bont states: 'The cooperation between the military and NGOs in Baghlan was new but it did not feel unnatural to me. Over time it has only become

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Dankers.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with De Bont.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Rietjens.

¹⁷⁷ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Kamerstuk 30075, nr. 1, Wederopbouw na gewapend conflict, vergaderjaar 2004-2005, 22 maart 2005.

¹⁷⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁷⁹ NIMH, 'Eindevaluatie PRT Baghlan', 20-21.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with De Feijter.

more natural. It was important to make this step towards formal cooperation. One must not underestimate the importance of bureaucracy in these things. The PRT in Baghlan was the first operation which included formal cooperation.¹⁸¹ De Feijter agrees: 'Baghlan has kicked-off a growing mutual trust between the military and NGOs, which possibly is limited to the realisation that cooperation is an option and can be beneficial. This has cost a lot of discussion, but it was worth the while. The PRT has been very valuable to the general discussion about the efficiency of counterinsurgency.'¹⁸²

Nowadays, the cooperation between NGOs and the Dutch military is no longer a controversial concept. Military officer to the PRT in Uruzgan and later Chief Operational Communication and Civil Outreach in Afghanistan Gwenda Nielen stated: 'The cooperation between NGOs and the military has improved, especially in The Hague. How this is translated to the field is still much dependent on the personal preference of the Commander.'¹⁸³ Progress in cooperation with NGOs is definitely made in the field of preparatory military training. Beljaars stated: 'The Red Cross and the Dutch military cooperate closely in several military trainings.'¹⁸⁴ One example of these trainings is the yearly 'Healthcare in Developing Countries' (GOLAMA) training for military students, in which a panel of four NGO representatives speaks with the students about NGO-military cooperation.¹⁸⁵ Nevertheless, NGO-military cooperation could entail more than just shared training programmes. Beljaars continues: 'However, whenever a new initiative of the Dutch government concerning conflict is introduced tension between both parties remains. The cores of both organisations are too incompatible in order to allow for integrated cooperation in the field.'¹⁸⁶ Kraan, too, believes that NGO-military cooperation in the field is not yet optimal: 'The relationship between the military and NGOs is still difficult and tensed. Better cooperation starts with mutual respect, which is still not the norm. Military personnel should not look down on civilians, as this makes cooperation impossible. Besides, they need us more than we need them. They deploy in conflict areas where we have been active for years, yet they do not approach us. The PRTs were a climax in the efforts to optimise NGO-military cooperation, I do not recognise this sentiment in the current military generation.'¹⁸⁷

Evaluation reports and interviews with people involved in the operation showed that the formulated

¹⁸¹ Interview with De Bont.

¹⁸² Interview with De Feijter.

¹⁸³ Gwenda Nielen – Military personnel of the PRT in Uruzgan and later Chief Operational Communication and Civil Outreach in Afghanistan (interview on 27-10-2018).

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Beljaars.

¹⁸⁵ Gezondheidszorg in Ontwikkelingslanden (GOLAMA) training, part of military master program (attended on 6-11-2018).

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Beljaars.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Kraan.

goals of the PRT in Baghlan were not easily realised. Shortcomings and complications arose which were not foreseen. However, the PRT has made some positive impact on both Baghlan as on NGO-military cooperation in general, it did not fundamentally improve the security situation in Afghanistan nor did it solve the challenges in NGO-military cooperation, which still remain today.

Conclusion

After the Cold War, the nature of conflict changed. With this, the nature of military deployment inevitably changed too. This research elaborated on the development of the new roles of military personnel and aid workers from NGOs within the context of the newly introduced concept of the Provincial Reconstruction Team. In 2004, the Netherlands deployed a PRT to the province Baghlan, Afghanistan. This was the first civil-military mission the Netherlands had ever conducted. A Political Advisor (POLAD) from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was part of the PRT personnel and maintained the relations with all civil actors amongst which NGOs. The planning and execution of the PRT was challenging because of different factors. This research studied the context in which the PRT concept arose and the political process towards the deployment of the PRT and analysed the formulated goals with the experiences of military personnel and officials, POLADs and NGO representatives.

This study has found that regardless of the scholarly and political interest in the potential of integration of NGO-military cooperation in peacebuilding operations, the integration of cooperation with NGOs in the PRT in Baghlan was limited. The name of the operation suggested a more progressive and innovative purpose than the goals the Dutch government actually formulated. The PRT was still predominantly a military operation without a concrete and ambitious reconstruction strategy. One could argue that the Netherlands was deployed in Afghanistan because of diplomatic interest to be ‘the best student in the class’ of NATO. This limited humanitarian ambition directly impacted the effectiveness of the operation. The goals formulated by the Dutch Cabinet can be summarised in the following table:

Increasing Security and Stability	Facilitating Reconstruction
Overseeing and assisting in the election process	Contributing to structural reconstruction
Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of the province	Offering humanitarian relief
	Improving the human rights situation

Figure 2: Index of formulated goals for the Dutch Provincial Reconstruction Team in Baghlan.

Using these goals to measure the effectiveness of the PRT, this study aimed to answer the following research question: *To what extent was the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Baghlan successful as the first Dutch civil-military operation?* Based on the research of secondary literature, evaluation reports, and the interviews conducted, one can conclude that the Dutch military generally had a positive impact

on the province of Baghlan. The PRT successfully facilitated both the elections and improved the security and stability in Baghlan by various activities focused on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of the province. Furthermore, the PRT performed several reconstruction projects, in cooperation with NGOs. The PRT did not however directly pursue the improvement of human rights or offered direct humanitarian relief. NGOs working in the Baghlan region and the rest of Afghanistan on the other hand, had a big impact on the wellbeing of the Afghan people in relation to human rights and humanitarian relief and the reconstruction of the infrastructure of the country. Without even being properly included in the PRT operation, they contributed greatly to the accomplishment of the formulated goals. By facilitating health care and providing food and water, they offered humanitarian relief and improved the human rights conditions in Afghanistan, where the PRT fell short.

However, although NGOs and the military both made progress in the Baghlan region, the effectiveness of the PRT was hampered by challenges of NGO-military cooperation. The interviews proved that all four categories of friction between the military and NGOs, as formulated in chapter 1, arose during the operation. The organisational structure, the opposite time frames, discrepant goals, motivations and methods, and the mutual misunderstandings and stereotypes about each other all constrained the effectiveness of NGO-military cooperation during the PRT in Baghlan. Sources like Boutros-Ghali 'An Agenda for Peace' and scholar publications like those of Abiew, Chandler and Winslow show that these challenges were already known in scholarly debate and international politics before the deployment of the Dutch PRT in Baghlan.¹⁸⁸ It would have been valuable if the military and the NGOs had anticipated these challenges from the outset of the operation. If both parties had incorporated cooperation thoroughly, the challenges could have been overcome. Apart from the absence of an integrated strategy, the short deployment, too, hampered the military specifically seriously limited the lasting impact on the province. A longer operation with longer deployment periods of the personnel and better-coordinated cooperation with NGOs would have made the PRT much more effective, according to the interviewees.

In conclusion, the Dutch PRT in Baghlan was moderately successful as a first civil-military operation but had some fundamental shortcomings. One of the most predominant shortcomings of the PRT was the lack of a concrete strategy due to the vagueness of the formulated goals. This vagueness of the formulated goals is closely linked to the absence of a clear uniform concept of the PRT in general. The fact that a crystallised PRT concept did not exist, was something all leading nations

¹⁸⁸ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 'An Agenda for Peace: Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping', 31 January 1992. Abiew, 'NGO-Military Relations in Peace Operations', 24-39. Abiew, 'From Civil Strife to Civic Society: NGO-Military Cooperation in Peace Operations', 3-27. Chandler, 'The Road to Military Humanitarianism', 678-700. Winslow, 'Strange Bedfellows: NGOs and the Military in Humanitarian Crises', 35-55.

of PRTs in Afghanistan struggled with.¹⁸⁹ Also the insufficient integration of cooperation with NGOs limited the effectiveness of the operation. The PRT in Baghlan did however contribute to the perception of integrated peace operations and NGO-military cooperation in the Netherlands. The successor of the PRT Baghlan, PRT Uruzgan, was already a more integrated operation, with NGOs being directly involved in the operation and the deployment of a Development Cooperation Advisor (OSAD) focusing specifically on reconstruction, supplementary to the POLAD. The PRT Uruzgan is a suitable subject for further research about the development of Dutch civil-military operations and NGO-military cooperation. If further research about the PRT concept would also be based on interviews with the different parties as a primary source, it would be interesting to include representatives of local NGOs and other non-Dutch NGOs that were active in the period of Dutch PRTs in Afghanistan.

This research offers new insights into an operation that is largely forgotten or overlooked in the existing literature. As the PRT in Baghlan was the first civil-military operation conducted by the Netherlands, this is a key moment in the history of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, which should not be overlooked. Although the operation in Baghlan was not perfect, it did start the development towards a more integrated approach and more civil-military cooperation in peace operations. The existing literature was not yet sufficient in assessing the political process leading up towards the deployment and measuring the effectiveness of the PRT using the experiences of the people involved. This study aims to fill in this blank.

NGO-military cooperation continues to present challenges. The frictions elaborated in this study are not yet overcome. The military does not reach out to NGOs as often as they could, and many NGOs have not become more pragmatic in their willingness to cooperate with the military. Cooperation is challenging and sometimes both parties seem to be too incompatible to be able to work together as a team. However, if cooperation is too problematic, adequate coordination between both parties should be a minimal goal to strive for. Informing each other on the projects they are conducting and discussing the conditions could increase the effectiveness of these activities. Coordination would already be immense progress. If we learn from the lessons of previous peacebuilding operations, we can increase the effectiveness of NGOs and the military in civil-military operations not only in plans, but also in practice.

¹⁸⁹ Loo, van, 'Dutch Forces in Pul-e Khumri', 193.

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Martine Flokstra – Artsen zonder Grenzen.

Willem van der Put – HealthWorks.

Jan Lamberink – ZOA.

Arjan Hehenkamp – Stichting Vluchteling.