
Recenzovaný článek

The Security-Development Nexus in Practice: Lessons Learned from the US Provincial Reconstruction Team in Panjshir in Afghanistan

Bezpečnostně-rozvojový nexus v praxi: Zkušenosti z amerického provinčního rekonstrukčního týmu v Pandžšíru v Afghánistánu

Zdeněk Rod

Abstract: The article holistically assesses the US application of security-development nexus (SDN) through the most known example of SDN in practice – provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) – to elucidate what lessons learned can be drawn from there. The PRT's unique small footprint approach aimed to skip combat phases and focus on development in Panjshir. The research detected fourteen lessons learned from PRT's Panjshir wrongdoings and relatively successful initiatives. Lessons learned include defining mission objectives, early identification of instability sources, unified funding, emphasis on security sector reform, cultural awareness, empowering locals, and continuity in leadership and mission. PRT Panjshir's approach is debated, emphasizing managing, not fully resolving, complex conditions.

Abstrakt: Článek komplexně hodnotí aplikaci bezpečnostně-rozvojového nexu (BRN) ze strany USA prostřednictvím nejznámějšího příkladu BRN v praxi – provinčního rekonstrukčního týmu (PRT) – a objasňuje, jaké poznatky lze z této aplikace vyvodit. PRT v Pandžšíru byl mimo jiné unikátní v tom, že byl jako jediný americký PRT tzv. civilně-vedený. Výzkum odhalil čtrnáct poučení z pochybení a relativně úspěšných iniciativ PRT v Pandžšíru. Mezi získané poznatky patří správné definování cílů mise, nutnost včasné identifikace zdrojů nestability, zajištění jednotného financování, důraz na reformu bezpečnostního sektoru, posílení kulturní povědomí v posádce, posílení postavení místních obyvatel a kontinuita vedení a mise.

Keywords: Afghanistan; Civilian-Military Cooperation; Panjshir; Provincial Reconstruction Teams; Security-Development Nexus; United States.

Klíčová slova: Afghánistán; civilně-vojenská spolupráce; Pandžšír; provinční rekonstrukční týmy; bezpečnostně-rozvojový nexus; Spojené státy americké.

INTRODUCTION

The discussion about the interconnection between security and development is very actual today. The security-development nexus (SDN), embodied in various missions, projects and tools, has taken a strong position in the disciplines of conflict resolution, post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. In particular, the SDN thinking is based on the premise that underdevelopment and the resulting frustration reinforce insecurity and threats and vice versa.

The SDN gradually established as a concept in the late 1990s and in recent years has played a vital role in the foreign security and development activities of a range of actors (USA, Canada, EU etc). Since the SDN has been around for more than three decades, it is vital to access its relevance for practical security policy and draw lessons learned and best practices from the field – typically from the environment of the civilian-military missions (CIMIC). As confirmed by the EU's recent use of the security development-nexus in the Sahel, the premises of the SDN do not seem to be losing their relevance¹. Moreover, the scientific community postulate that a closer examination of its application in practice is needed² to broaden the understanding of the SDN in the field.

The best-known implementation of the SDN in practice was the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan - and later in Iraq - since 2002³. In this case, the security and development aspects of the nexus were implemented through the link

- ¹ African Center for Strategic Studies. 2019. *EU Security Strategy in Sahel Focused on Security-Development Nexus*. Retrieved October 10, 2023 from <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/eu-security-strategy-sahel-focused-security-development-nexus/>.
- ² See Picciotto, R and Olonisakin, F. and Clarke, M. *Global Development and Human Security*. London: Transaction Publishers, 2007. ISBN 9781351517416; Stern, M. and Öjendal, J. Mapping the Security-Development Nexus: Conflict, Complexity, Cacophony, Convergence? *Security Dialogue*, 2010. 41(1), 5-30. DOI: 10.1177/09670106093570; Mudida, R. The Security-Development Nexus: A Structural Violence and Human Needs Approach. In *From Conflict to Regional Stability Linking Security and Development*, edited by Brockmann, K. and Bastian, H. eds. Berlin: DGAP, 2007., 11-22. ISBN: 9783981055368; Petrikova, I. and Lazell, M. Multilateral donors and the security-development nexus: discourse and practice in conflict-affected states. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 2017. 6(2017), 493-516. DOI: 10.1080/14678802.2017.1401841; Nilsson, M. and Taylor, L. K. Applying the security-development nexus on the ground: land restitution in Colombia. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 2016, 1-17. DOI: 10.1080/14678802.2016.1231844; McConnon, E. *Risk and the Security - Development Nexus. The Policies of the US, the UK and Canada*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, 5, 222. ISBN: 9783319982458; Merket, H. *The EU and the Security-Development Nexus: Bridging the Legal Divide*. Leiden: Hoteli Publishing, 2016, 20. ISBN: 9789004315013; Dursun-Özkanca, O. *The Nexus Between Security Sector Governance/Reform and Sustainable Development Goal-16*. Geneva: DCAF, 2021, 15. ISBN: 9781911529965.
- ³ Zoellick, R. *Fragile states: Securing development. Speech prepared for delivery at The International Institute for Strategic Studies, Geneva*. New York: World Bank, 2008.; Petřík, J. Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Securitizing Aid through Developmentalizing the Military. In: Brown S. and Grävingholt J. eds, *The Securitization of Foreign Aid. Rethinking International Development Series*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 163–187. DOI: 10.1007/978-1-137-56882-3_8; Merket, H. *The EU and the Security-Development Nexus: Bridging the Legal Divide*. Leiden: Hoteli Publishing, 2016. ISBN: 9789004315013; Horký-Hlucháň, O. and Szent-Iváyi, B. Neither security nor development? Czech and Hungarian identities and interests in the provincial reconstruction teams in Afghanistan. *East European Politics*, 2015. 31(4), 1-19. DOI: 10.1080/21599165.2015.1078792.

between civilian missions and military operations⁴. While the primary purpose for instituting PRTs was political, Robert M. Perito notes that ‘PRTs were also seen as a means for dealing with the causes of Afghanistan’s instability: terrorism, warlords, unemployment, and grinding poverty’⁵. According to NATO policy-makers, it was time to move from counterterrorism (capturing and killing terrorists) to counterinsurgency (eliminating the local causes of instability and separating them from the Taliban and al-Qaeda)⁶. As Petřík⁷ points out: “Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) became to the development – security nexus what light bulbs were to electricity. Before Edison’s invention, many people would have heard of electricity, but few would have understood its meaning. Only by direct application of the abstract phenomenon to practice was the utility of electricity illuminated and explained.”

This article aims to holistically assess the US application of SDN through the most known example of SDN in practice – PRTs. The article particularly zooms in on the PRT Panjshir and seeks to elucidate what lessons learned can be drawn from there. Since the article represents an in-depth case study zooming in on one particular case – PRT Panjshir, I textually and contextually analysed numerous national and international, NGOs documents and policy papers and conducted, for instance, two high-level interviews with the former military commander and civilian director of PRT Panjshir. Based on the Panjshir experience, the article detected several fourteen lessons learned from PRT’s Panjshir wrongdoings and relatively successful initiatives. The crucial lessons learned were carefully drawn from un/successful projects and assessed in the context of future CIMIC initiatives.

Besides, this article relates to a discussion about the US-NATO involvement and withdrawal in Afghanistan in the period 2001–2021 in four ways. First, Afghanistan provides a unique closed laboratory with a vast amount of still “raw” data, which yet remains to be properly assessed to draw particular lessons learned from it. Second, scholars shall holistically assess the Afghan experience to learn from previous mistakes after the US-NATO withdrawal. There are a lot of blind spots which remain to be still unseen; I believe that the unique nature of the civilian-led PRT Panjshir, as I argued elsewhere in the article, constitutes this concern. Third, zooming in on PRTs nowadays allows me to look at the PRT projects with hindsight, which is essential, especially concerning the interviews. I argue that respondents always sort out their thoughts only over time. Therefore, I conclude that this factor will allow me to collect much more robust empirical evidence than if I had examined the issue as the PRTs came to an end at the turn of 2013 and 2014. Fourth, in contrast with the majority of analysis mainly carried out of, for instance,

4 Mayville, A. K. *The Transformation of Capacity in International Development: Afghanistan and Pakistan*. London: Anthem Press, 2020, 133. ISBN 9781785271564.

5 Perito, R. M. *The U.S. experience with Provincial Reconstruction teams in Afghanistan lessons identified*. Washington D. C.: United State Institute For Peace, 2005.

6 Gibb, A. Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: A Case Study of Military-Led Development. *Res Militaris*, 2016. 6(2), 1-26. DOI: 10.1007/978-1-137-56882-3_8

7 Petřík, J. Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Securitized Aid through Developmentalizing the Military. In: Brown S. and Gravingholt J. eds, *The Securitization of Foreign Aid. Rethinking International Development Series*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 163–187. DOI: 10.1007/978-1-137-56882-3_8

from Ghazni, Zabul, Paktika or Nangarhar province, the analysis also shows how some US troops conducted the mission in relatively low-level threat environment such as PRT Panjshir. Therefore, it is vital to assess the PRT Panjshir since Panjshir province should have been the ideal type of province for the PRT mission since PRTs were intended to function in semi-permissive environments⁸. Moreover, the article also contributes to the post-withdrawal discussion, for instance, presented in *Foreign Affairs* journal⁹, about US-NATO initiatives which did not necessarily go as planned.

The following chapters briefly explore the SDN theoretical basis and research design. The consequent chapter introduces in nutshell what the PRT model was about. Then I will zoom in on the preparations for the PRT mission and, subsequently, I will analyse the PRTs in Panjshir. In Panjshir province. In the analysis, I will especially zoom in on the period between 2009–2010 since that it is the period the PRT was the most active¹⁰. Finally, I will provide lessons learned based on the previous analysis.

1 THEORETICAL BASIS OF SECURITY-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS IN A NUTSHELL

We can understand the nature of the SDN in the so-called sequential approaches, which are based on the assumption that security is a precondition for development and vice versa. Sequential approaches allow the researcher to view the SDN from three different perspectives:

⁸ CALL. *PRT Playbook 2007*. Fort Leavenworth: CALL, 2007, 1.

⁹ See e.i. Dobbins, J. Afghanistan Was Lost Long Ago. *Foreign Affairs*, 2021. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2021-08-30/afghanistan-was-lost-long-ago>; McKinley, M. We all lost Afghanistan. *Foreign Affairs*, 2021. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-08-16/we-all-lost-afghanistan-taliban>.

¹⁰ It also goes hand in hand with the NATO Summit in Bucharest in 2008, which laid out the so-called Comprehensive Strategic Political-Military Plan for Afghanistan (author's note).

Table 1: The SDN Typology

The Relationship between Security and Development
Security and Development mutually reinforce each other $S \Leftrightarrow D$
Security is the prerequisite of Development $S \Rightarrow D$
Development is the prerequisite of Security ¹¹ $D \Rightarrow S$

Source: Stewart¹², Waisová¹³, Rod¹⁴

The above table demonstrates the basic theoretical framework for understanding the three different SDN approaches. The three theoretical sequential approaches have been translated into a wide range of practical considerations of the relationship between security and development, against the backdrop of academic discussion and debates at international organisations and in interaction with the practical experience of donors (e.g. humanitarian organisations)¹⁵. Those practical considerations cannot be elaborated here in detail, however, the main shreds of those practical considerations can be summarized in the table 3 below.

¹¹ Moreover, the PRT Panjshir, which is going to be discussed in the following, is embedded in the third ideal type since it was a civilian-led PRT (author’s note).

¹² Stewart, F. Development and security. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 2004. 4(3), 261–288. DOI: 10.1080/1467880042000319863.

¹³ Waisova, S. The Security-Development Nexus: a Typology, History and Implementation of Changing Paradigm. *Defence & Strategy*, 2011. 2(2011), 91–110. DOI: 10.3849/1802-7199.

¹⁴ Rod, Z. Konceptualizace bezpečnostně-rozvojového nexu: současné interpretace a kritika. *Acta Facultы filozofické Západočeské univerzity v Plzni*, 2022. 15(1–2), 3–22. DOI: 10.24132/actaff.2023.15.1-2.2

¹⁵ Waisova, S. The Security-Development Nexus: a Typology, History and Implementation of Changing Paradigm. *Defence & Strategy*, 2011. 2(2011), 91–110. DOI: 10.3849/1802-7199.

Table 2: The SDN reflected in practical and academic considerations

The Relationship between Security and Development	Main Considerations
Security and Development mutually reinforce each other / $S \Leftrightarrow D$	Reflections of Human Security
	There is a link between peace and development
	Imperative Do No Harm
	Post-conflict Reconstruction
Security is the prerequisite of Development / $S \Rightarrow D$	Security Sector Form
Development is the prerequisite of Security / $D \Rightarrow S$	Development aid vis-à-vis national security
	Growing GDP is the key to Security
	Conflict Prevention

Source: Author¹⁶

2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study seeks to broaden the understanding of the SDN in practice through the US PRTs, especially the one in Panjshir province since it presented a specific PRT. As briefly drawn in the introduction, this article will assess how the US intended the SDN application through the PRTs and how they implemented the SDN through the PRTs in Afghanistan in practice and what lessons learned can be drawn based on the US experience. The reasoning behind the selection of the US PRTs is the following. First, the US implemented 12 PRTs where they were considered so-called the leading nation. Second, the US developed the PRT model and was the first nation which implemented it in Afghanistan in 2003. The number of individual PRTs and the length of their tenure promises to provide me with a sizeable empirical corpus of data to analyze the implementation and application of the SDN.

For the purposes of this article, it is not possible to analyse all of 12 US PRTs. Hence, I will solely analyse one PRT which was deployed in Panjshir province. The reasoning behind this selection stems from the fact the Panjshir considerably differed at the early stages of the US involvement in Afghanistan regarding insecurity and development. Panjshir was considered relatively safe at the beginning of the US PRT involvement. The US also deployed first civilian-led PRT in Panjshir, hence, I want to look into it what “civilian-led” really meant in the US thinking. Given the reasons above, I want to analyse the Panjshir case in deep to understand the security-development initiatives in practice.

¹⁶ Rod, Z. Konceptualizace bezpečnostně-rozvojového nexu: současné interpretace a kritika. *Acta Fakulty filozofické Západočeské univerzity v Plzni*, 2022. 15(1–2), 3–22. DOI: 10.24132/actaff.2023.15.1-2.2

Furthermore, it is also inevitable to present what exactly I will be looking for during the analysis:

First, level of documents: before I begin to analyse the PRT Panjshir, I briefly will zoom in on the key documents, doctrines and principles the PRTs work is based on.

Second, preparations for the mission: I will analyse which preparations the US conducted for the PRT deployment and how the US intended to implement the PRT activities in the field.

Third, the deployment of the mission: in the cases of Panjshir, I will zoom in on the activities the given PRT was conducting. During this analysis, I will be tracing whether some lessons learned can be drawn based on the PRT practice in the field.

Besides, I will draw the key lessons learned from unsuccessful and successful projects or events the PRT Panjshir came across during its mission. On one hand, regarding the successful ones, I will point out which projects worked and why they should be considered in the future. On the other hand, I will show which projects did not work and should be generally avoided.

In terms of the dataset, as mentioned above, I will be reflecting on the national policy documents and legislation. I would also consider academic and practitioner literature. To enrich the discussion concerning the US PRTs, I also had the chance to interview four former US officers who were directly involved in PRT Panjshir or were closely affiliated:

- 1) Lieutenant Colonel Eric Hommel (US Air Force) – military commander of the PRT Panjshir between 2009–2010
- 2) Jeremy Lewis (USAID) – former development advisor embedded in the PRT Panjshir between 2009–2010
- 3) Kristen Farnum – former member of the Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) who got in touch with several PRTs in Afghanistan
- 4) James P. DeHart (DoS) – Former civilian director of PRT Panjshir between 2009–2010

In some cases, I will also use information from other interviews (with other former PRTs personnel, policy officers, and NGO workers) conducted during my two years-long research among the European Ministries of Defense and NATO Civilian-Military Center of Excellence in Hague.

3 WHAT WERE THE PRTS?

In a nutshell, the PRTs combined the civilian and military mission aspects of stability and development and were meant to work as reconstruction and stabilization forces. The military and civilian personnel working in PRTs in Afghanistan's provinces aimed to provide security for aid works and help humanitarian assistance or reconstruction tasks in areas with ongoing conflict or high levels of insecurity¹⁷. The idea of creating

¹⁷ Maley, W. Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan - how they arrived and where they are going. *Nato Review*, 2007. <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2007/07/01/provincial-reconstruction-teams-in-afghanistan-how-they-arrived-and-where-they-are-going/index.html>.

a civilian-military unit such as PRT was likely formed during the 2002 International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)¹⁸ mission in the US sphere since the US played the largest role in this operation. Hence, the first PRTs were deployed by the US at the end of 2002 and at the beginning of 2003. Consequently, other PRTs, which evolved later on, were very often US-funded, directed or relied on US logistic support¹⁹. As more Coalition Forces were deployed, the expansion of PRTs was inevitable to manage the organization of PRT activities in Afghan provinces. Hence, the Coalition leadership concluded that US PRTs would operate in Regional Command West and East, while other states would cover the South and North.

Zooming in on the US PRTs, the US PRTs presented a model of 100–200 personnel where more than half of the team was represented by military officials – the US put predominantly emphasized the military component²⁰ of the civilian-military cooperation. Such command division resulted in a situation where, on the one hand, the military personnel had seizable finances to use without unstrained bureaucratic procedures; on the other hand, the civilian personnel (generally represented by USAID) had to wait for months in some cases to receive the funds – see following section.

4 ON THE PATH TO US PRTS

4. 1 Documents Reflecting on US Prts

The US PRTs were reflecting a whole scale of high-level documents, principles and doctrines such as COIN doctrines FM 3-7 (2003)²¹, FMI 3-07.22 (2004) and FM 3-24 (2006); Security Sector Reform (SSR) principles²²; document entitled Principles Guiding PRT Working Relations with UNAMA, NGOs and Local Government issued in 2003 by the US Embassy in Kabul²³; or by the crucial National Security Strategy of the US from 2002 (NSS 2002),

¹⁸ The Bonn Agreement of December 2001 provided for the deployment of ISAF in Afghanistan. Given that Afghanistan lacked a credible national army or police force, ISAF was seen as essential to dealing with a looming security vacuum in rural areas (Maley, 2007)

¹⁹ Gibb, A. Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: A Case Study of Military-Led Development. *Res Militaris*, 2016. 6(2), 1-26. DOI: 10.1007/978-1-137-56882-3_8.

²⁰ ISWa. 2002. PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS (PRTS). 2020. <http://www.understandingwar.org/provincial-reconstruction-teams-prts>.

²¹ Department of the Army. *FM 3-07, Stability Operations and Support Operations*. Washington D.C. 2003.

²² ISWa. 2002. PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS (PRTS). 2020. <http://www.understandingwar.org/provincial-reconstruction-teams-prts>.

²³ Perito, R. M. *The U.S. experience with Provincial Reconstruction teams in Afghanistan lessons identified*. Washington D. C.: United State Institute For Peace, 2005, 2.

The NSS 2002 played a crucial role, hence, I will introduce it in brief. The NSS 2002 already reflected new threats such as international terrorism and the issue of the weak states such as Afghanistan. Concerning Afghanistan, the strategy mentioned that “poverty does not make poor people into terrorists and murderers. Yet poverty, weak institutions, and corruption can make weak states vulnerable to terrorist networks and drug cartels within their borders.” To solve this and other issues, development and security assistance to alleviate the developing societies is crucial to deter terrorists from creating another safe haven²⁴. The National Security Strategy, to some extent, portrays the nexus between security and development. Those grand thoughts were later on reflected in further lower documents and approaches. Interestingly, the whole-of-government approach was never implemented in contrast with the Canadians or Dutch PRTs²⁵.

4.2 Preparations for the Mission

On one hand, the military personnel and commanders had to undergo training in US training facilities lasting upwards of three months. It was necessary to provide each individual with a complex set of knowledge to ensure coherency in the team since the military members of the PRTs (Navy, Air Force, Army, Army National Guard, Air National Guard, Army Reserve, Air Force Reserve, etc.) had different backgrounds, and experiences²⁶. The training mainly included combat skills training (shoot, move, communicate, treat the wounded, counter improvised explosive device tactics, convoy operations, military decision making, etc.)²⁷, but also cultural awareness training and communication training. Career diplomats conducted the cross-cultural communication and cultural awareness training and explained how to engage with Afghans. It was raised that the US PRT personnel had to listen to their Afghan partners in an effort to “win hearts and minds.” Afghan role players were used to conduct cross-cultural communication vignettes designed for the military to practice interaction in contentious situations²⁸. Former PRT commander Lt. Col. Eric Hommel commented during our interview on the situation in 2009, ‘The diplomats talked in definite terms about the Afghan people and the importance of diplomacy, without ever defining diplomacy in the PRT context. The entire time they were briefing, I’m thinking, ‘If you’re this good and you know all the answers,

²⁴ White House. *National Security Strategy*. Washington D.C.: White House. 2002, 7

²⁵ Stringer, K. D. and Sizemore, K. M. *The U.S. Interagency Role in Future Conflict Prevention: Provincial Reconstruction Teams for Select Partner Nations*. Fort Leavenworth: Center for Interagency Cooperation. Undated, 11.

²⁶ Honoré, R. and Boslego, D. V. Forging Provincial Reconstruction Teams. *NDU*, 2007. 44(1), 85-89.; Marine Corps. *Provincial Reconstruction Teams Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: in Afghanistan: Tactical Units with Strategic Impact Tactical Units with Strategic Impact*. Quantico: Center for Lessons Learned, 2006.

²⁷ Air Force. *Airmen, Soldiers train for provincial reconstruction team*, 2008. <https://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/122540/airmen-soldiers-train-for-provincial-reconstruction-team/>.

²⁸ Hommel, E. Interview. 2022.

how come we haven't won the war in the past eight years?' Frankly, much of the cultural training was insufficient, and PRT personnel could not deeply understand the Afghan society's cultural strains. Even Kristen Farnum²⁹, who was providing the cultural training in the US, noted that "it seems that cultural awareness training was sort of insufficient".

On the other side, the civilians from the DoS, USAID and so forth had a clear role; they were preparing their career officers or contractors for development projects. Cultural training, of course, was provided as well. Jeremy Lewis³⁰ (USAID) even stated that he did not undergo any preparations at all.

4.3 Where Did All the Money Come From?

The preparation phase also considered how the PRT projects would be financed. The US designed the funding in the way when the Army personnel relied on the so-called CERP (Commander's Emergency Response Program) funded by the DoD. In contrast, USAID personnel relied on the so-called QIP (Quick Impact Program) funded by the DoS. Given the CERP nature, the military personnel was generally flexible program and unrestrained by bureaucratic procedures³¹. CERP was implemented across "20 different categories, such as transportation, electricity, and agriculture. Since 2004, Congress appropriated \$3.7 billion for CERP activities in Afghanistan, with over \$2.6 billion (69 percent) appropriated between fiscal years 2009 and 2013."³² DOD perceived CERP as a critical tool for US commanders to use in conducting counterinsurgency and other US objectives, including improving economic development, supporting the Afghan government, protecting the Afghan people, and undermining the insurgency. It is estimated that between 2009–2013, CERP funded 45,846 projects (80 percent of all CERP projects in Afghanistan)³³. However, in 2009, US Congress reviewed CERP expenditures and determined that CERP funds were not used in a manner true to the intent of the emergency reconstruction, which meant that CERP was used in traditional development areas in which USAID should have been responsible. Therefore, in the summer of 2009, Congress directed the DoD to deemphasise CERP funds only using CERP in situations requiring immediate assistance and defined as an "emergency"³⁴.

²⁹ Farnum, K. Interview about Afghanistan, 2022.

³⁰ Lewis, J. Interview, 2022.

³¹ Petřík, J. Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Securitizing Aid through Developmentalizing the Military. In: Brown S. and Gravingholt J. eds, *The Securitization of Foreign Aid. Rethinking International Development Series*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 163–187. DOI: 10.1007/978-1-137-56882-3_8.

³² SIGAR. *SIGAR 18–45 Audit Report*. Washington D.C.: Pentagon, 2018.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Hommel, E. Hope Doesn't Live Here Anymore: An Afghan Civilian- Military Vision—One Commander's Experience. In: Gundersen, J and Civic, M. A., *Unity of Mission*. Maxwell: Air University Press, 2016, 149–172, 169. ISBN: 9781585662470.

In contrast, USAID relied on QIP. “The purpose of the program was to provide USAID officers located at the PRTs with the ability to implement small projects (community irrigation systems, clean water supply, road improvements, small power systems, and the construction or rehabilitation of government buildings, schools, and clinics. In addition to infrastructure, support government capacity building, job placement, micro-finance, gender-related activities, and media), over 90 percent cost less than \$350,000 per project, that further the core objectives of stability, reconstruction, and building support for the central government of Afghanistan.”³⁵ The main differences between CERP and QIP was CERP funding was way more faster; however, USAID could wait up to nine months for the completion of procedures necessary to release funds from QIP³⁶.

5 THE PANJSHIR CASE

5.1 Setting the Ground

The US established the PRT in Panjshir province in October 2005. The Panjshir PRT was an exception and in contrast to the other PRTs. Panjshir was the only US PRT that was civilian-led and military-commanded while utilizing an indigenous security force which was double-headed by Director from the DoS and the military Commander.

The ‘director’ of the PRT was a career DoS Foreign Service Officer who led efforts to build government capacity and maintained ultimate responsibility for all civilian personnel primarily from USAID, the Department of Agriculture (DoA), the US Department of Justice (DOJ), and other government agencies. The other US PRTs listed their DoS leader as the ‘State Department Representative.’³⁷

The “commander” of the PRT on the Lieutenant Colonel level was in charge of all of the US Air Force, US Army, US Navy, US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) personnel. He commanded the PRT and exercised command authority over military operations. The military commander also oversaw the indigenous Mujahedeen security force and forward operating base (FOB) operations, including sole ownership of the FOB. As the only coalition military unit in Panjshir, the military commander also functioned as the ground-battlespace commander. In other words, that the PRT was “civilian-led” is a misnomer. In the US, the DoS cannot lead military forces since the DoS has no command authority. The reasoning behind the term “civilian-led” probably goes back to one significant detail

³⁵ USAID, PRT QUICK IMPACT PROJECTS. 2019. <https://www.usaid.gov/node/51861>.

³⁶ Petřík, J. Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Securitizing Aid through Developmentalizing the Military. In: Brown S. and Gravingholt J. eds, *The Securitization of Foreign Aid. Rethinking International Development Series*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 163–187. DOI: 10.1007/978-1-137-56882-3_8.

³⁷ Hommel, E. Interview, 2022.

– Panjshir had no infantry units (no direct combat mission). Hence, it became an opportunity for the DoS to claim ownership.³⁸

The PRT Panjshir was sometimes even called a prototype among the US PRTs³⁹. In Panjshir, the so-called “small footprint” approach was chosen deliberately to fit the unique circumstances of Panjshir – an ethnically homogenous valley which has successfully resisted all intruders in the past 30 years”⁴⁰. Hence, the PRT skipped the “clear and hold” phases of [warfare] operations and went straight to “build.”⁴¹

What the title director meant in practice remained blurred since the military commander did not report to the director but to the one-star brigade commander and, through him, to a two-star division commander. In contrast, the director followed a parallel [civilian] reporting chain. The director also found it somewhat complicated to direct resources that he did not own. This problem also extended to the director’s USAID and DoA colleagues. The military funded the vast majority of the PRT’s development projects; hence, it was understandable that the military expected to retain the final say on which projects happened⁴². Therefore, final cooperation between the civilian director and military commander vastly relied on their mutual sympathies.

Besides, “Panjshir is different than the rest of Afghanistan; no one is shooting at you”⁴³. But terrorist events did occur on rare occasions. The security situation in 2005 was relatively safe, and Panjshir was considered till the Taliban surge in 2010 as a relatively stable and secure province⁴⁴. Moreover, it is also important to mention that Panjshir province was never fully under Taliban control and contained strong anti-Taliban resistance⁴⁵, which certainly affected the province’s security situation. As CIGI states, “the stability of Panjshir province, its insularity and self-sufficiency protected it from the violence and volatility of other regions”⁴⁶. Panjshir was also considerably underdeveloped – the first paved road to Badakhshan province (130 km) was contracted by the

³⁸ DeHart, J. P. Interview, 2022; Hommel, E. Interview, 2022.

³⁹ Eronen, O. PRT Models in Afghanistan. Approaches to Civil-Military Integration. *CMC Finland Civilian Crisis Management Studies*, 2008. 1(5), 1-52.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Hommel, E. Hope Doesn’t Live Here Anymore: An Afghan Civilian- Military Vision—One Commander’s Experience. In: Gundersen, J and Civic, M. A., *Unity of Mission*. Maxwell: Air University Press, 2016, 149-172, 151. ISBN: 9781585662470.

⁴² DeHart, J. P. Interview, 2022.

⁴³ Hommel, E. Hope Doesn’t Live Here Anymore: An Afghan Civilian- Military Vision—One Commander’s Experience. In: Gundersen, J and Civic, M. A., *Unity of Mission*. Maxwell: Air University Press, 2016, 149-172, 155. ISBN: 9781585662470.

⁴⁴ Matwiczak, K. *A Comprehensive Database of Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan*. University of Texas, 2009, 29.

⁴⁵ AlArabiya. *Afghanistan’s Panjshir Valley: Home of the anti-Taliban resistance*. 2022. <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2021/08/25/Afghanistan-s-Panjshir-Valley-Home-of-the-anti-Taliban-resistance>.

⁴⁶ CIGI. *The Green Valley of Panjshir — Afghanistan’s Secure Province*. Undated. <https://www.cigionline.org/articles/green-valley-panjshir-afghanistans-secure-province/>

US government using CERP money and completed in 2010⁴⁷. Panjshir is also relatively sparsely populated, with about 170 thousand habitants, mainly the Tajik ethnic group⁴⁸.

5. 2 Coordination, Funding and Projects

Further defining the 2009-2010 PRT Panjshir case, in fact PRT's CERP money was vastly restricted as mentioned earlier in the text; PRT Panjshir was unable after 2009 to purchase all necessary security and development objectives (top-down approach) and instead had to inspire the local's initiatives way more (bottom-up approach). However, it is appropriate to say that before the 2009 money restrictions, local ownership and institutional capacity-building initiatives were not always fostered either. Foundational stability operations theory (ex. do no harm, employment of local solutions, etc.) was overshadowed by a top-down perception that PRTs could purchase their way to victory.

Additionally, given the fact the PRT had been in the field since 2005, in 2009 the PRT was directed by military leadership to conduct a "stability framework" designed to determine sources of instability within the Panjshir area of operations. Following the parameters of the framework, the PRT leadership team (director and commander) viewed the main source of instability in Panjshir coming from a government (both provincial and national) that is unable or unwilling to take care of its constituents. The PRT discovered that among many other the PRT itself was one the sources of instability in Panjshir. The reasoning lies in the fact that since 2005 the PRT had usurped the authority of the provincial government, acting like a shadow government doing the work of the rightful owners.⁴⁹

Besides, the approach always changed as the new commander was appointed. But it seems that back in 2010, local ownership and mutual coordination and synchronization were anchored. Unfortunately, the mutual coordination was not set institutionally but ad hoc based on mutual respect⁵⁰. Therefore, if the coordination between the military and development officers was not anchored, the development personnel could have been somewhat overshadowed.

Most development officers, mainly USAID, if the mutual coordination was anchored, were regularly meeting the local entities to understand better what was going down there in Panjshir. They reported this information to PRT Panjshir and the US Embassy in Kabul. However, Jeremy Lewis⁵¹ (USAID) remembers that "talking to people" was the most challenging part. Why? It was not easy to verify the validity of the information provided.

⁴⁷ DVIDS. Panjshir PRT engineers survey road to Badakhshan. 2011. <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/70480/panjshir-prt-engineers-survey-road-badakhshan>.

⁴⁸ EUAA. *Panjshir*. 2020. <https://euaa.europa.eu/country-guidance-afghanistan-2020/panjshir>.

⁴⁹ DeHart, J. P. Interview, 2022; Eric Hommel, "Interview", 2022.

⁵⁰ Hommel, E. Interview, 2022.

⁵¹ Lewis, J. Interview, 2022.

The Afghan entities – the Shuras/Jirga⁵², district government, province government, and national government – did not always talk to each other and exchange information. Sometimes, there could have been local conflict which was difficult to identify to avoid any issues. A lot of issues also stemmed from not knowing well the local environment. When the PRT built something in one village, the other village immediately responded: “Why this village and not us?” Moreover, many conflicts had nothing to do with the Taliban.

It was also widespread that once conducting local-ownership initiatives to find out what the locals need, the USAID personnel received very different answers. For instance, when Jeremy Lewis was seeking to find out whether a school could be built in a given area, the responses differed: local Shira/Jirga said that a school is needed as soon as possible, while the district government said a school is needed in different part; at the same time the provincial government said the school is not needed at all, and at the end, the national government announced that the school is in the national development plan and will be built in two years.⁵³

Getting some development projects done was also very complicated since the PRT deployment was one year long and most of the development or security initiatives had to be approved at the US Embassy or the National Government in Kabul. The First 3-4 months it is just about gathering information. And there were just approximately 8 months to do something – within this framework, one can never understand the complexity of the environments. Some other PRT wanted to move very fast to have some tangible results at the end of the deployment; however, this way only resulted in development projects the locals did not have to like. The answer to why the DoD funds were often used was simple. If the PRT director or commander wanted tangible results, they had to rely on the DoD CERP funds since the USAID funding takes approx. 3-5 years. Besides, when the PRT wanted to construct something (like hospitals, schools, dwells and so forth), local contractors were needed. However, the contracting process was a huge topic and not only due to corruption. The particular issues mainly stemmed from the fact that the local contractors knew approximately how much money the PRT Panjshir had, which very often influenced how much they charged for the work⁵⁴. The shadow of corruption was, however, partly diminished since the PRT always divided the remuneration for the contractors into 3 or 4 parts⁵⁵. Moreover, most of the projects were discussed with The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, which according to many respondents, was the most effective and trustworthy government place full of enthusiastic professionals who wanted to see a developed Afghanistan⁵⁶.

One of the most important projects was building schools since education is considered one of the key elements of societal development. For instance, two schools in

⁵² Grouping of elderly and respected men in the village – local governance (author’s note).

⁵³ Lewis, J. Interview, 2022.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Similar pattern could have been observed in the case of the Czech PRT in Logar province (author’s note).

⁵⁶ Author’s note

Dara and Paryan districts were built⁵⁷. Those projects were important. Schools helped to alleviate public health. Schools increased the level of education. Building a school is a relatively easy task; however, many schools were being built without knowing whether there would be enough skilled teachers to work in. As argued by Eric Hommel, “If you have a good teacher, classes can be conducted “below a tree”, but if you have schools without teachers, then the school’s role cannot be accomplished. Getting adequate personnel was one of the most challenging tasks. The local teachers were uneducated, and the PRT spent little time enhancing teachers education”⁵⁸.

Except for education, another example of an interesting initiative that had a positive impact was a farming project that bolstered income with bees. DoA representatives introduced the project to increase agricultural productivity and boost the economic capacity of the locals. 450 families throughout Afghanistan’s Panjshir province were supplied with training and materials to operate and manage their own honey production businesses. Local farmers generally agreed that selling honey brought them extra income needed. Additionally, the project benefits the ecosystem and built capacity through co-operation since the farmers were exchanging their best practices⁵⁹. This is an example of rather cheap development projects with economic and societal impacts.

Regarding the security part of the dimension, except for patrolling and general military stuff, the military officers (mainly US Army police) trained the Afghan National Police (ANP), whose task was to Panjshir’s six districts and one municipality. The ANP presence in Panjshir was about 600 men. The training was difficult. Most of the men were illiterate⁶⁰. High illiteracy resulted in a situation where many of the officers charged with enforcing the law could not understand the law they were charged to enforce. Hence, additional educational programmes for ANP officers were provided. After all that, the ANP forces could function from 2010 on. However, education is key and should be maintained afterwards as well. After 2010, civilian resources aimed to develop the justice sector through rule-of-law training and broader ANP literary education declined⁶¹.

As mentioned elsewhere in the text, after 2009, the military commander could no longer rely on quick CERP funding. Therefore, the commander and director had to get creative. The group thinking, in the end, resulted in the so-called “sweat equity” building

⁵⁷ US Department of Defense. *Members of the Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team check on the progress of a school construction project*. 2007. <https://www.defense.gov/Multimedia/Photos/igphoto/2001145371/>; Wilton, J. Red Bulls’ have helping hand in building of all-girls school in Afghanistan. *National Guard*, 2011. <https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Overseas-Operations/Article/607130/red-bulls-have-helping-hand-in-building-of-all-girls-school-in-afghanistan/>.

⁵⁸ Lewis, J. Interview, 2022.; Malkasian, C. and Meyerle, G. *PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS: HOW DO WE KNOW THEY WORK?* Strategies Studies Institute, 2009, 1.

⁵⁹ John T. Stamm, “Afghan farmers bolster income with bees.” *CENTOM*, 2009, <https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/NEWS-ARTICLES/News-Article-View/Article/883918/afghan-farmers-bolster-income-with-bees/>.

⁶⁰ Concerning interviews with other PRTs, it seems that the illiteracy was a common sign when training the ANP or Afghan National Army (author’s note).

⁶¹ Hommel, E. Hope Doesn’t Live Here Anymore: An Afghan Civilian- Military Vision—One Commander’s Experience. In: Gundersen, J and Civic, M. A., *Unity of Mission*. Maxwell: Air University Press, 2016, 149-172, 162. ISBN: 9781585662470.

program designed to empower rural villages to assist, for instance, in building their community schools. “Community buy-in was pivotal in ensuring the success of the sweat equity program. When a society becomes conditioned to the donor-recipient mindset, it tends to expect additional and continual support.”⁶²

Besides, the often neglected topic is to what extent, especially soldiers, should use humanitarian aid to win hearts and minds. As J. Lewis⁶³ remembers, this approach was regularly anchored. According to others⁶⁴, humanitarian aid should not be used for the win the hearts and minds purposes at all. The reasoning behind this idea is that the locals soon find out that humanitarian aid often and regularly aims to gather intel information and that the win hearts and minds approach might be just a way to get information from them. Moreover, if the humanitarian aid is too often, the locals can find out that whatever they say, they will get some reward⁶⁵.

Another significant topic is that the PRT Panjshir should have been more aware of the job the other NGOs in the province are doing. Sometimes, the PRT could have duplicated the other NGOs’ jobs. This was not anything in Afghanistan; the duplication was happening. It appears the PRT Panjshir did not have sufficient knowledge about the NGOs activities in the province. The PRT Panjshir personnel also stated that it would be better if the PRT was involved in the districts where no NGOs worked⁶⁶. The PRT-NGO debate is generally a very sensitive topic. The NGO workers assumed that PRT could worsen NGO’s security since NGO workers could have been seen together with PRT personnel and thus could lose their neutrality⁶⁷.

It is also crucial to discuss the potential security deterioration after the Taliban surge. Panjshir province was a unique case. The security conditions were relatively acceptable back in 2005, although the level of development was miserable. Nevertheless, as the years passed, the security situation, especially after 2010, started getting worse. There is not an easy answer why especially the security situation deteriorated inside of Panjshir as well since it was relatively safe since the beginning with low insurgent activity. According to main interviewees – Lt. Col. Eric Hommel, Jeremy Lewis (USAID) and James P. DeHart (DoS) assumed that the problem was not inside the province but outside. As the security situation was deteriorating in other provinces, it logically impacted Panjshir, as well as the Taliban insurgents, were getting closer.⁶⁸

⁶² *ibid.*, 165.

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Malkasian, C. and Meyerle, G. *PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS: HOW DO WE KNOW THEY WORK?* Strategies Studies Institute, 2009, 2.

⁶⁵ Information provided by Anonymous Czech PRT personnel when discussing the US PRT involvement (author’s note).

⁶⁶ Lewis, J. Interview, 2022.

⁶⁷ Mitchell, D. F. Blurred Lines? Provincial Reconstruction Teams and NGO Insecurity in Afghanistan, 2010–2011. *International Journal of Security and Development*, 2015. 4(1). 9. DOI: DOI: 10.5334/sta.ev

⁶⁸ Hommel, E. Hope Doesn’t Live Here Anymore: An Afghan Civilian- Military Vision—One Commander’s Experience. In: Gundersen, J and Civic, M. A., *Unity of Mission*. Maxwell: Air University Press, 2016, 149-172, 169. ISBN: 9781585662470.

5.3 Closure of the PRT Panjshir

Panjshir FOB came under a coordinated Taliban attack in October 2011, wounding several Afghan security guards and leaving five Taliban attackers dead⁶⁹. This was the first full-scale attack on the Panjshir FOB since 2001⁷⁰, and it came only after the civilian-military presence regressed into a military-only presence. The US returned to a military-centric structure of the PRTs, started a slow security transition to the local security forces and development activities and good-governance initiatives to sustain the institutions that the United States helped to develop has become an afterthought. Such an attitude can be associated with the US strategy to withdraw from Afghanistan in the future. Panjshir's case was not any different. In 2010, the skilled civilian-military personnel of PRT Panjshir was ordered to Bagram Air Base while leaving a small cadre of the military in Panjshir. But civilian experts dealing with the local habitants and government of Panjshir were withdrawn as well.

However, few soldiers left in Panjshir could not replace the civilian experts working on development and good governance to mentor Panjshir authorities⁷¹. PRT Panjshir in 2010 might have approached a successful security transition to the local authorities and development initiatives, especially regarding good governance. The course of development changed in 2010, and the whole civilian-military engagement with it. the PRT Panjshir was de facto closed in 2011. Just a couple of soldiers stayed in Panjshir till 2014, when most of the PRTs were closed. These days, Panjshir has gained a strong Taliban presence⁷².

5.4 Lessons Learned

The previous section highlights several PRT Panjshir limitations but also relatively well-managed initiatives. I draw from the PRT Panjshir analysis of particular lessons learned wrongdoings and relatively successful initiatives. I believe below-indicated fourteen lessons can be generalized to some extent in future civilian-military initiatives.

⁶⁹ It is important to mention that the Taliban threat came from other provinces. Due to the strong anti-Taliban feelings in Panjshir, it was rare to have locals getting recruited to Taliban (author's note).

⁷⁰ CTS Sentiel. Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity. 2011. <https://ctc.usma.edu/recent-highlights-in-terrorist-activity-25/>

⁷¹ Hommel, E. Hope Doesn't Live Here Anymore: An Afghan Civilian- Military Vision—One Commander's Experience. In: Gundersen, J and Civic, M. A., *Unity of Mission*. Maxwell: Air University Press, 2016, 149-172, 168, 169. ISBN: 9781585662470.

⁷² US Department of State. *Department Press Briefing*. 2022, <https://www.state.gov/briefings/departement-press-briefing-september-15-2022/>.

Clearly define the mission objectives

The note that the PRT was “civilian-led” is a misnomer. In the US, the DoS cannot lead military forces since the DoS has no command authority. This led to the situation when appropriate PRT work tremendously depended on the commander and civilian director relationships. If they did not get along well with each other, PRT was not simply doing a good job. In an environment as complicated as Afghanistan, mutual synchronization of the PRT leadership is critical. This fact was somewhat confirmed by the Panjshir governor Bahlol who said the PRT Panjshir deployed in 2009-2010 was the first PRT that made the locals work.⁷³

Find the main sources of instability at the early stages of the mission

The PRT Panjshir approached this analysis in 2009 four years after its foundation. The main source of instability in Panjshir coming from a government (both provincial and national) that is unable or unwilling to take care of its constituents.

One main source of funding for development initiatives:

Panjshir case pointed out that the military had clear leverage over the development projects with their CERP funds. Besides, USAID workers designated to do development had to wait for their funds even a couple of years. It would be vital if there was one source of relatively simple funding for both actors who would have to work with it altogether. This would narrow the relationship between the military and development workers. Besides, it is also apt to ask whether the military should stick with implementing development tasks. Soldiers are designated for security, this should be their main task. The development experts should be in charge of the development activities.

Security sector reform:

Once enhancing the SSR, the literacy education of the security professionals must remain a top priority during the security transition process; otherwise, it would simply train the security professionals to employ tactics and procedures without understanding when and how to utilise them. It is also crucial to foster their education once they were deployed to the field. Regarding education, having more educated people is always key. However, you must know you will have teachers to fill the schools in.

Know better your environment:

Knowing better your environment and trying to understand the local decision-making before you start doing something. The analysis revealed in many places that especially during the infrastructure project it was very difficult to understand the local decision-making between Shuras/Jirgas, district government, province government, and national government. This also goes hand in hand with the preparations of the personnel mustn't be underestimated. The cultural awareness training has to be more profound. PRT

⁷³ Hommel, E. Interview, 2022; Lewis, J. Interview, 2022.

should be aware of the historical and cultural roots of each specific area of operation. It is necessary to understand regional dynamics to win hearts and minds.

Foster local ownership, empower the locals:

If you do not empower the locals and rely too much on the top-down approach, you might never get the locals working and trying to rebuild the place for themselves. Bottom-up approaches and fostering local ownership should be anchored instead. As mentioned elsewhere in the text, after 2009, the military commander could no longer rely on quick CERP funding. Therefore, the commander and director had to get creative. The group thinking, in the end, resulted in the so-called “sweat equity” building program designed to empower rural villages to assist, for instance, in building their community schools. “Community buy-in was pivotal in ensuring the success of the sweat equity program. When a society becomes conditioned to the donor-recipient mindset, it tends to expect additional and continual support.”⁷⁴ In other words, development and security initiatives should reflect the needs of the locals. The bottom-up approach must be the key priority.

Money is not Everything:

Some cheap development projects can have way bigger impacts than expensive development initiatives. See the Bee and honey production project. It did not only help the locals to earn more money but also showed that the project benefits the ecosystem and built capacity through cooperation since the farmers were exchanging their best practices. Success does not always have to be measured by the amount of money allocated.

Focus on structural issues and not primarily on quick impact activities:

The PRT mission was relatively short which led most of the officers to do projects with tangible results that they would get promoted later on. However, reconstruction has to be structural. Structural reconstruction, nevertheless, is way more longer and consistency in the rotations has to be anchored. To support the consistency of the long-term initiatives, senior personnel should be prioritized. Based on the interviews with the former US PRT personnel, it turns out that by appointing senior people who no longer seek promotion, the PRT was efficient. To give an example, no one sees the impacts of education programmes in the HQ; however, everybody sees how much money one spends on infrastructure and so forth. In other words, younger professionals could have tended to do projects that were not necessary for the locals but were well-perceived in the HQ. Moreover, as it already works in the government, if the PRT did not spend the allocated amount of money, he would get less of it next year.

⁷⁴ Hommel, E. Hope Doesn't Live Here Anymore: An Afghan Civilian- Military Vision—One Commander's Experience. In: Gundersen, J and Civic, M. A., *Unity of Mission*. Maxwell: Air University Press, 2016, 149-172, 165. ISBN: 9781585662470.

Do not pull out skill personnel without knowing the place is ready:

Transitions to the locals who were not ready happened extremely fast. In 2010, the skilled civilian-military personnel of PRT Panjshir was ordered to Bagram Air Base while leaving a small cadre of the military in Panjshir. The analysis did not even detect whether the PRT Panjshir assessed the locals are so-called “ready to go”. The CIMIC unit should leave the region once the security transition to the local authorities is completed. As mentioned above, most PRT Panjshir withdrew once the security situation deteriorated.

Continuity of the mission has to be ensured:

The given rotations have to exchange information among them closely. It was ineffective when every new rotation had to spend 3-4 months to figure out what was going on in Panjshir. The continuity of the leadership should have been maintained too. It is only effective if a new commander comes out with a brand new strategy each year if the previous strategy is poor.

Have knowledge what the others are doing:

Cooperation with international NGOs should be synchronized to avoid the duplication of development projects.

Do not use humanitarian aid for the win and hearts:

The reasoning behind this idea is that the locals soon find out that humanitarian aid often and regularly aims to gather intel information and that the win hearts and minds approach might be just a way to get information from them. Moreover, if the humanitarian aid is too often, the locals can find out that whatever they say, they will get some reward.

Try to put as many obstacles to corruption as possible:

First, PRT should monitor aid allocation as the risk of corruption on both sides is possible. Furthermore, it turned out well when the remuneration fees for the local contractors had to be paid in several parts to decrease the risk of fraud.

Good governance requires time:

Good governance should be anchored if the headquarters intends to have a specific CIMIC unit deployed for an extended period. It is possible to develop good governance initiatives during five years long deployment. The question also arises whether CIMIC units such as PRT should be doing any good governance. PRTs appeared to be somewhat effective in building projects and generally short-time activities. Long-term initiatives such as good governance should be left to designated professionals outside the PRT who focus on good governance. Nevertheless, trying to build good governance is a task for a long run, almost decades. To successfully approach good governance, the PRT would have to probably stay way longer. However, it is not clear how much longer. During my stay in NATO Civilian-Military Center of Excellence in Hague one of the former German

PRT senior officers told me good-governance takes up to three generations of locals⁷⁵. Jeremy Lewis⁷⁶ mentioned during our interview, the good-governance initiatives like advising the local authorities how to communicate among themselves, how to deal with the national government and how to create a functional bureaucratic structure had only limited impact due to the short period the PRT Panjshir focused on the topics mentioned above which were from 2005 till 2011. But still, critically assessed, good governance activities shall be carefully approached. One has to consider whether, for instance, the village leader or governor of a province with distinct cultural and identity points of view would fully listen to people from different parts of the World. It might eventually work but after a long period. However, generally observed, good governance activities outside of the Euroatlantic World generally do not work⁷⁷.

CONCLUSION

First of all, it is vital to try to answer whether the PRT Panjshir mission was successful. Generally, outside of the framework of causal quantitative analysis having clear dependent and independent variables, it is very difficult to draw such a conclusion from a purely interpretative qualitative one. However, if we look at it from the most general line, the PRT's ultimate goal was to achieve security and development. After the Taliban surge in 2010 the security situation generally deteriorated, and more enhanced development could not be consequently achieved. In Panjshir, such conditions were accelerated by the departure vast of the PRT Panjshir personnel after 2010. Hence, it is vital to look down from the strategic level into the tactical level where the minor projects and initiatives were conducted. It would be too easy to say that PRT Panjshir and other PRTs were not successful at all. They did certainly help some locals to get from the miserable development conditions, and built schools and critical infrastructure. Not every projected was carried out and the infrastructure built was for nothing.

Nevertheless, it is also questionable whether we should be asking if something related to PRTs was successful. I think it is more convenient to ask instead whether we reached satisfying or sufficient results. In conflict zones, measuring success is always difficult. We can, however, detect whether at least sufficient results were reached. The results do not have to be perfect but functioning. We find analogical situation in the debate on conflict resolution vis-à-vis conflict management. Just a few conflicts can be probably resolved for good. However, most of them cannot. Hence, we can observe scholars and experts tend to prioritize the word "manage". I believe PRTs generally tried to manage the security and development conditions to a lesser or greater extent. However, they did not definitely fully resolve those conditions.

⁷⁵ Mühlich, S., Bundeswehr Germany. Interview. 2021.

⁷⁶ Lewis, J. Interview, 2022.

⁷⁷ Kocián, T. Interview with director from Czech NGO People in Need. 2022.

The last question remains to be answered – can the PRT model be duplicated in future conflicts? First, it is important to point out that PRTs in Afghanistan were so-called context-oriented, hence, it brings difficulties to answer this question. Nowadays, I do not see whether a similar model could be used, for instance, in the conflict Sahel which is beset by glooming insurgency and terrorism. Sahel is a conflict area and requires different approaches than PRT which was intended for a post-conflict environment. Something like PRT could be considered for the post-conflict environments which Afghanistan never was. Panjshir was a low-threat environment, but it was not a post-conflict environment. PRT's elements might be theoretically duplicated in post-conflict zones such as in Western Africa (e.i. Sierra Leone) or the Balkans (Kosovo) in the CIMIC initiatives. Some of its elements might be used in post-war Ukraine in theory. Right now, we know that European states have already preliminary divided Ukraine into regions they would like to rebuild. However, if the West wanted to use the PRT model in Ukraine it would have to avoid previous mistakes from the Balkans and Afghanistan. For instance, the Ukrainian government would have to play a key role, and PRTs would just support the task's execution. National PRTs should also synchronize their activities among themselves to avoid the situation when each nation going to the provinces with their national PRT meant the repetition of so-called balkanization. Lastly, the West in Ukraine would have to also conduct a horizontal way to reconstruction, which Afghanistan never was as gen. Ton van Loon⁷⁸ (former ISAF commander of Regional Command South) pointed out during our interview.

Author: **Zdeněk Rod, born 1996.** *He graduated from the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen with a Bachelor's and Master's degree in International Relations. He teaches security studies at the same university and is also completing his postgraduate studies in international relations, specializing in conflict resolution and security studies. He also co-runs a security consulting firm, Center for Security Consulting, and teaches security studies at Ambis University in Prague. Previously, he studied at the Universities of Ljubljana and Budapest and the European Security and Defence Academy in Brussels. He also worked at the Ministry of Defence in the Hybrid Threat Unit. He specializes in foreign security issues, hybrid threats and strategic communications.*

How to cite: ROD, Zdeněk. The Security-Development Nexus in Practice: Lessons Learned from the US Provincial Reconstruction Team in Panjshir in Afghanistan. *Vojenské rozhledy*. 2024, 33 (1), 105-126. ISSN 1210-3292 (print), 2336-2995 (online). Available at: www.vojenskerozhledy.cz.

⁷⁸ Ton, Loon van. Interview. 2022.