An analysis of the British military approach to reconstruction and development in Helmand Province since 2006

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David Woodward

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Abstract

This paper critically evaluates the role played by the British military in the reconstruction and development of Helmand since its deployment there in 2006. It provides the context surrounding the deployment including the merging of international thoughts on the provision of security and development, the recent turbulent history of Afghanistan and demonstrates the considerable development challenges the country and Helmand in particular faces. It explains how the military became increasingly involved in reconstruction and development, an activity that is not their core business, through a realisation that Afghan development was critical to their success, but that due to the security situation they were largely the only actor present to engage in it. It is not a role for which they were fully prepared or wanted.

The paper explores the Comprehensive Approach that aimed to combine all levers of government power to a unified goal, the military doctrine that guides activity to identify whether it adequately supports the role of the military in Helmand and the evidence of what has actually been achieved. It concludes that whilst the military understood that they alone could not ‘solve Helmand’ the Comprehensive Approach did not initially work, largely due to inter-departmental rivalries and whilst there has been progress at the strategic level there is still some way to go. This lack of full implementation has had a detrimental effect on development activity in Helmand. At the operational level there has been greater progress and an integrated Comprehensive Approach has now been achieved with government representatives working towards a common purpose. The military doctrine has not adequately supported the mission resulting in lessons having to be learned on the ground, although this has now been addressed with new guidance. Initial development activity was often disjointed, but with greater experience and an increased civilian input it is improving. It remains generally small and limited, but has come a long way, is now ‘scaling up’ where possible and its processes are now far more in tune with established development theory and practice. The military is now a competent partner in development activity in Helmand.
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Research Methods

This study is based upon research conducted during the summer of 2010. It analyses the overarching strategic through to tactical approach, the guidance given to the military in the form of its doctrine and the evidence and accounts of what has actually been achieved.

I knew that the British military had deployed to Helmand in 2006 and had become involved in reconstruction and development work. I needed to understand the background rationale to the deployment and how they had become involved in an activity that was not their traditional core business. I gained an understanding of the development challenges in Afghanistan, and Helmand in particular, from government and non-governmental agency reports on the internet and the historical background from academic literature held at the Defence Library at Shrivenham.

The study would have to be principally desk level research, but I knew there would be problems with this. There is no single work that has looked at this topic. The operation in Helmand is ongoing and less than five years old. The security situation is non-permissive resulting in journalists and researchers having had very limited access to first hand information and the opportunity to see anything other than the British government’s view of events. The detailed military and government reports are mostly classified and therefore inaccessible and government and military reports that are accessible would often portray a more positive interpretation of events than may actually be the case. The same would be true of military blogs. Published material would also be slightly out of date. There is very limited information on the Afghan perspective of operations and objective information would therefore be difficult to obtain and would have to rely on analysis and more informed commentators and observers. It would not be possible to visit Helmand as part of the research for this dissertation and it would not be possible to gain a first hand account of the Afghan perspective on the British military approach to reconstruction and development.

The literature indicated that over the last two decades there had been a convergence of security and development aims throughout the International Community. I wanted to explore how this had affected the military and it became apparent that the key effect of this convergence for the British was the development of the concept of the Comprehensive Approach and the attempts at its implementation. I therefore concentrated on academic literature, government reports and interviews with some of the key players to build up a picture of how this approach had developed and the implications of that development.

I wanted to explore the doctrine that underpins the military approach, but it was important to me that this doctrine could be accessed via the internet to ensure that I could not be accused of using anything remotely classified. From this I aimed to comment on its suitability through a comparison with the theory and practice of development gleaned throughout the Masters’ course.
Exploring what the military has actually achieved was always going to be the most challenging aspect of the dissertation. There is no published information of any great detail about Helmand. I became aware that the reports that are published by government departments or NGOs mostly appeared to represent an unbalanced view based on their own particular prejudices or agenda. I therefore felt it was critically important to interview some of those who had actually taken part. Using my military contacts it was relatively easy to identify possible military and civilian interviewees, but it was far more difficult to find people willing to speak openly and frankly about their experiences or even willing to speak at all. As an ongoing operation it remains a sensitive topic. However on the understanding that they would not be identified 18 people from a variety of backgrounds were interviewed. The testimony of those who appeared to provide a useful and balanced account have been included and where possible their testimony has been cross-referenced with the published information covering their specific time periods in Helmand.
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1: Abbreviations

ANDS - Afghan National Development Strategy
CA - Comprehensive Approach
CERPs - Commanders Emergency Relief Programmes
CIMIC - Civil Military Cooperation
CMMH - Civil Military Mission Helmand
COIN - Counter-Insurgency
CWA - Consent Winning Activity
DFID - Department for International Development
FCO - Foreign and Commonwealth Office
GoA - Government of Afghanistan
JDN - Joint Doctrine Note
JDP - Joint Doctrine Publication
IC - International Community
IDA - International Development Act
ISAF - International Security Assistance Force
KI - Key Informant
M&E - Monitoring and Evaluation
MOD - Ministry of Defence
MSSG - Military Stabilisation Support Group
MSST - Military Stabilisation Support Team
NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation
OGD - Other Government Departments
PCRU - Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit
PDC - Provincial Development Council
PRA - Participatory Rapid Appraisal
PRT - Provincial Reconstruction Team
QIP - Quick Impact Project
R&D - Reconstruction and Development
SAF - Stabilisation Aid Fund
SSR - Security Sector Reform
SU - Stabilisation Unit
2: Context

Convergence of Security and Development

Foreign policy decisions and the definition of what constituted a national security threat were relatively clear cut during the years of the more polarised world and proxy campaigns of the Cold War. The concept and definition of security has subsequently broadened as many commentators, such as Macrae and Leader (2000) note. By the mid 2000’s, 95% of conflicts worldwide were internal (Coicaud, 2007) The UK’s own National Security Strategy (NSS) (2008) succinctly sums up these changes and modern threats.

‘The Cold War threat has been replaced by a diverse, but interconnected set of threats and risks which have the potential to undermine wider international security. They include international terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, conflicts and failed states, pandemics and transnational crime...driven by a diverse and interconnected set of underlying factors, including climate change, competition for energy, poverty and poor governance, demographic changes and globalisation’ (p.13)

Sovacool and Haflon (2007) highlight the effect of failing and failed states on international security and how the international community (IC) has gradually acknowledged the requirement to link development of these failing or failed states into their own security interests. For Nathan (2008) ‘The world saw on 11 September the consequences a failed state can have for global security’ (p.8). In addition modern irregular warfare and any post conflict stabilisation is now conducted in an environment more complex than during the Cold War. Most take place in countries suffering underdevelopment and poverty with many states unable to cope and therefore requiring assistance from the IC. The NSS again shows the UK position on this linkage.

‘Whenever possible, we will tackle security challenges early...the most effective way involves early engagement...the most effective way to reduce the threat posed by failed states is to support fragile states in strengthening their governance, their development and their security capabilities’ (p.14)

It is now acknowledged that short term solutions to enable conflict termination are inadequate for long term resolution, where the root causes need to be addressed for as Gray (2006) states ‘war is only about the peace that follows’. The link between development and security had been partly developed through the US experience in Afghanistan during the 1980s where it used aid to the mujahedeen to help influence the conflict, but more latterly in the 1990s where it was seen that more conventional aid strategies could exert influence over conflict (Macrae and Leader, 2000). Development was being seen as an aid to ending conflict and if the conflict affected ones own security, then security and development became intimately linked. For Duffield (2001) ‘the association of conflict with underdevelopment has served to blur security and development’. As such the need for security and development agencies to operate alongside and more importantly to align activity is crucial in the pursuit of long term resolution. In a globalised interconnected world where international security threats come from failing states there is therefore an increasing convergence of security and development.
Throughout the 1990’s this convergence has been acknowledged by the western military through their development of Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) departments and doctrine, although at this stage it was essentially a coordination function. As Gordon (2006) states the link between security and development and their interdependence has now been institutionalised in the practices of policy makers, military commanders, academics and development practitioners, resulting as Frerks (2006) comments in civil tasks becoming part of a mission mandate. Rotberg (2007) notes that recent western expeditionary military operations, such as Iraq and Afghanistan are part of the need to enhance western security and that there is a growing acceptance of the need for security to support development and development to support security through mutually reinforcing activities. The Peace Support Operations (PSO) of the 1990’s have now evolved into intervention operations linked to long term stability. Therefore it is in the interest of the military engaged in these conflicts to ensure that reconstruction and development (R&D) of a failing state take place. If there is a limited national or international capacity to do this then the military will increasingly fill the gap as an aid to their overall mission success. It is within the context of the evolution of these international thoughts that the UK military found itself in Helmand Province, Afghanistan in 2006.

Afghan History

Afghanistan can lay considerable claim to being a failed or at least failing state (Gennip, 2010). In order to understand how this situation transpired and the consequent development challenges it now faces, it is necessary to explore some of the country’s recent history. The Soviet invasion of 1979 was followed by a ten year military occupation, supporting the pro-Soviet government. This prompted a fierce resistance from the multi-tribal mujahedeen who united against the invading foreign presence, a common thread throughout Afghanistan history and culture. The Soviet response was brutal, involving the systematic destruction of rural infrastructure including villages, perennial crops, livestock and irrigation systems. The Soviet occupation resulted in the creation of 5.5 million Afghan refugees (Harvey, 2002). Following a growing realisation that like many before them, they could not subjugate the country and in the face of mounting international pressure the Soviet’s withdrew in 1989. Without the uniting common enemy, a civil war broke out between the competing mujahedeen warlords which lasted for 6 years until the Taliban took control of the country. By 1997 the Taliban controlled 95% of Afghanistan (Senlis, 2007). Principally ethnic Pashtun, they had originated in the refugee camps of North West Frontier Province in Pakistan and returned to Afghanistan in 1994 preaching a strict interpretation of sharia law. The IC initially responded positively to an organisation that was seen as providing order to Afghanistan. This rapidly changed due to their strict domestic policies and by the fact that they sheltered and provided a safe operating base to the leadership and training camps of Al Qaeda. Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, a US backed and UN endorsed campaign removed the Taliban from power in 2002, through Operation Enduring Freedom. Immediately after, as Maley describes (2006), a large scale NATO intervention force was sent to the capital under the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) banner to provide a security framework to the fledgling government, to support the host nation

1 The main ethnic groups are Pashtun, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras.
and assist with R&D. ISAF has gradually expanded its footprint to more areas of the country.

The initial IC plan was detailed in the Bonn Agreement, signed on the 5 December 2001, which provided a framework for the IC to help Afghanistan create a legitimate government. The Afghan Compact, signed on 31 June 2006, expanded on this framework and endorsed an Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) setting benchmarks of security, governance, rule of law, human rights and economic and social development. The IC’s stated aim, in both documents, is to ensure a stable Afghanistan that no longer poses a threat to the IC.

**The State of Afghanistan**

The development challenge in Afghanistan is staggering and in 2008 it was understood that it would not meet any of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 (International Development Committee, 2008). It is ranked 181 of 182 nations in the Human Development Index and has a life expectancy of 44 years, ranking it 219 of 224 countries. The ANDS says 20% of population cannot meet the minimum levels of dietary energy, 41% of children are underweight and 57% of the population are under 18, but with little hope of employment. In addition as Farrell and Gordon (2009) state there is ‘no effective elite, a vast and difficult terrain, a lack of infrastructure, a fragmented tribal population who are xenophobic, conservative and hostile to foreigners’ (p.664). On top of this is endemic corruption with the country rated in 2008 176 of 180 in the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (Alexander, 2009). The UN plan is based principally on the establishment of a legitimate government, but as Freeman (2007) says, even this basic concept is contested with development also having the potential to be portrayed as a western plot. For example in rural areas tribal leaders, shuras and mullah dominated societies are often against development, particularly if it involves foreigners. For them a new school will introduce new ideas and mullahs fear being replaced by younger better educated leaders (Rashid, 2008). However despite this the development challenge is matched at least in the rhetoric and ambition of the IC, if not resources, by what Farrell (2009) describes as the equivalent of delivering the ‘Enlightenment and Marshall Plan in the context of Europe’s 100 years war’ (p.667).

Helmand Province is located in south-west Afghanistan with a border with Pakistan. Helmand River is the largest river running north-south before turning west towards Iran. It is along this north-south stretch that the urban centres are located. Helmand is essentially a desert plateau apart from the fertile areas around the river. The population is 1.4 million, with an average of 9 people per household. Due to the conflict in Helmand accurate up to date statistics are unavailable, but previous statistics (DFID, 2008) show unsurprisingly that Helmand is even less well developed than the Afghan average and is likely to have deteriorated. For example the national average maternal mortality rate is 1600/100,000 live births (one of the worst in the world) whereas Helmand’s is 4503/100,000. The national average for having a skilled attendant at birth is 18.9%, in Helmand it is 1.5%. Safe drinking water is available to only 13%, 5% have safe toilet facilities and 6% have electricity, (NATO 2009) all lower than national averages.

Thruelson (2008) states that the economy is based on criminality, corruption and narcotics trafficking with the province being the largest opium producer in
Afghanistan, providing 35% of farmers’ annual income with 80% of farming families involved in its production. This has a significant negative and complicating effect on R&D efforts as farmers routinely bribe police and officials and it was estimated that government and provincial officials are involved in as much as 70% of drug trafficking (US Dept of State, 2007 in Thruelson p.14). As this industry prospers in a political and security vacuum it is therefore in the interests of much of the population to keep the situation insecure. Being Pashtun, this population are also the most naturally inclined to support the Taliban. These conditions reflect the R&D challenges that faced the British in Helmand in 2006.

**The British arrive in Helmand**

The declared aim of the British government in 2006 was a ‘stable, secure, democratic and self sustaining Afghanistan, free from terrorism and terrorist domination’ (Ingram, 2006) which sets an overarching vision for what the military should be working towards. In May 2006, the Secretary of State for Defence, John Reid, announced that the UK would assume responsibility for military efforts in Helmand. He famously said that he hoped that not a ‘single shot would be fired’ (Dressler, 2009). The troops were deployed as part of the plan to expand NATO’s footprint from the north to improve security, political, social and economic aspects around the capital Lashkar Gah and then expand outwards and this was presented as a PSO.

Planning for the operation had begun in 2005 with the Cabinet Office establishing, following pressure from the MOD, the Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit (PCRU) to lead inter-departmental planning for a strategic framework which resulted in a ‘UK Joint Plan for Helmand’. The plan, according to Dressler (2009) envisaged British and Afghan troops providing security to allow civilian development work to transform the political, social and economic fabric of the town. The military had always acknowledged that they alone could not ‘solve’ Helmand, but the plan was derailed from the outset. As Farrel (2009) describes, the planners had a lack of knowledge of the situation and a government focus on Iraq deflected resources. The situation on the ground was far worse than expected with fierce resistance from the Taliban and too few troops to establish security, and from 2006-07 the military adjusted from a peacekeeping role to a counter-insurgency role (COIN).

The Department for International Development (DFID) and Foreign Office (FCO) would not send staff to Helmand due to the lack of security and the perception grew in the military that they did not want to conduct development work in a conflict environment. In 2006-07 the military focussed on defeating the Taliban, but as Burke (2009) states they did not hold the ground to allow any development work to take place. This concentration on kinetic activity frustrated the FCO and DFID (DFID 2009) as, for them, not enough thought was going into R&D. The military perception was different as quoted in the Sunday Telegraph (2006). The military were frustrated by the reluctance of civilian staff to leave Kabul as one officer made clear ‘If we can’t drag them away from their beers and BBQ in Kabul, then what we are doing in Helmand will be fatally undermined. We are creating space for development, but there is no one there to do it.’ Thruelson (2008) states that by the end of 2006 there were 4,500 troops in Helmand but only 4 civilians who had no authority to approve projects.
By October 2007 there had been a significant increase in troop numbers to 7,750 (Farrel, 2009) and the military focussed more on aligning military and development activities. This resulted in 2008 in the Helmand Road Map, a military initiated, but civilian agreed plan which set out a broad range of security and development objectives focussed on engaging the population at the local level and winning consent. Its success depended upon a better resourced and more effective civil-military effort.

The military had always realised that traditional military efforts were not going to achieve the government’s objectives in Helmand. As General Richards (British ISAF Commander) said in 2006 ‘Soldiers will be the first to tell you that the military effort alone is not enough. We must create conditions that bring all the actors together. We can set the conditions, but are often powerless to set the key parts of the overall plan’ (Cobbald, 2008). General McKiernon a subsequent ISAF commander, reiterated this understanding saying ‘After security is established we have to have reconstruction and development to meet the needs of the Afghan people. Only when these lines of operation work together in tandem, will we get the right outcome. Offering development progress is the key to success’ (NATO, 2009). However Helmand had an absence of NGOs operating and a reluctance by DFID and FCO to deploy staff due to a lack of security. Therefore the military became increasingly involved in R&D activities as ‘without tangible improvements in peoples’ lives the insurgency will not be defeated’ (IDC, 2008).

Development in Conflict

The concept of conducting R&D within a conflict does not have a distinctive academic base that differs greatly from established development principles (Martin, 2005). However it is different, is more complex and requires greater contextual understanding and conflict analysis. As Grossman (2009) notes the approach depends on whether one is working ‘in conflict’ or ‘on conflict’. ‘In conflict’ requires a ‘Do No Harm’ approach (Anderson, 2000) to ensure that one does not exacerbate the conflict. ‘On conflict’ (Goodhand, 2001) involves addressing the causes and escalating factors of the conflict, the military role in Helmand. Anderson states that R&D should be delivered impartially, a view not shared by Grossman who dismisses the apolitical nature of aid in a conflict scenario, but concurs that the intervention should at least do no harm. Martin (2005) states that one must have clearly defined development principles, understand the context and dynamics of the conflict and population, particularly the power dynamics ie: being conflict sensitive.

Both Grossman and Gennip (2010) identify 4 key pillars to R&D in/on conflict; establishing a safe and secure environment; establishing justice; social and economic well being and establishing good governance and participation. Of these security must come first, the primary aim of the military in Helmand. Following this, community driven development strategies with the broad agreement of all stakeholders are even more important in a conflict to empower the community, increase transparency and reduce corruption. Analysis by Collier and Hoeffler (2002) has indicated that, once secure, there is a requirement to take advantage of a small window of opportunity to set an area on the road to development, requiring the rapid reconstruction and restoration of basic services. Goodhand (2006) states that tied aid should be avoided and local staff used, empowering the local authorities to take the lead with as BAAG (2009) note interventions funded through local
government and not directly paid for. In addition local plans must be tied to national priorities, but as Grossman states conflict situations are not suited to development ‘by the book’, requiring flexibility and an ability to exploit opportunities. The following chapters will identify whether the military comply with these principles and the wider established generic principles of developmental best practice.
3: The Strategic Level Framework – The Comprehensive Approach

The Comprehensive Approach

This chapter will look at the strategic level framework the British military aspires to in the implementation of R&D activity and assess its success. The overarching concept that sets the framework for the British military approach to R&D activity within Helmand (and elsewhere) is the Joint Doctrine Note 4/05 ‘The Comprehensive Approach’ (CA), (2006). The CA emerged because of the changing nature of conflict and a realisation that the military alone could not achieve success, through its experiences in the various Balkans campaigns of the 1990’s. Following these experiences and those in Iraq it realised that co-operation with other actors at the tactical and operational level was not enough and that this co-operation was required from the strategic level down. Korski (2009) states that Iraq was the key to this change as it clearly showed the cost of not having a joined up civil-military plan. After the invasion of Iraq in 2003 FCO and DFID staff deployed slowly and reconstruction funds were slow to arrive. This resulted in a military ‘heavy’ plan and the post conflict window to act decisively with R&D work was missed (Cross, 2007). This lead to the writing of the CA which sought to embrace working with others. It is a conceptual framework to co-ordinate x-governmental responses ‘to draw together the 3 national instruments of power military, diplomatic and economic’ (p.3). In Helmand the military saw itself in a supporting role creating conditions for other government departments (OGDs). The aim of the approach is to establish ‘commonly understood principles and collaborative processes that enhance the likelihood of favourable and enduring outcomes’ (p.5). It should focus all activity on an agreed unifying theme with development activity considered at the outset of planning. The military aim is that this strategic agreement between departments should then filter down and be implemented seamlessly at the operational and tactical level. Through this the military sought to avoid a haphazard approach and aimed to align their activity with OGDs to achieve coherent solutions. Des Browne (2006), Secretary of State for Defence represented the military view by saying that the CA is the ‘interweaving of different departments reinforcing each other like the strands of a rope’(p.2).

Problems with Implementation

The necessity of such an approach to R&D activity in Helmand would seem intuitive, but its implementation has proved problematic from the start. Kent (2007) says the concept is too simplistic and that naturally each of the 3 key government departments (MOD, FCO and DFID) approached its function in Afghanistan from a different viewpoint. The different departments each had separate views of its role, with the FCO working alongside the Government of Afghanistan (GoA), DFID alongside the World Bank and UN and the MOD alongside NATO. These varying perspectives have proved to be particularly important between the MOD and DFID. Despite the rhetoric in the IC acknowledging the need for all actors to work together as ‘operating in the political, economic and military spheres independently means that a breakdown in one risks failure in all others’ (Bonn Agreement, 2001), this had not been achieved from the outset in 2001. The IC’s Bonn Agreement was a piecemeal strategy that lacked a coordinated plan and this lack of coordination was replicated by the British government and was still evident with the British insertion
into Helmand in 2006. John Reid had said ‘this will not be achieved by military means alone...we in the government have undertaken an unprecedented degree of x-government coordination to ensure that this is a fully integrated package addressing governance, security and political and social development’ (Richards, 2008, p.42), but the reality was different. Whilst the military perhaps naively believed these discussions had implemented a CA the reality, as Richards describes, manifested itself in departmentalism, suspicion, cultural differences, mistrust and competition between ministries. The military saw its role as providing secure space for civilian actors to carry out R&D work, but from the start they were not supported in the manner they envisaged. The military wanted a CA, but on their terms and together with the challenges outlined by Richards above were added a lack of mutual language, processes and priorities preventing full implementation at the strategic level, combined critically with a lack of an overall coordinating authority overseeing the plan in government. The MOD’s attempts to formalise a CA were, according to Dressler (2008), resented by OGDs who feared a military takeover and having to compromise their own departmental priorities.

DFID’s mission to alleviate poverty is enshrined in the International Development Act (IDA) legislation, which conflicted with pursuing a national agenda and, according to Waddell (2006), cooperating with the military. By 2006 DFID had a 10 year bilateral plan with GoA targeting resources across all 34 of Afghanistan’s provinces (DFID 2006). They did not, by their own admission, initially see development being possible in a conflict area and had reluctance from the highest level to support what they saw as a military mission in Helmand. This caused friction with the military on the ground who believed DFID should concentrate on backing up progress in Helmand with development projects. General Richards (Norton-Taylor, 2007) stated ‘I will not conceal our frustration with the speed of DFID’s delivery on the ground and occasional reluctance to join us as necessary planning partners... they were guilty of not living up to our expectations’ (p.2). DFID were in an invidious position, constrained, albeit willingly, by the ideals of the IDA and the military initially failed to appreciate these differences and address the R&D shortfall. The strategic level CA was not working because the military wanted DFID to fund projects directly, but DFID wanted to work through the Afghan line ministries. To the military, DFID’s activities were too long term; they wanted DFID to be a follow on force once an area was secured.

Towards a CA

The military CA had stalled because OGDs would not fully support it. The PCRU had been established in late 2004, which brought together elements of the FCO, DFID and military together, but it was poorly funded and resourced and did not achieve full operating capability until mid 2006, by which time the military were already in Helmand. The PCRU had developed the initial plan for Helmand, but the military who arrived in Helmand were faced with an altogether different scenario from that envisaged. Korski (2009) says that the 2005 Afghan plan was not an integrated plan due to the failure to achieve a CA, but was a series of individual department plans stitched together. Hence many issues not owned by 1 department fell through the cracks. The troops that deployed to Helmand saw the weaknesses of the plan and wrote their own without input from the FCO or DFID, which undermined the developing CA and reinforced suspicions. The Conservative Party called for a CA to be implemented in government and in response to outside pressure the new Brown
government in 2007 convened a new Cabinet sub-committee, the National Security, International Relations and Development (NSID), bringing together several departments to look at overall strategy. Senior FCO, DFID and military staff now worked closer together. Operationally there was also progress with the development of the Helmand Road Map, a joint civil-military plan.

The PCRU was replaced in December 2007 by the Stabilisation Unit (SU) as an attempt to provide a broader forum for government coordination, although it still had no executive authority. The rebranding came with a £269 million Stabilisation Aid Fund (SAF) which removed one of the major challenges to implementing a CA, namely a common funding source. Previously as Duffield (2008) notes tension over funding had prevented inter-agency cooperation. However the SU was not a panacea for the implementation of development activities as weaknesses in its outlook remained. The aim of the SU is to ‘coordinate activity to achieve a stable environment that will enable longer term development work to take place’ (SU, 2008). It seeks to bridge the gap between emergency humanitarian aid and longer term development, but the danger appears to be that it creates a new stovepipe of activity with a separate agenda from aid and development. The SAF is geared towards shorter term projects and its purpose is not development work, stating that this is left solely to DFID. This would however appear to be a false division as many SAF funded projects will have a developmental and long term impact, which is certainly how the military aims to use it. This focus on the short term could also result in projects that are unsustainable or have longer term negative impacts. The SU’s statements on the SAF imply that DFID is clearly not allowing it to impinge upon its central role and Korski (2009) states that at the strategic level there remains a lack of synergy between the agendas of the 3 key departments.

Problems Remain

However the SU has made progress to implementing a CA, but like its predecessor the PCRU, the military remain the most enthusiastic partner. In Helmand it provides specialist advice on how to deliver basic services, such as roads, sanitation and education, through to advising on the development of government. Its key tasks are to help the 3 departments gain a common understanding of issues and develop a common strategic framework, to provide personnel to advise on the resulting projects and to identify and share best practice. It has instigated joint training with an annual exercise beginning in 2008 to develop better planning processes, although the initial exercise was poorly attended by both DFID and FCO staff. The SU is helping to break down scepticism over the military motivation for conducting R&D in Helmand, but as Duffield (2008) says this scepticism remains. ‘There is a fear that the military will use reconstruction and development work to gather intelligence or buy favour, impacting on how other agencies are perceived’(p.22). Waddell (2008) states that this view largely reflects an institutional lack of understanding of the realities in Helmand, where due to the security situation the military have to have a key role in these tasks as they are the predominant manpower with access to the areas requiring this work. Koski’s (2009) view is that this OGD opinion partly stems from their experience in Kosovo in 1999 where military assets in a humanitarian disaster made no contribution.

There has also not been a development of enlightened military R&D doctrine resulting in scepticism from DFID and FCO as to the extent to which the military
understand the issues and problems. This is accurate as up until now this has not been a core military task and hence their desire to embrace civilian experts in the planning process. They realise that they are not R&D professionals and need training and expertise, but there is also a lack of trust in the abilities of civilian actors which leads to hostility. Loyd (2010) quoted a military officer describing his civilian counterparts as ‘unable to pour piss from a boot if the instructions were on the heel’. DFID had control of R&D funds, but with no staff on the ground the oversight of projects was poor resulting in bribery and corruption. In 2006 he says DFID had £6.5 million available for Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) in Helmand, but only spent £600K, much to the annoyance of the military.

There remains a strategic reluctance by DFID staff to acknowledge the necessary role of the military in occupying ‘humanitarian space’ in Helmand, necessary as Duffield says because of the targeting of aid workers by the insurgents. Whilst the SU has improved the implementation of the CA there remains a lack of complete acceptance to this approach by DFID. As Richards (2008) says ‘its great strength (SU) is that it represents a standing tri-department planning capacity, but as the child of 3 very different departments it faces the risk that it is owned by no one. It also does not have the manpower or institutional weight and cohesion to effectively shape and influence the overall Whitehall agenda’ (p.41). The SAF remains small and beyond this there is no convergence of funding.

Individual departments keep their own money and spend it in their own way. Only limited resources are filtered down to the people on the ground in Helmand (largely the military). There is therefore limited opportunity for the military commanders to conduct the sort of ‘Action Planning’ to kick start development, as described by Hamdi (2004), even if they had this in mind. This is because DFID are constrained by the IDA and need their remit altered so that they can support stabilisation tasks. According to Korski (2009) there remains a reluctance to spend money on military developed initiatives. By comparison the US have made greater strides. The US military are fully integrated with civilian planners and operatives (Sky, 2006). The US are content to leave military forces at the disposal of development advisors, something the British military would not yet be happy to do. In Afghanistan the GoA has 1 point of contact for the US whereas there are 3 departments to deal with for the UK, with not even the SU providing a single strategic voice. The US military commanders also have delegated access to finance to carry out R&D initiatives through the Commanders Emergency Relief Programmes (CERPs). In contrast, Sky claims that not only do the UK military have limited access to money, they also have, through lack of experience, limited knowledge about how best to use the cash.

Greater coordination is clearly needed. At the end of 2007 General Richards (Cobbald, 2008) stated that the ‘key weakness is delivering on results to meet expectations. The military are creating the reconstruction and development space, but the space is not being filled fast enough because of beaurocracy, funding and availability of civilian expertise’. He went on to say that ‘more authority and money should be given to military commanders to orchestrate reconstruction and development….our civilian colleagues are not geared up to serve in such an environment, not trained to do so in the energetic manner that alone can deliver early success, keeping pace with peoples expectations’. The military realised the importance of rapid R&D activity to follow in areas where they were clearing Taliban in order to stabilise the area and prompt economic and social development,
exploiting the window of opportunity highlighted by Collier. This clearly met the military’s overall strategy of winning the consent of the population to support the presence of GoA control and what they saw as the British Government’s agenda, but DFID were not aligned to support this. They continued to pursue their own distinct IDA agenda. At the strategic level DFID failed to adapt to the unique challenges of R&D in the conflict environment of Helmand. The military did not understand that development takes time, but neither did the population who expected rapid results. This resulted in the military becoming more and more engaged in R&D activities.

The Way Ahead

In 2008 the institutional ‘stovepipes’ that the 3 key governmental departments remained in was highlighted in the UK NSS (2008) which provided firm direction to government departments to achieve a CA. This strategy also clearly articulates the link between security and development. However there remains evidence that the despite this direction a CA is still not being achieved. According to Korski (2009) the CA Working Group, tasked to give it impetus and improve inter-departmental coordination, is staffed by junior ministers and has no authoritative head. It issues instructions, but does little to affect OGDs actions. The partial failure of the CA at strategic level has had a detrimental effect on the ability of the military to implement R&D in Helmand. There needs to be structural change to prevent departments remaining solely focussed on their primary roles.

The reluctance of OGDs to support a CA was not shared by the senior civil servants on the ground, for example in 2008 Sir Sherrard Cowper-Coles, the British Ambassador to Kabul (Norton-Taylor, 2008) said that the solution lay in an integrated civil-military approach, but the situation lacked an overall CA due to an absence of political authority in Whitehall. Whilst the 3 departments had committed staff to the SU they needed to be fully coordinated in their activities by an executive body.

There appears a need to formalise the CA further, clarify the chain of command and provide a unity of purpose with OGDs providing more deployable personnel. So how can a strategic level CA agreed by the 3 key departments be achieved? Korski (2009) states that ‘re-engineering Whitehall’s organisational structure so that civil-military cooperation becomes routine will remain one of the main challenges over the next decade’. What is agreed by many commentators and would seem an obvious, but as yet unachieved aim is for the 3 departments to have 1 doctrine detailing the approach, 1 plan and 1 reconstruction agenda for Helmand. Gordon, Korski and Crawshaw (2007) suggest that there is a requirement for a National Strategic Planning and Operations Team to control the strategic plan. This could be lead by the Cabinet Office with representatives from the 3 key departments, who must have executive authority to speak on behalf of their department to deliver strategic plans to guide the conduct of the operation. The new Coalition government has now established a National Security Council (PM’s Office, 2010) which could fulfil this function, but it remains too early to tell whether it can overcome departmental intransigence.

Teuten, a DFID civil servant, who has just completed over 3 years as the head of the SU admits these failings (2010) and states that it needs the Cabinet Office to pull it together. The report of the Defence Committee (2010) highlights the fact that the CA is now officially endorsed by all 3 departments as the best way to approach R&D in
Helmand. It states that progress has been made since its inception in 2006 but admits that more needs to be done and that the direction of the NSS has not been followed through. Its recommendation is that the 3 departments should develop a common doctrine for a CA, but the fact that this is only a recommendation further highlights the continuing weakness of a lack of authority. The report concurs with what external commentators have been saying in that the Cabinet Office must oversee it. It also states that the IDA creates a culture within DFID that adversely impacts on its participation in a CA ie: working with the military on an overall Helmand strategy.

The CA at the Operational Level

The vehicle for implementing a CA to R&D at the operational level in Helmand is the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). The PRTs were a concept developed by the US in 2002 to spread GoA influence (State Dept, 2006) and consist of soldiers and civilian agencies. When the UK deployed to Helmand in 2006 it deployed with its own PRT with responsibility for initiating R&D work and was to consist of staff from the military, FCO and DFID. However it suffered from a lack of resources and unclear or ambiguous mission which caused civil-military tension on the ground. This, according to Korski (2010) lead to difficulties in generating a meaningful contribution and as previously noted due to the security situation and a lack of preparedness for the conditions in Helmand, civilian staff did not deploy in the required numbers, leaving the military in the lead.

The situation is improving and DFID who were according to Korski (2009) ‘allergic to closer civil-military cooperation’ have now embraced the CA at the operational level. Lyon (2009) says that it gradually became apparent to DFID that where targeting of civilian and aid workers is an insurgent tactic there is no alternative to the military taking on a R&D role and DFID’s own Country Programme Evaluation (2009) criticised its performance in tackling R&D challenges in Helmand. DFID could stick to its principles of ‘humanitarian space’ and risk failure or compromise, and thus DFID’s mindset gradually changed and moved to a more CA and working alongside the military. This has prompted the arrival of more civilian staff with numbers in Helmand having risen from 25 in 2007 to 80 in 2009. These civilians have developed a capacity for political leadership in Helmand helping coordinate a more localised and immediate R&D programme in conjunction with the military.

The Helmand Road Map (Thruelson, 2008) helped with the integration of civil-military efforts as did the establishment of a Civil Military Mission Helmand (CMMH) headquarters in June 2008 to form a coherent plan for the province. According to Thruelson, the CMMH has emerged as an important model ending duplication of tasks, such as information gathering, analysis and communications. It formed a collaborative headquarters in Lashkar Gah and as part of the PRT each district now has a joint civil-military stabilisation team of 10 staff. The CMMH clearly places civilians at the heart of decision making and civil and military resources are now pooled towards common objectives. Civilian stabilisation advisors at the district level are now able to provide direction to military personnel. The military have reported positively (Helmand Blog, 2010) on the effectiveness of these stabilisation advisors in coordinating a CA at the operational and tactical level, reducing many of the previous prejudices.
The role of the civilian and military overlap in Helmand, but as shown earlier the military have always seen R&D as a civilian lead. Until 2008 the problem was that there were no senior civil servants in Helmand and therefore the military did effectively have the lead. This problem was appreciated by Cowper-Coles (Norton-Taylor, 2008) who saw that the civilian must monitor the military to ensure that policy is not set by the military in order to achieve their own goals, which may be out of step with the needs of the people. Cowper-Coles saw the need for a more CA within the PRT and advocated, with agreement from the military, for their head to be replaced by a civilian. This happened in May 2008 with an FCO 2* assuming the appointment. It was also part of his strategy to force OGDs to take more ownership of R&D tasks in Helmand. The military were happy to hand over this responsibility in line with their desire to be in a supporting role in R&D. This tempered the purely military motives to more civilianised development goals.

Following the production of the Helmand Road Map, creation of the CMMH and the appointment of a civilian at the head of the PRT, all military operations now need a specific long term objective. Theoretically there is now a merger of military COIN operations and a CA R&D plan. Current military operations staff, longer term military planners and PRT staff now plan together on a daily basis to implement any project. The process follows 8 steps as outlined by Thruelson (2008, p.18), that ensures coordination of intent and resources to a common goal, with the civilian head keeping the process on track.

This PRT as well as including military, DFID and FCO staff now also includes USAID, Estonians and Danes (FCO, 2009). It assists the Afghan Provincial Development Council (PDC) in determining Helmand’s priorities and the delivery of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs). Thus it is now possible, following the build up of civilian staff, to have an integrated CA to direct R&D activity. The result according to NATO (2009) is that the PRT in Helmand is now the most civilianised of all PRTs and is the best at getting political, military and aid leaders together to take shared decisions. It also states that it is the most successful PRT in utilising Afghan resources, in comparison with other PRTs, who focus on tied aid that leaves the country in profit for their own nation’s companies, such as USAID where 40% of its aid is spent on US companies alone.

**Concerns with the PRT**

The PRT is not without its critics, although there is limited criticism of the UK PRT specifically. State-building is one of its declared goals ‘to assist GoA to extend its authority’ (SU, 2009), but for many NGOs this is not impartial enough. Very few NGOs are prepared to work with PRTs and 11 NGOs including Oxfam, Christian Aid and CARE called for aid delivery and military goals to be de-linked at the 2009 NATO Summit (NATO, 2009). These agencies claim, with some justification, that the PRTs ‘hearts and minds’ approach to development, aimed at winning popular consent is drawn directly from COIN doctrine and could therefore produce unsustainable and inappropriate results. They resent the military seemingly leading on R&D tasks, for it is the military staff they tend to encounter on the ground, but the arrival of a senior FCO figure to lead the PRT has assisted in altering this perception. However even with a civilian lead it could be understood that military personalities in an austere environment like Lashkar Gah could influence activity to suit their goals.
There is also concern within DFID (2009) that the PRT has no formalised training and equipment and does not attract the best people. There is also the fear (BAAG, 2009) that the military will still be the dominant force in R&D activities in Helmand and that these will be conducted as an operational consideration of what they need to achieve for operational gain in their 6 month tour, rather than seeing the bigger development picture of broader and deeper reform. The CMMH has sought to allay these fears, but more work is clearly still required. Oxfam’s criticism (NATO, 2009) repeated by BAAG blames the PRT for poor projects with low developmental impact, (‘they are a major player in putting up empty buildings’ p.23), for diverting resources into these projects and pursuing a national agenda, although no detail is given.

This criticism reflects deep seated fundamental objections from NGOs to the military being involved in R&D activity at all. The key objections are the blurring of the division between civil and military activities, undermining the neutrality and safety of aid workers. There are concerns over the politisisation of aid, development as a means to an end, rather than a right in itself (Barry, 2002) and its militarisation with governments giving resources to the military at the expense of civilian channels. Studer (2001) and Lilly (2002) claim their involvement violates humanitarian principles, there is institutional incompatibility and the military are no good at it, not observing international standards and wasting money. Frerks (2006) however believes that there is a requirement for NGOs to be ‘principled pragmatists’, balancing principles against functional interests, complementarity and mutual interests to cooperate with the military as required. In line with military thoughts he believes that development in Afghanistan should be ‘as civilian as possible, as military as necessary’ (p.13). He states that NGOs in the field tend to be open to collaboration with the military and that NGO headquarters can lose themselves in the ‘poetry and philosophy’ of academic discussions.

Gordon (2009) asserts that development in Afghanistan cannot be neutral, involving as it does social and political change and inevitably involves taking sides and using government apparatus. He also declares that claims of neutrality are hypocritical as most international NGOs receive much of their funding from their domestic governments. Frerks describes the thoughts of the many NGOs that are keen to work with the military, particularly Afghan NGOs, who resent international NGO criticism of their association with the military. They state that the PRT will target even the remotest villages that NGOs cannot access. For these NGOs, ‘humanitarian’ means helping people in need regardless of whom you have to collaborate with. Despite these varying views NGO criticism has, according to NATO (2009), engendered a more thoughtful approach that is better coordinated and with longer term perspectives. The PRT now works closely with the PDC and NGOs to better coordinate military activity away from NGOs who do not want any contact with the military.

Summary

The CA is at the core of how the military believes it should approach R&D activity in Helmand. It does not seek a lead role, recognising its own limitations in knowledge and training, but in the absence of other actors it has been forced to take a more active role understanding that R&D is the key to success. The success of its role in R&D is determined partly by the successful implementation of the CA. This has only been partly achieved at the strategic level due to inter-departmental rivalries, but at
the operational level, largely through common sense, the requirement for a CA is more readily acknowledged by all actors. It is no longer purely on military terms and by 2009 had been successfully implemented, allowing R&D projects to benefit from civilian expertise. With increased civilian input the military are now able to step away from a leadership role and move towards the supporting role they always envisaged.
4: Military Doctrine

Having looked at the overarching strategic through to tactical approach of the military to its engagement in R&D activities, this chapter will analyse the doctrinal direction given to guide their actions. Military doctrine is produced by the Defence Doctrine and Concepts Cell and this doctrine provides the backbone around which all plans should be formulated. As described by General Dannatt it ‘should be both usable as a template by the less able to apply to every situation, but more usefully as a framework of thought for the more imaginative’ (SU, 2008). All commanders are required to be familiar with the principles contained within and to use them in the promulgation of their duties. This chapter will assess whether they provide adequate direction to implement the R&D agenda in Helmand. Is the doctrine fit for purpose?

As previously discussed R&D has not been a core military task and as late as the invasion of Iraq in 2003 the military believed that this was a civilian function. Its experiences in Helmand have changed that view, but the doctrine is still catching up with this new reality. There is currently no specific R&D doctrine publication, but reference is made to it in a number of other documents. In addition the military has now formalised its role in R&D by designating a new military task, Military Assistance to Stabilisation and Development (MoD, 2008). This formalisation recognises that it has not fulfilled this role in the past as well as it could have been done. This task acknowledges that the military will now operate as part of an inter-agency coalition, but that R&D tasks will initially fall almost exclusively to the military in non-permissive environments like Helmand. The tasks within it include delivery of essential services, support to governance, security sector reform (SSR) and economic development. All except SSR are not core business and would if the security situation allowed, it correctly states, be performed by civilian agencies. This is an important document as it now shows that the military can no longer be allowed to deal with R&D as a secondary issue with little advance preparation, but it will now be at the forefront of their role for which they must train. To support this new task, a draft doctrine is being written (JDP-3-40) and the direction this proposes will also be assessed.

Current Doctrine

The British military approach, by commanders on the ground, to the R&D role it now finds itself in in Helmand remains dominated by the overarching operational doctrine for conducting COIN operations. For example JDN 2/07 ‘Countering Irregular Activity within a CA’ gives a number of pointers to the mindset that subsequently affects activity. The principles that set the tone and attitude of the military have been developed through experience in colonial wars, principally Malaya (1948-60) which established key concepts that still provide the framework, as stated in this JDN including; the need to separate the insurgent from the mass of the people, the battle to win ‘hearts and minds’ and political and socio-economic development to prevent a recurrence of the problem. Development is mentioned here, but what is the motive? In this document R&D is seen as a tool to assist in defeating insurgents and providing security as part of a ‘hearts and minds’ strategy. This should not however prevent the military from conducting effective development, but there is no guidance here outlining how it should be approached. The document shows an understanding of the causes of insurgency, for example that most of the Taliban fight for economic reasons such as unemployment, poverty and disillusionment through a lack of
opportunities, but the focus is to provide security for other agencies to conduct development, which is not the reality in Helmand.

The major tactic it discusses to assist in rebuilding a failed state such as Afghanistan is that the intervening forces must gain ‘Campaign Authority’ with the population until the state can take over again, winning ‘hearts and minds’ through ‘altering the cognitive behaviour of the people’ to support the GoA. This is clearly development on ‘our’ terms and lacks any form of impartiality. An aspect of achieving this is seen as being through the restoration and provision of essential services, but throughout the involvement is seen as being ‘temporary and improvised’, not a reflection of its role in Helmand. The tactics discussed all skirt around the core issue of what is really required, a focus on a well planned sustainable development in line with the needs of the population. This document by itself clearly does not provide adequate guidance for development activities in Helmand.

CIMIC doctrine (Joint Defence Publication 3-90, 2006) focuses a little more directly on the conduct of R&D activities. It states that commanders should understand the need to maintain humanitarian space for humanitarian organisations to operate in and that if this is not possible, as in Helmand, then responsibility for R&D should be handed over to civilian agencies as quickly as possible. The document sets out some key principles to abide by including:

a. Cultural awareness.
b. Transparency with humanitarian agencies.
c. Encouraging a culture of ownership and self help within the local population.
d. Including the perceptions of the silent minority, such as women.

However, it states, this ‘should not be described as humanitarian’ (p.4) as it is purely focussed towards winning ‘hearts and minds’ and gaining Campaign Authority to achieve political and military objectives. This results in a blurring of intent and unclear focus between R&D for the benefit of the population and winning ‘hearts and minds’ to allow the military space to conduct its more traditional activities. The concept and value of a hearts and minds approach was popularised by Field Marshall Templar in 1952 ‘the answer lies in the hearts and minds of the people’ (Charters, 1989, p.195). This phrase has been used to describe the British military approach to COIN since the Malaya Emergency (1948-60) and by the US since Vietnam. This is not a written doctrine, but a powerful concept that has been embraced by the military, politicians and the media and is a less coercive approach that rejects the idea of a purely military solution. One of the problems with it is that it means different things to different people, resulting in suspicion of the military motive amongst NGOs and OGDs. For them, who focus on the needs of the people, hearts and minds is not a legitimate objective (BAAG, 2009) and an adherence to this concept will hinder further development of a CA as other agencies do not believe in it.

Winning hearts and minds as a primary overarching focus is a flawed agenda as it is intangible, if hearts and minds can be won then they can also be lost, particularly in Afghan society. Development should be the shared goal within the CA as the effect of sustainable development is more difficult to reverse. If sustainable development is achieved then the hearts and minds of the population will naturally follow. A cultural
change of mindset and emphasis is therefore required within the military. They should embrace a development agenda and change the focus away from hearts and minds towards development goals in order to implement the CA and achieve lasting success. Aligning the strategy, objectives and demands of the military and humanitarian organisations is the key to success and the concept of hearts and minds should now be consigned to history.

These documents provide the current primary source of doctrine for R&D activity. As previously discussed the lack of a specific new development doctrine has, understandably in the light of what is current guidance, lead NGOs and OGDs to doubt the genuine motives of the military in conducting development.

Draft Doctrine

The extant doctrine provides little information to prepare commanders for their current role in R&D in Helmand and the emphasis on hearts and minds misleads them. Preparation has relied on lessons learned being captured and passed on in training to prepare each new 6 month deployment. The new draft doctrine, JDP 3-40, seeks to rectify the information shortfall and will determine the way the military should conduct these activities in the future. This document has captured the lessons learned from Helmand and presents what is perceived as the best guidance. At over 200 pages it takes military doctrine from a famine to a feast, but is it any good?

From the start it focuses on the implementation of the CA, which it states has not been fully achieved, with the aim of the document being used to also inform civilian partners of the military approach, helping to develop a common understanding and unity of purpose. Acknowledging that the key to being able to conduct R&D is the provision of security, it highlights a desire to limit the need for fighting which only treats the symptoms of insurgency and not the root causes. Indeed collateral damage, inevitable to a certain extent, can undermine wider efforts and critically it makes the assertion that ‘kinetic operations should be subordinate to measures to spur development’ (p.8). The document fights against the norm of military training, the concept of delivering rapid results by admitting the military are often accused of having a narrow short term view of what is needed for success and stressing the requirement for a longer term approach.

Development is now acknowledged as the key element in a successful COIN operation, success in battle is described as irrelevant without development and the key elements of the military role are identified as building human security. This is achieved for example by providing safety, sanitation, health; fostering host government capacity and legitimacy; stimulating economic development and in a non-permissive environment providing immediate visible progress to the local population. This last point must be done whilst not hindering longer term development which it acknowledges is a difficult issue that can cause tension with OGDs and NGOs. In an aside, seemingly for these agencies benefit, it states that they must realise that what the military need to do in these windows of opportunity immediately after security is established may be economically sub-optimal, but a stimulus along the lines of ‘Small Change’ (Hamdi, 2004) is required and is line with the thoughts of Collier and Hoeffler (2002). These decisions are to be made in consultation, with shared analysis and inclusive decision making. Civilian advice
should always be integrated into operational planning so an assessment can be made of the possible longer term impact on sustainable local capacity.

The purpose for doing this remains partial as the document admits. Development is not the motive, but a means to an end to meet national interests and it also debunks previous thoughts on humanitarian space. In a non-permissive environment, it astutely claims, there is no humanitarian space and civilian actors in this environment cannot be apolitical, making a shared approach all the more important. However, significantly the document separates the national interest from the military by stating that development should never be carried out purely to support military goals.

The core principles set out in the introduction are the CA, host nation lead as much as possible and once an area is permissive to hand over R&D responsibility to civilian agencies. However whilst the military are involved in these activities a number of key themes are discussed such as the edict of the Hippocratic oath familiar to development practitioners as ‘do no harm’, doing ‘good enough’ as well as the need to manage expectations by delivering no less than is promised. The current military strategy in Helmand to ‘Clear, Hold and Build’ is replaced by the more relevant ‘Engage, Secure, Hold and Develop’. Engage involves forming a consensus with stakeholders, understanding issues and prioritising to ensure the needs of the population are met. Secure and Hold refer to gaining a permissive enough environment for reconstruction work and Develop, unlike the previous concept of ‘Build’ is wider than a focus on infrastructure. It should be guided by civilians, directed to the specific needs of the population and measured in outcomes, not outputs, so for example, a functioning hospital not just a building. Through a series of chapters the document then goes into considerable detail on various aspects of R&D activity. This chapter will concentrate on guidance for economic and infrastructure development, where poverty is outlined as both a cause and effect of conflict, and the often much-maligned QIPs.

**Economic Development**

The economic and infrastructure section raises the importance of understanding the DFID approach ‘to enable effective cooperation and collaboration’ (p5-18), including the use of the LogFrame and it encourages commanders to use the Red Cross Better Programming Initiative to explore the impact of development projects. Potential activities outlined include generating employment, putting money in local economies, restoring and protecting infrastructure and providing security for market activities to commence whilst all the time avoiding unbalancing the economy and ensuring a linkage between local needs and national priorities, a difficult but admirable challenge.

In the section on ‘Generating Employment’ similarly to all other sections it is geared around gaining support for the host government. Whilst the motive may be different from OGDs and NGOs the intent remains the same i.e: doing the best for the country’s development. It discusses ‘cash for work’ programmes, but correctly highlights their short term nature and stresses the need for sustained employment prospects. Correctly it highlights that disparities between the pay scales of those civilians working for the military and what can be earned on the local market must be avoided, a fault of the military in the past. For example in Iraq the US paid local
workers to leave important jobs misdirecting the development of local human capacity (Waldman, 2008). Employment opportunities are to be distributed evenly to avoid favouring one group or sector of society which may stimulate local grievances.

There is an encouraging emphasis on the role of the host nation who should own all solutions with activity operated by, with and through locals to prevent dependency and allow sustainability. The ‘Engage’ element is the key to this and much detail is given to developing a rapport with locals through various meetings and discussion groups to secure agreement on objectives, resources and priorities. PRA is not mentioned specifically, but the essence appears to be the same. Similarly the importance of M&E is detailed to measure outcomes and impacts intended or otherwise, some of which will be based on the psychological assessment of perceptions. For example in late 2007 questionnaires were distributed in Helmand to establish a baseline set of views and subsequent projects are now measured against this baseline to assess what people feel and think of the development activity.

Quick Impact Projects

Since 2006 QIPs have received considerable criticism from OGDs and NGOs (BAAG 2009) for being inappropriate and unsustainable. Does this document provide adequate direction to reassure those organisations and ensure that these problems do not endure? QIPs are implemented by the PRT through consultation with DFID Stabilisation Advisors and funded by the SAF. They are designed to be short term, small scale, low cost and rapidly implemented to deliver an immediate and visible impact. This is to provide tangible evidence to the local population of progress to show that life under the GoA is preferable to Taliban control. As such its purpose is to support the GoA to fulfil its core functions and to facilitate the government’s ability to deliver what is expected by the population. As this is designed to alter the population’s perceptions it is therefore focussed solely on their reality in line with Chambers ‘Whose Reality Counts’ (1990). For the military it is only worth doing what the local population want and whilst the motive is again political the intent remains the same as Chambers. The doctrine sets out 2 types of QIPs. The Direct QIP provides immediately required services such as roads, bridges and health clinics. Indirect QIPs are designed to win the consent of the population for GoA by clearing waste or building parks and sports stadia.

The SU QIPs Handbook referenced in the doctrine provides the nuts and bolts detail to implement each of these activities whilst in the document itself the guidelines for the effective use of QIPs reads like a section from a development practitioners handbook. For example QIPs should ‘Do No Harm’, involve full local participation, be sustainable, well coordinated with stakeholders and correctly undergo effective M&E.

Summary

It has been acknowledged that current doctrine does not provide adequate guidance for commanders in Helmand. For a military document the new draft doctrine is an enlightened piece of work and has clearly been heavily influenced by civilian development experts through consultation and research. If this version remains intact and is digested and implemented, it will provide a comprehensive framework for ensuring best practice in military R&D activities. It must be remembered that the military are operating in an extremely complex environment requiring agility and
flexibility of mind to balance security concerns and development needs. The focus remains on winning consent, winning 'hearts and minds', and still needs to shift to focusing on the needs of the population first with an assumption that consent will then follow. The military has however come a long way with the draft doctrine, its procedures appear good, but its motive remains fixed on development as a means to an end. It could be argued that they should go further, but this is probably unrealistic as they are not after all a development agency. As long as the separation of motive and intent are understood then this document should assist further the development of an effective CA.
6: Reconstruction and Development in Helmand

Having assessed the overarching approach and the doctrinal direction it is now time to turn to an assessment of the quality of the R&D that has actually taken place in Helmand since 2006. The main military focus is in providing security and SSR. These are more traditional military activities that set the conditions for development work. It is this subsequent development work that will be analysed in this chapter. Published information is limited and there is no overall encompassing assessment available, so this chapter will be a snapshot view of elements of what has been achieved. It will rely mostly on the personal testimony of Key Informants (KI) tempered with the limited published information available. It is largely uncorroborated, anecdotal and is difficult to triangulate, but all those interviewed appeared to give a balanced view of their experiences.

Key Informant 1

KI1 was a DFID member of staff serving with the PRT in 2006, but based mostly in Kabul who talked of slow, but steady development progress although the military had a limited focus on this task due to pressure from the Taliban. Throughout the period the military concentrated on small scale Consent Winning Activity that could deliver an immediate effect in their 6 month tour of duty. The focus was very short term with no thought given to establishing medium term priorities. The DFID staff in Afghanistan did not approve of this approach, expressing concerns over bias in the apportionment of resources that was not focussed on the actual needs of the population and had the potential to undermine their own development initiatives. The inference from this is a clear indication that DFID and the military were not working together and there was an absence of coordination. He admitted however that being rear based in Kabul made it extremely difficult for DFID to implement their own plans.

The military units did identify and establish good links with the key local leaders, but due to the unexpected high level of insurgency, staff were quickly moved from area to area resulting in a lack of continuity and poor expectation management. The key leaders would identify their needs and then expect things to happen as from their view a contract had been entered into, but as units changed over priorities changed, leading to disillusionment. The military also saw themselves as being responsible for delivering projects therefore creating a dependency mindset. The result was a series of disjointed and incomplete projects as BAAG (2009) also indicates. Military units would identify the need for a project, but due to fighting the insurgency they did not have the resources or time to complete it and the PRT was not fully established at this time to coordinate and provide continuity. There was also no effective M&E other than a measure of US$ spent.

Key Informant 2

KI2 deployed to Helmand in August 2006 as part of an engineer unit, tasked to assist the troops who identified the need for projects in implementing them. At this stage, he says, R&D had stalled due to the withdrawal of FCO and DFID staff to Kabul with most of the province too insecure for civilians and NGOs to operate in. KI2 claims that DFID had a long term strategy in line with priorities set in Kabul, but that this, critically for the military, left a 2 year gap for immediate projects. As far as he was concerned DFID's ambitions were too long term and were not going to assist in
winning over the population and alleviating their issues fast enough. It was his job to try to fill this gap. Despite an admission that his unit was completely untrained for implementing an appropriate R&D programme his approach appears enlightened. The only vehicle for delivering reconstruction was the QIP, the purpose of which he claims was largely misunderstood by the military. In order to gain funding approval these had to directly support the COIN operation and were used to gain short term consent of the population.

He engaged with the fledgling PDC to identify the top 10 QIPs, but admitted that he did not have time to truly assess what factors led the PDC to determine the top 10, which probably reflected their own biases to their own elements of the community. Partly driven by a lack of resources and also by a desire not to create dependency, he wanted the locals to do as much work as possible and developed a quick and simple contracting system, that bypassed the official beaurocratic UK government system, allowing the development of a portfolio of local contractors. A key lesson, that resonates with development theory, was his surprise in finding that a reasonably good construction capability existed locally and that many firms had technical ability, but no equipment. The military engineers’ involvement in projects was significant to begin with, but gradually decreased so that by early 2007 the Afghans were doing everything, supervised and mentored by the military.

The concentration was on building infrastructure and the successes claimed included the building of a midwife school in Lashkar Gah and 30 classrooms in Sangin. However as reported in IDC (2008), the midwife school was never used and the classrooms stayed empty because the projects were not tied in with what the Afghan line ministries could deliver in terms of students and teachers. The Afghan Ministry of Education needed to train the teachers first. Development was incorrectly being measured in outputs and not outcomes. At this stage military development appears well intentioned and was sowing the seeds for future improvement, but was ultimately poorly coordinated, rushed and many of the projects failed, failing to win consent or serve the people of Helmand.

**External Comment**

Simmonds (DFID, 2008) conducted a detailed assessment of the Helmand health sector for DFID in 2007 and claimed the ‘verdict is out on the usefulness of QIPs, there are more questions than answers’ (p.12) and that tensions between DFID and the military over their purpose should be made more explicit and transparent. This has subsequently been addressed following the establishment of the CMMH she admits. As an example of a poorly coordinated QIP she mentions the construction of flush latrines at 2 schools in Lashkar Gah built in 2007. By the time of her visit these were not functioning as there ‘is no electricity and therefore no water and no way to empty the septic tank’ (p.14). This was despite an original agreement with the Ministry of Education guidelines to build pit latrines. The Afghan contractor did not follow these guidelines and submitted an invoice for extra costs that were agreed by the PRT. She estimates that each latrine probably cost $30,000 whereas an ordinary pit latrine would have been less than $2,000. The PRT claimed that the high levels of insecurity prevented adequate M&E and there are a number of examples of similar well intentioned projects being wasteful.
The military, she claims, had gathered useful information such as statistics, health, education and infrastructure surveys and produced maps and graphical support to the local health NGO, Ibn Sinh, and was also an active member of the Provincial Health Coordination Committee (PHCC), but she claims the military often arranged parallel coordination meetings which undermined the PHCC. She also criticises the military for providing health clinics (medical outreach) for the population claiming that this attempt to win 'hearts and minds' was, by association, putting the lives of communities and NGOs at risk. This activity is well intentioned but needed to be more sensitive.

CARE’s Deputy Director in Afghanistan (Wissing, 2009) was more critical claiming that the military and development needed to be kept totally separate and that their involvement compromised NGOs development work. She says that they are not trained in the role and therefore their efforts are ineffective, an argument that does not logically follow. In a vitriolic statement she says ‘If we can’t do it [development] what on earth gives you the idea the military can. I don’t really care what you’re talking about when you start talking about hearts and minds. They aren’t won with a pen or a schoolbag. They’re won by not killing civilians and they’re won by being here for the long haul and doing the job properly’ (p.2), but there were few NGOs in Helmand at this time and without the military very little would have happened. Frerks (2006) also notes that claims that the military have a short term perspective, limited knowledge and sensitivity to the local context, are inefficient and make promises they do not keep are all flaws relatively common in the development industry and these are therefore not a reason for dismissing the military contribution.

In contrast, Loyd (2010) gives an example from the hospital in Gereshk in 2007 where USAID had donated a washing machine. The military saw it sitting idle and decided to sink a well and connect the machine, but DFID vetoed the small project claiming the work should be done by local civilians and therefore denied funding. This epitomises the conflict and varying approach at the time between the military and DFID. The military wanted to demonstrate tangible progress, but DFID were sticking to their development principles which are undeniable, but needed to be tempered with common sense and an appreciation that the context in Helmand was not a traditional development environment.

The security situation prevented DFID staff from being able to organise such projects. Improving security was clearly key and Dressler (2009) quotes the UK’s Stabilisation Advisor, a Colonel Holt who stated that after 8 months in Musa Qala (2007-08) there had not been ‘much visible progress’ due to insecurity. Without security, development projects were ineffective as the Taliban attacked projects and intimidated the locals to prevent contractors being engaged. This, Colonel Holt says, resulted in attempts at remote contracting with little military supervision ending in misuse of funds due to subcontracting, bribery and deliberate Afghan inflation of costs.

So what is the overall picture from 2006-08? Clearly there were good intentions, probably some limited progress, but a lack of coordination reflected the failure of a CA at this stage. Senlis (2008) claim that development projects in Helmand during this period showed next to no impact and were totally dysfunctional. The year 2008 seems to be a turning point, with external criticism drying up. The implementation of
the Helmand Road Map, a joint civil-military plan and the creation of the CMMH appear significant in this.

Changes from 2008

Two military KIs who deployed with the PRT in 2008 show an improving picture. The focus however remained on outputs not outcomes. ‘In assessing the PRT it was tangibles that were looked at and over this period 34 projects were completed by Afghan contractors under military supervision with 103 ongoing ranging from schools and clinics to major projects like rebuilding the canal in Lashkar Gah’. This latter project was subsequently completed and now provides irrigation to 10,000 farmers (FCO 2009). Throughout 2008 they claim that the PRT gradually shifted its focus from projects to programmes such as irrigation and water provision rather than buildings in order to create more employment opportunities, identified as a major concern by the local shura councils. The PRT was also able to secure funding sources external to DFID, such as $50 million to build a road from Gereshk to Sangin. However the feeling remained that the PRT were too small to make significant progress and lacked funding. Friction with DFID also remained and the KIs resented the fact that DFID’s money went principally to the Afghan ministries in Kabul when they felt they needed it in Helmand. They compared themselves to US PRTs who with access to CERPs could initiate a seemingly endless amount of development projects. There remained a poor understanding of DFID’s role in Afghanistan, the CA and common understanding was still not working. Whilst implementing development programmes they admit they lacked experience and needed, but did not receive enough DFID expertise despite civilian staff numbers rising.

Partly in answer to a shortage of civilian staff the Military Stabilisation Support Group (MSSG) was developed. This provided trained military staff able to deliver development projects. They deployed as small teams (MSSTs) to coordinate civil-military and PRT lines of activity at the tactical level, planning with locals and mentoring the local delivery of projects which began in 2008 and has subsequently grown into a significant capability. Despite the concerns raised, both KIs felt that the projects delivered were appropriate and whilst relatively insignificant as a whole they had a considerable impact on the population in the immediate vicinity.

The military KI from 2009 provides a picture of continuing issues, but considerable progress at least in terms of process and the implementation of the CA. By 2009 the Helmand Road Map was out of date and a Helmand Stabilisation Plan was embarked upon involving the GoA, DFID, USAID, FCO and PRT. This was to counter the issue that despite the CMMH there was still no overall coordination of a R&D plan. Thematic areas of development such as education and health continued to operate in isolation and were not working to an integrated purpose resulting in missed opportunities. However the project in Nad-e-Ali shows the potential for the way ahead and is worthy of some detail, showing an ability to scale up activities.

Nad-e-Ali Project

Following the establishment of a secure environment the MSSTs (teams of 3 with a local interpreter) conducted a rapid needs analysis (effectively PRA) via shura councils to inform the community and identify needs. Working with local NGOs such as the Afghan Youth Peace Organisation, who had access to the local population,
they called for the community to gather local shuras to select delegates to a jirga (meeting) in the district council. This lead to 130 elders being selected who met with the provincial governor to discuss overall plans. From the 130 elders, community councils were formed, which were facilitated by the PRT, who provided funding for travel and stationary for example. The Councils then developed an agreed plan with the PRT, to deal with such things as justice, employment, health, education and infrastructure, which the PRT assisted in funding through the Governor’s office, aiding capacity building. Throughout there was an awareness not to create dependency and at all times Afghan processes were followed with Afghans taking the lead even though the KI found this uncomfortable and inefficient to do so. The PRT ensured visits from line ministry staff such as, during the building of schools, the Director of Education and Department of Education Engineer to ensure the projects were completed to Afghan standards and to encourage ownership.

Summary

The comprehensive nature of the Nad-e-Ali programme is a significant advance on the uncoordinated series of projects in earlier years, but one key weakness is still evident. The military version of PRA only ever consults community leaders as for the military who remain intent on winning consent it is only really their opinion that matters. There therefore remain the silent majority whose needs may not be being met. It is probably only the civilian element of the PRT who can influence this further development. The KIs were all willing to point out their limitations in implementing R&D, particularly in the early years through a lack of experience, but were also certain that small scale steady progress was being made. These small changes, largely the result of a form of Action Planning (Hamdi, 2004) could stimulate significant indigenous development. The processes have improved in line with the adoption of a more CA, following the arrival and input of civilian development experts and the military learning its lessons. Within its resource limitations the military is now well established to initiate and oversee appropriate development progress, the challenge is to scale these up. Having spoken to those who conducted this work in Helmand it is impossible not to be impressed by their commitment, passion and motivation to do the right thing for the local people. WO2 Gove of the Gereshk MSST verbalised the current military attitude (Helmand Blog, 2010) ‘it is extremely rewarding to see these projects move from the drawing board to actual completion knowing that it will help the local people in the future’.
7: CONCLUSION

Following more than 30 years of conflict Afghanistan is ranked towards the bottom of all development indices with Helmand displaying conditions worse than most of the national averages. The development challenge in Helmand is staggering.

From the 1990’s onwards there has been a convergence of security and development during which time the military came to realise that there was a requirement for security to support development through mutually reinforcing activities and that they could not achieve success on operations alone. The military deployed to Helmand in 2006 with the concept that they would be in a supporting role, providing security to allow OGDs and NGOs to conduct R&D tasks. However they were unable to provide a secure enough environment for civilian actors to deploy and became embroiled in a fierce COIN operation, resulting in the military taking the lead in initiating R&D activities. This was not a role they sought, but they understood that development was the key to success.

The attempts of the military to develop a unified government plan for R&D in Helmand had been based upon the implementation of the CA, but this implementation was hampered by departmental rivalry and mistrust. Progress has been made, but at the strategic level there remains a requirement for greater central coordination of the 3 key government departments towards a single purpose. Initially hampered by the same issues, the CA at the operational level has subsequently been implemented more successfully with the development of a joint plan, a civil-military headquarters and a PRT with significant civilian input. This has allowed the military to step away from a R&D leadership function although many NGOs still have concerns with the role of the PRT.

The military now realise that in a non-permissive environment they will be directly involved in R&D activities, they cannot rely on civilian actors to be present and their improvised approach of the past has been inadequate. Current doctrine does not provide adequate information to help prepare the military for their role in Helmand and the focus on winning hearts and minds is misleading. However recognition of some of these shortfalls has resulted in new doctrine being produced providing enlightened guidance on development best practice, although the motive for conducting this activity remains partial, and has to, as the military are not a development agency.

Without a fully implemented CA, a lack of military preparation for a R&D role and inadequate doctrine it is unsurprisingly that initial activities in Helmand had been of limited success, as indicated by KIs. Their evidence suggests they were well intentioned, but disjointed due to a lack of understanding of development practice. Lessons have subsequently been learned and the quality of projects and participation has gradually improved with more sustainable outcomes. There remains too much emphasis on winning consent, but despite this motive the intent is now clearly to do the best for the people of Helmand. There is obviously still scope for improvement, but increasing civilian input has enhanced their capabilities in providing ‘good enough’ R&D, improving the lives of the Afghan people.

Providing a secure environment and human security for R&D activity to take place remains key and will continue to be the primary role of the military. However through necessity and an improved understanding of the specific conditions in Helmand the
military have made significant strides forward as a partner in providing R&D. R&D in Helmand is really only at its genesis and it remains to be seen whether the level of investment will be sustained by western governments’ once their military finally go home.
Bibliography


