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Civil-military relations: No Room for Humanitarianism in comprehensive approaches[1]

By Stephen Cornish, Policy & Advocacy Advisor, CARE Canada and Marit Glad, Advocacy Coordinator, CARE Afghanistan[2]

This paper seeks to outline a number of issues arising from the politicization and militarization of aid resulting from the use of comprehensive approaches, and to highlight the new challenges that this trend poses for civilian populations and non governmental organizations (NGOs). Through the examination of the Afghanistan case, it aims to explain some of the reasons for NGOs criticism of comprehensive approaches and their reluctance to collaborate with military actors.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the security agenda has largely trumped the human security agenda to the detriment of vulnerable populations and of the development and humanitarian actors which come to their assistance. Aid has become overtly politicized and used as a tool to stabilize fragile states in the name of anti-terrorism. Comprehensive approaches to stabilization, where political, military and development are complimentary instruments, have changed the nature of aid. Development and humanitarian assistance is no longer based on criteria of need and aid effectiveness, but is used as a strategy to appease communities and win "hearts and minds".

As a result, humanitarian agencies find themselves caught in a situation where they are struggling to carry out their work according to humanitarian principles: and guided by the victim's right to assistance. To complicate matters further, the increased integration of aid and humanitarian assistance into political and military strategies is already having negative impacts on NGO security. Aid workers and NGOs have thus come to resist the wider interventionist agenda, and in doing so are being perceived as obstructionist by the other whole of government players.

To date the military components have largely dominated comprehensive approaches, and have increasingly utilized international assistance as a means to gain both security benefits and troop protection. In Afghanistan, this results in a large part of funding being channelled to the instable provinces in the South. Donors have largely focused on reconstruction and development, thus limiting the amount of funding for needs based humanitarian assistance.

Troop contributing countries/donors are also allowing military actors to increasingly engage directly in relief and reconstruction activities to legitimize their presence. Not only is this an issue for NGOs because military personnel are not trained to perform such tasks (and the results are thus extremely variable), but it also contributes to blurring the lines between military and civilian actors, which can increase the risk for aid workers.

Since this article was written (in June 2008), the situation for aid workers has deteriorated. By mid September 2008, 28 aid workers had beeen killed; twice as many as in 2007.[3] NGOs are now a target for aimed opposition groups in Afghanistan.

Securitization of the aid agenda

From an aid worker's perspective, the challenges and opportunities associated with civil-military coordination are seen in the context of the increasingly politicized and militarized use of aid. Since the end of the Cold War there has been an evolution from the tradition of neutral humanitarian assistance to the more controversial (yet now widely accepted) practice of forcible humanitarian interventions (HI). In the 1990s humanitarianism was marked by the increasing use of forcible humanitarian interventions in defence of populations at risk. From northern Iraq, through Liberia, Kosovo and Rwanda these interventions would challenge the inviolability of state sovereignty and eventually lead to the establishment of the concept of human security. Unfortunately such assistance was often not based on need alone; but on political and strategic considerations which began to determine the where and when of intervention. In the aftermath of 9/11 forcible military interventions were usurped by strategic

considerations, (not longer only to protect civilians and respond to life-saving needs) but undertaken, pre-emptively and in order to set the stage for defensive and offensive conflicts and for integrated, coordinated and coherent approaches to conflict transformation and democracy building. For the US administration and the military, humanitarians were to serve as *force multipliers* (as famously stated by Secretary of State Colin Powell[4]) in these new conflicts, and their actions coordinated and controlled to ensure strategic benefit and force acceptance.

"In the post 9/11 world security-centric era, poverty and violent conflict in the south are viewed increasingly as 'threats' to the security of the North. Development assistance is once again seen... as a tool for rich countries to defend themselves against these 'threats'." [5]

Even oversees development aid (ODA), which had been a staunch supporter of the rights of the poor, has become distorted by the "security lens" through which many Western governments now view the world and its failed and failing states. Failing states (with their potential to foster terrorism) are now seen as a potential security threats by Western countries. Military interventions to stabilize such countries, has thus become a defence mechanism.

Integrated or comprehensive approaches; where military power, diplomacy and development are employed as a complimentary tool set to stabilize fragile states and to secure western interests, are a natural continuation of this logic. Even when motivated by intentions of stabilizing states and improving the lives of populations, such approaches have resulted in humanitarian and development aid programming becoming subordinated to political interests in counterproductive ways. Arguably this ideological progression has removed the primacy of the 'Humanitarian Imperative'[6] and a victim's right to assistance according to need, and supplanted it with a concept of aid as justice and as a tool for promoting peacebuilding and human security agendas. This shift has resulted in both practical and ideological challenges for aid agencies attempting to maintain quality independent programming in this new environment, and has had repercussions on civil military relations; as NGOs fearing for their security

as a result of being increasingly perceived to be part of the broader international intervention have had to distance themselves from the whole of government state-building effort underway.

Aid workers and NGOs have come to resist this wider agenda, as they see it undermining both the purpose and goals of humanitarianism, and the motives that drive humanitarian and development work: every human's right to assistance and the obligation to provide such assistance according to humanitarian principles. Multi-mandate organizations are caught in this paradox, as entities committed both to providing relief (according to independent humanitarian principles) and carrying out development programming, which can be seen as supporting the political interests of host governments and /or of donor governments. As such they have had to adapt their principles and accept certain operational constraints in order to work in proximity to comprehensive/integrated missions, while still striving to maintain their independence.

Globally, there has been a marked increase in violence against aid workers since the rise of the comprehensive approach.[7] While there seems to be no clear correlation between attacks on NGOs and the intensity of the conflict or presence of specific military actors;[8] we have witnessed a steady increase in attacks of a political nature on aid workers worldwide.[9] *"The perception of aid workers' association with political processes clearly exists in the minds of local belligerents. Seeking not to heighten this perception is thus a legitimate concern".*[10] Trying to maintain independence in programming, and keeping a clear distance from politico/military endeavours is thus not only an ideological stance, it is also a risk mitigation strategy for NGOs.

Unfortunately by questioning the politicisation of aid and the notion of shared goals (commonly ascribed) amongst all actors, humanitarians are now seen as obstructionist and antiquated by the political and military communities.

Maintaining independence – a constant struggle

Traditionally, international NGO (hereafter INGO) presence in war zones was undertaken to provide humanitarian assistance to long-suffering

civilian populations. That populations have a right to assistance without discrimination is one of the fundamental principles of the humanitarian imperative and is enshrined in both International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and in the Geneva Conventions. In order to gain access to war-zones and to create the humanitarian space necessary for delivering assistance safely and for providing some degree of protection for the beneficiaries, principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence were devised.

These classical humanitarians (now known as minimalists) were joined by increasing numbers of development NGOs in the complex emergencies and conflict zones in the post-Cold War period. As such, together they faced the challenges of obtaining mission security in intra-state conflicts and of negotiating humanitarian space with non-state actors in an increasingly politicized environment of forcible Humanitarian Interventions.

To address some of the new challenges and maintain independence, leading aid organisations came together to define codes of conduct in aid, "Best Practices" and minimum standards for assistance. The 1994 Red Cross Code of Conduct which emerged was established to uphold humanitarian behaviour and independence and to prevent against abuses and appropriation of humanitarian assistance including the overt politicisation of aid, which is spelled out in one of its principle tenets:

Humanitarian principles:

Humanity: human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found, with particular attention to the most vulnerable in the population, such as children, women and the elderly.

Impartiality: assistance should be provided without political conditions; without discrimination as to ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political opinions, social status, race or religion and solely on the basis of needs.

Neutrality: all humanitarian assistance must be provided without engaging in hostilities or taking sides in controversies of a political, religious or ideological nature.

Independence: civilian humanitarian actors must retain their operational independence, including the freedom of movement, recruitment of national and international staff, non-integration into military planning and action, and access to communications.

"We will never knowingly - or through negligence - allow ourselves, or our employees, to be used to gather information of a political, military or economically sensitive nature for governments or other bodies that may serve purposes other than those which are strictly humanitarian, nor will we act as instruments of foreign policy of donor governments".[11]

Under the code, agencies would still be able to implement programs in conjunction with governments, if the aid agencies' goals were respected (or co-aligned naturally as is often the case in responding to natural disasters for example), when the principle of allocating aid according to need was upheld, and when humanitarian motivations for assistance could be guaranteed; hence, when aid is given impartially (regardless of who the beneficiaries are) and according to criteria of need alone. In addition to the code governing intentions, a convention dealing with aid effectiveness would set out minimum technical standards for aid delivery in order to ensure quality aid for the populations being assisted. The largest and most influential of these forums became known as the *Sphere project.*[12]

This introspective trend included the "Do No Harm" approach popularised by Mary B. Anderson. She posited that aid can increase local tensions if distributed unequally (ie. favouring one ethnic group or tribe): if a school is located in an area that favours use by one part of the community or if food distributions happens to benefit one ethnic group more than another. She also underlined the unintended economic side effects that aid could have; (such as when aid efforts affect prices, wages and profits) on the duration of the conflict itself. Anderson argued that aid should not only be delivered responsibly, minimizing its impact on the conflict, but that it should also "...help war to end by lessening intergroup tensions and strengthening intergroup connections."[13] Many INGOs operating in war zones have taken these ideas on board and are now "conflict proofing" their operations and seeking to empower local individuals and organisations.

Diplomacy and Development out-matched by Defence in comprehensive approaches

The combination of political, military and development measures to foster peace, security, economic resurgence and good governance has

several names: integrated, comprehensive, 3D (Defence, Diplomacy and Development) or whole-of-government approach (WGA).[14] Working together as equal partners, the various arms of donor governments and others (like aid agencies) are intended to act not only to resolve conflict but also to transform societies, lifting failed and failing states into a new era of responsible governments that serve their people's best interests.

Although best practice suggests that such partnerships works best amongst "partnerships of equals"[15], defence seems to have out-matched diplomacy and development in most current comprehensive interventions. In the aftermath of 9/11 the treatment of "failed states" became openly driven by national security agendas. Poverty reduction, development and the rights-based approach (where people are entitled to assistance to fulfil their human rights) were officially subordinated to wider strategic imperatives.

The *Reality of Aid* report, which comments on the state of global development by combining the views of some 30 countries, dedicated its 2006 issue to examining the impact of security and conflict on aid. Its authors concluded that donor-led Whole of Government Approaches (WGAs) to interventions have "largely subsumed diplomacy and development interests and favoured defence or military responses" for managing conflict and for meeting the strategic goals defined by the donor governments involved.[16] This, they point out, is not only true in Haiti, Sudan and Iraq, but in Afghanistan as well. While this may have been inevitable, it nonetheless exposed a lack of shared goals and abilities amongst the comprehensive approach actors and would further erode their ability to coordinate effectively in theatre.

As a case in point, the goals of the different actors in Afghanistan are different. *"[United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan] UNAMA's overall function is to promote peace and stability by leading... efforts in rebuilding the country and strengthening the foundations for peace and constitutional democracy".*[17] The mission of the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) on the other hand is to *"assist the Afghan government in extending its authority and creating a secure environment".*[18]

Finally, CARE Afghanistan's mission is *"to address the underlying causes of poverty, human suffering and social injustice".* [19]

Afghanistan: aid in support of troops

Comprehensive approaches have been widely adopted by the troop contributing countries in Afghanistan. There is a broad agreement that a combination of military, political, and development efforts is the only way to obtain a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. Thus, troop contributing countries are also engaged politically and in development efforts. While NGOs would normally welcome an increased focus on development, the instrumentalization of aid and the manner in which the three dimensional approach is rolled out in country, is discouraging for most NGOs. In Afghanistan, the domination of the security agenda and the use of quasi-development projects for force protection purposes is widespread.

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) is explicit about using aid to achieve counter-insurgency objectives; which is why it channels more than half of its budget to the four most insecure provinces.[20] Rather than channelling assistance according to need in Afghanistan, the concentration of aid funding in provinces that are politically and militarily important (for the NATO donor countries involved) has become the norm. Helmand province alone is the third largest recipient of USAID funding in the world, and thus receives more aid dollars than many of the world's poorest countries. Similarly, the British government concentrates 25 percent of its development funds in Helmand, where its main forces are deployed. On the same note, Canada which had been allocating 25 percent of its aid to its military stronghold of Kandahar[21]; has now undertaken to spend 50% of its ODA in that province. In this way, the whole of government approach is not a comprehensive nationwide effort, but rather a compartmentalized approach where each troop contributing country focuses a disproportionate amount of its efforts (diplomacy and development included) on its "own province". As a result, not only is there a risk of neglecting the overall picture, but a number of neglected "non-strategic" areas have emerged. Focus on troubled provinces could create a perverse incentive to misbehave as secure areas receive less assistance in respective to more troubled regions.

More directly, American troops have at their disposal the so-called Commander's Emergency Response Programme (CERP). This discretionary fund can be used for any number of projects: roads, clinics, schools, distribution of blankets and food, to increase local support. Schools and roads are built to win hostile communities' sympathy. "CERP is a nuclear weapon; it is the asymmetrical weapon of choice," according to an American officer.[22]

While such distribution politics might make sense in defence circles, where security and appeasement of hostile communities are some of the main goals, NGOs, which commonly focus their work on the most vulnerable and marginalized people, will question the fact that need is not the main criteria according to which projects and locations are selected.

No room for humanitarianism in Afghanistan

Alarming for humanitarians in Afghanistan is the overall lack of focus on humanitarian issues. Afghanistan is still a troubled country with alarming humanitarian problems, despite years of international military and civilian efforts. Insecurity is spreading in Afghanistan and the increased fighting is causing high numbers of civilian casualties. Last year, 1500 civilians were killed and 500 have been killed over the first five months of 2008. According to the Afghanistan NGO Security Office (ANSO), the number of civilian casualties is up 75 percent compared to last year, and the UNAMA Human Rights Team show a significant increase in casualties compared to the same period in 2007. May 2008 was the worst month since 2001 when security incidents are concerned. While five years ago, only 3 suicide attacks were carried out in Afghanistan, 160 suicide bombers carried out their mission in 2007.

Insecurity is also impacting negatively on the government's and NGOs' ability to provide basic services to the population. Attacks on schools and clinics are widespread, and over the last couple of months NGOs facilitating the National Solidarity Programme are increasingly being attacked. In May 2008, the Ministry of Public Health announced that 360 000 people were left without health care due to attacks. Likewise, over the last two years 2,450 "terrorist" attacks were carried out targeting schools: 235 schoolchildren,

teachers and other education workers were killed, and another 222 wounded.[23] During the first four months of this year, over 80 attacks were carried out contributing to about 300 000 children being deprived of their right to education.[24] The global rise in food prices is aggravating the situation further. In a country that ranks among the poorest in Asia and least developed in the world, the recent increases in food prices are mounting to a humanitarian crisis. Before the price rise, it was estimated that roughly half of the population was having trouble meeting daily food requirements.[25] Now with prices doubling and tripling in many areas, safety nets are failing and people are adopting erosive coping strategies.

In addition to this, aid agencies' access to communities is shrinking, depriving people of assistance. UN agencies cannot operate in 25 % of the districts. NGOs had to withdraw from areas in which they have been working for decades. Much of the South, South East, and parts of the East are largely inaccessible for aid agencies. Additionally, Afghanistan is regularly hit by natural disasters such as floods and drought.

Despite of this situation, traditional humanitarian donors have been largely absent from Afghanistan. Countries contributing financially to assist Afghanistan have principally focused on reconstruction and quasi-development projects while the humanitarian side of the donor agencies has not been present in Kabul. Independent humanitarian funding does not seem to fit into the overall comprehensive approach. This results in limited funding for needs based humanitarian assistance.[26] Afghanistan has over the past years received funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund, because the humanitarian crisis there is classified as an underfunded emergency; despite the billions of dollars that are directed to Afghanistan.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)

PRTs are the reflection of comprehensive approaches at the provincial level. These US-designed units (now adopted by the militaries comprising ISAF) were originally tasked with coordinating humanitarian aid and aid actors, and often operated outside of pre-existing UN coordination mechanisms, and while their mandate does not mention carrying out aid

projects themselves, but tasks them to "enable…reconstruction"[27], they soon began functioning as "military-relief hybrids".[28]

After their launch by the US in 2002, both the British and American forces openly considered their PRTs' so-called humanitarian aid as an instrument in the war against terror.[29] 25 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) engage directly in relief, reconstruction and development activities. Not only have these kinds of practices contributed to blurring the lines between military and humanitarian actors, but they have also changed the nature of aid. "While PRTs are related to humanitarian efforts, unlike NGO and UN relief organizations, they seek to achieve the political ends of their sponsoring governments by extending the reach of the host government and providing strategies to improve security and governance in conflicted regions".[30]

There is great distress within the NGO community concerning the level of PRT and military involvement in normally civilian led tasks; such as development and relief activities, this is primarily because: "PRTs (…) blur the distinction between the military and aid workers, jeopardizing the perceived neutrality of the latter, putting them in danger and reducing operating space for humanitarian organisations".[31] To say nothing of the fact that the military is not trained to perform such tasks and thus results are often substandard. Likewise, given that the aid is not based on people's needs; life saving programs may be foregone and the most vulnerable people's needs may go unmet as the military focuses on visible signs of improvement in order to buy consent for their presence and politico/military project - through what have become commonly known as 'Hearts and Minds' initiatives.

Quasi-Development projects for force protection

PRTs and military forces' involvement in civilian activities is based on the hypothesis that their involvement in soft-power tasks will provide community acceptance and force protection. The belief is that if a community sees the international military forces involved in building a school or a well, they will be less likely to attack the same forces. As a result of this, projects are often picked because of their strategic

importance to appease communities; not because they will be effective in development terms or because the needs are most pressing in that area. The resulting projects, in terms of aid effectiveness and sustainability, have as a consequence been varied. Wells have been dug, and fallen into disuse as nobody was trained in their maintenance; and schools built which sit empty for lack of teachers, as the military failed to coordinate with the Ministry of Education (and thus the ministry did not budget for salaries for these additional teachers) are some of the examples.

Even in cases where there are no obvious military or political objectives behind the selection of projects, the selection process may still be questioned. One of ISAF's current aims is to "identify reconstruction needs, such as the rehabilitation of schools and medical facilities, restoring water supplies and providing support for other civil-military projects".[32] Military forces are not trained in carrying out needs assessments and are often unfamiliar with implementation criteria. Basing projects on abbreviated and potentially biased needs assessments carried out by the military will thus not ensure that projects are allocated where needs are highest, nor where they are likely to be most efficient. For instance, there have been several examples of PRT built schools, exceeding the actual need of the community – they are just too big. Valuable resources have been used to build classrooms that remain unused because there are not enough students in the community.

Further, projects that are carried out in the absence of proper assessments could have negative effects on the populations one is trying to assist. Being perceived as particular beneficiaries of a PRT project could have negative effects on the security of an ethnic group or tribe in terms of being accused of having close links with the military. In an environment where Afghans are being killed, because insurgents find a "suspicious" phone number and accuse them of spying for the international military, extreme caution should be shown by the PRTs when dealing with the local population. In one recent incident, two local engineers leading a PRT project were killed the day of the completion of the project. According to another report from the field, Taliban explicitly warned the local population about taking part in a PRT road construction project.

INGOs are operating according to a development paradigm, especially focusing on the poorest and most vulnerable groups, traditionally marginalized by local elites. Communities are seen as important resources and are involved in activities. Sustainability of projects and communities' capacities to be self sufficient are the main goals. This stands in a sharp contrast to the charity paradigm, often applied by military forces in their efforts to "win hearts and minds"; where all Afghans are seen as poor and in need of assistance, and where one time hand-outs of materials is seen as a solution. Such hand-out practices can in the worst case undermine more long term and sustainable activities carried out by government or NGOs. A PRT's free veterinary services severely undermined a carefully built up NGO project where vaccinations of life stock were provided for a small fee, in order to ensure sustainability of the project. The PRT's free services obviously became very popular and almost forced the project to close, damaging a sustainable mechanism.

PRTs' involvement in quasi-development projects is therefore questioned by NGOs, and many are reluctant to engage in implementing projects for the PRTs.

Military forces in disguise

To further complicate the civil military relations in Afghanistan, there has been little respect in Afghanistan for principles of the Geneva Convention of clearly distinguishing military forces from civilians. From the outset in Afghanistan, international military forces have had a lack of respect for the existing civil/military cooperation guidelines or experience worked out in earlier UN forcible military interventions and integrated missions. Such guidelines include that military actors should only be employed in humanitarian assistance as a last resort, hence where and when there are no civilian alternatives, and that all humanitarian operations should follow the criteria of humanity, impartiality and neutrality. Additionally, they recall the principle from international humanitarian law about maintaining a clear distinction between combatants and non-combatants.

One example of the lack of respect for such norms is the military's extensive use of white land cruisers (rather than their traditional green or

brown vehicles). White land cruisers have through decades of use by NGOs and UN in conflict areas become recognised as signalling the presence of humanitarians and the delivery of aid. The militaries' copying of the white-vehicles (which have normally protected aid agencies from attacks) has resulted in a number of documented cases where civilian convoys have been mistakenly attacked by insurgents. Despite continuous efforts by the NGO community, most nations within ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) continue using non-marked white land cruisers.

The damage done is perhaps already irreparable; the perceptions that aid actors are merely emissaries of their countries' intervening military forces will not soon fade. Tragically, dozens more humanitarians have been killed and the consent-based, impartial NGO assistance model worked out over decades has been erased, further reducing assistance and development prospects for the population.[33]

In 2007, 88 NGO workers were kidnapped and 15 killed in Afghanistan.[34] The worrying trend continues in 2008, with 12 deaths and 16 kidnappings only in the year's first five months.[35] Likewise, humanitarian convoys are under constant attacks. NGOs are also increasingly being targeted by insurgents.[36]

The direct consequence of increased NGO insecurity is the agencies' decreased ability to access populations in need. Currently, in Afghanistan, large parts of the country are inaccessible to humanitarian actors, leaving many communities deprived of humanitarian assistance. The operational space for humanitarian actors has decreased consistently over the last year. UNHCR had access to only 55 % of the country going into 2008[37], and the Red Cross has stated that the current humanitarian access situation is the worst in 27 years.[38]

One commentator suggests that: *"Any political-military intervention that has a humanitarian component instantly stigmatises humanitarians and puts them in danger. The stigma remains long after the military has departed; affecting trust and confidence with which humanitarians are perceived, literally adding years to the process of reconstruction, reconciliation and prosperity."*[38]

Despite such grim prospects, the increased risk to aid workers, and the reduction in areas where they can safely and effectively work, a number of NGOs have stayed on and attempted to carry out their assistance missions under the less than favourable conditions afforded by the comprehensive approaches in Afghanistan.

Carrying out Peacebuilding and Development Efforts – In the War on Terror

"Humanitarians would never deny that the creation of a stable peace is in everyone's best interest. However, they would also assert the need for humanitarian action to exist alongside peacebuilding efforts in order to uphold the principle of humanity and the protection of civilian life as the conflict rages." [40]

Inside Afghanistan there are largely two realities. The first reality exists in the central, north and western regions where humanitarian agencies and multi-mandate organisations are, despite the relative insecurity, still able to carry out humanitarian assistance, development initiatives and peacebuilding ventures.

In these areas, the world's focused attention on Afghanistan has, despite the challenges, resulted in a number of successes which are often over-shadowed by the obstacles that remain. Government-led, donor-sponsored and often NGO-implemented programmes have resulted in more than 350,000 families accessing microfinance and micro-credit initiatives, and 12,000 of Afghanistan's 24,000 municipalities benefiting from the establishment of community development counsels, and the implementation of locally managed development initiatives made possible by the Afghan Government's National Solidarity Program.

The second reality concerns eastern, southern and other areas of the country where, aid agencies have largely had to withdraw or reduce their programming to insufficient *remote-controlled efforts* due to security constraints related to the ongoing war on terror:

"Reconstruction has been very slow in the South. The food aid system has failed, causing a severe famine. Much of the population of Southern

Afghanistan is alienated from ISAF. Unless these circumstance change, the (...) mission (...) will become less and less acceptable to the local population. Time is not on NATO['s](...) side."[41]

Perhaps as a result of such portrayals, the general consensus emerging is that the comprehensive approach is not working in Afghanistan and, furthermore, that its failings can largely be attributed to the ineffectual and uncooperative development component.

Ultimately NGOs receive and implement between 10 and 15% of donor aid arriving in the country. Yet they are increasingly being held responsible for all the development failures in the Afghan context. Development projects funded through external support and often directed through private contractors and/or PRTs have been singled out as being particularly costly, wasteful, lacking in quality and often not taking into account community needs.[42] As well, government-led efforts have been stalled by a nascent and corrupt bureaucracy that has been overloaded by donor funding, despite its inability to manage, and support such a heavy programming burden.[43]

ISAF and NATO have felt let down by all the above as they decry the lack of visible development benefits, which they believe, would shore up the population's support following their hard won victories on the battlefields.

Safeguarding Humanitarian Principles of Independence/Neutrality/ Impartiality

"Reconciling military, diplomatic and humanitarian objectives may be a more effective way of stabilizing failed and fragile states, but it also creates inevitable trade-offs and requires a high degree of collaboration." [44]

The question is what trade-offs to make and how much can one agree to suspend its own morality and principles in order to arrive at the greater good? What has also been shown through the Afghan experiment is that the degree of collaboration needed sometimes remains higher than

agencies can afford without becoming complicit in the militaries' agenda. The same difficulties can sometimes also arise when collaborating with governments in development and peacebuilding efforts.

To remain independent, agencies must remain in charge of where, and with whom, they work. Yet in government or military led peacebuilding efforts, agencies sometimes have little control over the types of projects and or locations where they will be implemented.
What is often not understood is that many multi-mandate agencies have already sacrificed a portion of their neutrality, impartiality and independence by acting as implementing agencies for various Afghan ministries. Agencies have done this to ensure their ability to assist and to participate in the peacebuilding activities funded by the donors under the comprehensive logic.

In fact more than 80% of NGO activities in the country are already tied to government programmes. While good donorship principles oblige that a majority of funds be directed through multilateral organisations or into direct budgetary support to the host government, this shift has further disenfranchised many beneficiaries and shut down *"key services not covered under the remit of the current government programmes."* [45]

In the south, the few NGOs still able to function have clearly been unable to meet the lifesaving needs of the civilian population. Defence actors have both offered to extend protection to aid agencies[46] and have tried setting up "Priority Development Zones" (PDZs) in which security would be maintained by the coalition members. From the humanitarian side there is little belief in the solutions offered, something that perplexes the military and further fixes the stereotype that humanitarians are somehow antiquated and that they selectively use neutrality as an excuse to avoid working with the military.

Yet in Southern Afghanistan, CARE's local partners have been approached and told: *"Your aid is good for the local community and may continue. However if you or the programmes you implement become associated with NATO forces, then you will make yourself a target."* This is not an idle

threat. NGO offices and staff have been searched for links to the military, and threatened with repercussions if such links are found. Likewise, NGO projects have had to close down due to visits of PRTs or donors in heavily armed escorts. Communities have approached the NGO in the aftermath of such visits, communicating that the community can no longer provide security to the project staff.

In an effort to maintain their independence and in order to protect themselves from the perception of assisting the military projects in Southern Afghanistan, some agencies refused to consider funds to extend project activities there until the military agrees to conduct only security and policing activities there.[47]

CARE is responsible for the lives of some 700 national staff and their families, and is assisting hundreds of thousand of Afghans in 11 provinces. We do this successfully under the traditional model of arranging safety through community acceptance and local integration. In absence of armed escorts and armoured vehicles, one must weigh very carefully the expansion of our activities into areas where the conditions for safe and successful delivery of assistance programming no longer exist.

The reality is that aid agencies would make themselves targets by working in close relation with the military, in for example providing humanitarian assistance in an aftermath of a military operation. Such actions would destroy the consent-based security and community acceptance model on which they rely to carry out their programming. It is thus no wonder that, "aid agencies are very nervous about working side by side with the military. When that happens, their impartiality in the eyes of the community has been lost"[48] and with it, their ability to safely and effectively carry out both humanitarian and bottom-up, inclusive programming for the benefit of all. Reports from the field, as portrayed in the abovementioned episodes, indicate that NGO security lies in keeping a clear distance from military activities.

Compromising on the principle of impartiality leads to the conditionality of assistance. In Afghanistan, food distributions are carried out to

earn communities' loyalty or to reduce their negative perception of the international military forces after military operations. Such cases of instrumentalization of aid are in complete contradiction to the humanitarian principles where assistance should be given according to need. Engaging in such practices, using food aid as a political tool, or carrying out programs together with the PRTs - would put us in direct contravention of the Red Cross Code of Conduct, which humanitarians and development agencies signed back in 1994 precisely to guard against the politicisation and instrumentalization of aid.

While Afghanistan is the central issue today, much more is at stake. The very legitimacy of humanitarian interventions could be lost if the international community is not careful to safeguard the core principle of humanity. Morality matters, and both right intentions and just means are essential to upholding the legitimacy of humanitarian interventions.

Notes:

1. This brief is based on Stephen Cornish' article: No Room for Humanitarianism in 3D Policies: Have Forcible Humanitarian Interventions and Integrated Approaches lost their way?, published in the Journal of Military and Strategic Studies, Fall 2007, Vol. 10, Issue 1.
2. This article reflects the personal opinion of the authors, and does not necessarliy reflect the official views of CARE.
3. According to the Afghanistan NGO Security Office (ANSO), 15 workers were killed in 2007.
4. Colin L. Powell, "Remarks to the National Foreign Policy Conference for Leaders of Nongovernmental Organizations," Washington, DC, October 26, 2001, http://www.yale.edu/ (accessed Sept 25th 2007).
5. Simpson & Tomlinson, "Canada: Is Anyone Listening,"
6. The Humanitarian Imperative implies the everybody's right to receive humanitarian assistance and the obligation of the international community to provide humanitarian assistance wherever needed (Red

Cross Code of Conduct, 1994).

7. Annual incidents almost doubled between 1997-2001 and 2002-2005. Providing Aid in Insecure Environments: Trends in Policy and Operations, Humanitarian Policy Group, Briefing Paper 24, September 2006, p1.
8. This could also be a result of more cautious modus operandi by NGOs in more high intensity conflict areas.
9. Providing Aid in Insecure Environments: Trends in Policy and Operations, CIC Briefing Paper, 2006, p6.
10. Providing Aid in Insecure Environments: Trends in Policy and Operations, Humanitarian Policy Group, Briefing Paper 24, September 2006, p3.
11. NB. The code, although conceived for disasters, also covers conflict interventions which are further regulated under IHL. IFRC "The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief" Annex VI to the resolutions of the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, (Geneva, 1995):1. www.ifrc.org/Docs/idrl/I259EN.pdf (accessed September 24th 2007), 1-6.
12. The Sphere Project: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response was launched in 1997 and represents three things; a handbook, a broad process of collaboration and an expression of commitment to quality and accountability. http://www.sphereproject.org/ (accessed September 24, 2007)
13. Mary B Anderson, Do No Harm, How Aid Can Support Peace-Or War (London: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 67.
14. While there are more constrictive uses of WGA referring exclusively to joined-up government departments we will hereafter use the term interchangeably with 3D, or coherent approach. We do so as government aid policy set according to WGA priorities influences the type and distribution of programming and defines the actors (including development agencies) that will carry them out. Additionally some commentators and institutes now use WGA when referring to 3D efforts.
15. "Generally speaking, the concept is most popular among development ministries, which use it to describe a subset of poor countries where weak governance and state capacity are impediments to pro-poor

growth. Foreign and Defence ministries tend to be more sceptical, finding the term a distraction from concrete challenges and crisis response and post conflict reconstruction." Patrick & Brown, Greater Than The Sum Of Its Parts, 128-129.

16. "Reality of Aid," (2006) www.realityofaid.org (accessed July 26th, 2007), 1.
17. UNAMA official website www.unama-afg.org
18. ISAF official webpage
19. CARE Afghanistan's webpage www.care.org.af
20. Falling Short: Aid Effectiveness in Afghanistan, ACBAR, March 2008, p13.
21. Afghanistan aid must be spread, Financial Times, 19 March 2007; Afghan-Canada relations to enhance in 2008: Envoy, PakTribune.com, 4 January 2008.
22. Colonel Mark Johnstone, deputy commander of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, cited in "A war of money as well as bullets", The Economist, UK, May 22nd, 2008.
23. AFGHANISTAN: Ten schools torched in past three weeks, IRIN news, http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=77695
24. AFGHANISTAN: Ten schools torched in past three weeks, IRIN news, http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=77695
25. An estimated 45 percent of the population was food insecure before the price rise NRVA 2007 as quoted in ANDS 2007.
26. Initial findings from the evaluation of the Central Emergency Response Fund, intended to be a support funding for underfunded emergencies and rapid response, indicate that this is used by the UN agencies as the primary funding mechanism.
27. PRT Executive Steering Committee, 27 Jan 2005.
28. Isabelle Bercq, "La militarisation de l'action humanitaire en Afghanistan," Note D'analyse (Groupe de recherche et d'information sur la paix et la sécurité, 9 mai 2005), 2. www.grip.org/bdg/g4572.htlm (accessed August 20th 2007).
29. Bercq, "La militarisation de l'action humanitaire en Afghanistan" , 1.
30. "Provincial Reconstruction Teams: Lessons and Recommendations", Woodrow Wilson School, January 2008, p5.
31. Submission to the House of Commons International Development

Committee Inquiry 'Development Assistance in Insecure Environments: Afghanistan', Oxfam, November 2007, p9.

32. ISAF official webpage, http://152.152.94.201/isaf/topics/mandate/index.html
33. "There has been a sharp rise in attacks against aid workers (28 NGO workers killed from January to August 2006 compared with 31 aid workers killed during the whole of 2005) and conversely, a reduction in areas where agencies are prepared to work...This has triggered a vicious circle: the insecurity is preventing reconstruction and this in turn is fuelling the population's distrust of both the international community and the government". Holly Ritchie, "Aid Effectiveness in Afghanistan At a Crossroads," ACBAR Briefing Paper (Nov 2006): 5. www.reliefweb.int/library/document/2006.acbar-afg-oinov.pdf (accessed July26th 2007).
34. Figures taken from Afghan NGO Safety Office, Quarterly Data Report and Annual Summation, January 2008.
35. According to ANSO, June 2, 2008.
36. ANSO, Quarterly Data Report, April 2008.
37. While the attacks on UN and ICRC are decreasing worldwide, the attacks on NGOs and national Red Cross/Crescent workers are increasing. This trend could be a consequence of the tightening of UN security procedures after the 2003 attack on the UN mission in Iraq. Providing Aid in Insecure Environments: Trends in Policy and Operations, Humanitarian Policy Group, Briefing Paper 24, September 2006, p1.
38. 'Afghanistan's refugee crisis 'ignored'', The Guardian, 13 February 2008.
39. Ted Itani, "Politicization of Aid," in On Track 12:1 (Spring 2007), Conference of Defence Association Institute, 3.
40. Erin A Weir, "Conflict or Compromise: UN Integrated Missions and the Humanitarian Imperative," KAIPTC Monograph N0.4 www.trainingforpeace.org (accessed Sept. 2007), 37.
41. Gordon Smith and others, "Canada in Afghanistan: Is it Working?" Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, (2007) www.cdfai.org (accessed Aug 2007), 14.
42. Hamish Nixon, "Aiding the State? International Assistance and the

Statebuilding Paradox," in Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit-Briefing Paper Series (Kabul: AREU, 2007), 9.

43. Ritchie, "Aid Effectiveness in Afghanistan at a Crossroads," 6.
44. Owen & Travers, "3D Vision", 46.
45. Ritchie, "Aid Effectiveness in Afghanistan At a Crossroads," 7.
46. "At the other extreme, a few agencies and donor representatives chose to embed themselves with the PRTs or to travel alongside CF convoys for their protection. This approach was chastised as dangerous by most assistance agencies." Domini and others, "Mapping the Security Environment," 15.
47. Rick Westhead, "Relief Groups reject Afghan projects," Toronto Star, 19th of October 2006.
48. Rick Westhead, "Relief Groups reject Afghan projects," Toronto Star, 19th of October 2006.

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