Defense, Development and Diplomacy in Hybrid State-building Interventions

A local perspective on the outcomes of Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan.

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Abstract

Most studies on Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan have focused on foreign perspectives thus giving little attention to the perspective of local Afghans to understand its aftermath and consequences. Based on empirical work and information drawn from semi-structured interviews with experts who have worked with military and civilian development agencies as well as government liaison officers, this study explores the intended and unintended outcomes of PRTs across the country. The findings were interpreted with the help of a theoretical framework based on PRT objectives such as security implementation, reconstruction, and development as well as extending the authority of central government and building local institutions. The findings show that there were various factors ignored which impacted the success of the Afghan state-building operation. The lack of local knowledge regarding political, cultural and religious aspects, relying on warlords, putting the local institutions in wrong hands, lack of local consent, inadequate and unprofessional disbursement of development aid, putting the military in charge of everything, undermining the human development aspects as well as the long-term presence of foreign militaries in the country were some of the major factors which lead the PRTs to have unsuccessful and counterproductive outcomes. In addition, the aid disbursed by the military has not only diverted the military from its main task but also led to a high level of corruption, high expenditure, lowest possible quality, risking the safety of civilians, NGOs as well as development in the country. Furthermore, the discussion and analysis of the findings show that the use of the military might have played a much greater role in the failure of the overall state-building campaign as the role of diplomatic and development agencies was undermined.

Keywords: Foreign Aid, State-building operations, Security & Development, Provincial Reconstruction Teams.
Introduction

Background of the Study

As of May 2021, and after nearly 20 years of presence in Afghanistan, the United States and its NATO allies have started withdrawing their last soldiers. The Doha Agreement between U.S and the Taliban during February 2020 has paved the way for U.S and NATO troops to withdraw from the country, if the Taliban can ensure that Afghanistan will not be used by terror groups again, as one of the conditions (Qazi, 2020). As a matter of fact, the recent security situation has been described worse than the time of the arrival of the U.S and allied forces. The worsening economic situation in the country has forced nearly two/third of the Afghan population to live under the poverty line (World Bank, 2020). While the Taliban has gained control over most of the territories in the country in recent months (SIGAR, July 2021), the increasing insecurity, worsening economic conditions, corrupt and weak institutions, partial implementation of law and order, as well as the fragile political situation in the country has made the International Community wonder whether their 20 years of state-building efforts in developing Afghanistan was all in vain after the withdrawal of international forces.

During this time a huge amount of international aid was rushed by various governments and aid agencies allocated towards the reconstruction and development of the country (Langenkamp, 2002). A country in the war for several decades the state and institutions of which were totally collapsed, Afghanistan has been the first state-building test of the twenty-first century that entangled the U.S and its allies for the last two decades where security, development, and diplomatic efforts were combined and assigned to the military. The reemergence of counterinsurgency operations and the role of development in securitizing collapsed or collapsing states susceptible to terrorism has been the main goals where the root causes of conflict such as political, social, and economic aspects are considered more important than the conventional military operations (McArthur, 2011). The United States, the International Community including U.N, and NATO have been running various aid programs dedicated to state-building operations in Afghanistan. As the war got more and more complicated, the U.S and its allies intended to get the support of the local populace by tasking their forces to provide essential services and security to the Afghan population on a local level rather than working to build the government institutions in Kabul (Lake, 2010). This resulted in a drastic increase in foreign aid for local aid programs. For example, the ‘Commander’s Emergency Response Program’ (CERP) of the US Military increased from 40 million in 2004 to 1 billion US dollars.
in 2010 (SIGAR, July 2015). The state-building efforts of the International Community took 11 years before it was closed prior to 2014. At the time of its closure, the outcome of the international communities’ efforts of state-building operations reaching over a 120 billion U.S Dollars expenditure by 2012, had been underwhelming. As of now, half of the country’s Gross Domestic Product comes from the drug trade. Hunger and malnourishment of children under the age of five are widespread. The country’s politics has been defined by corruption at local, regional, and national levels putting Afghanistan at the bottom of Human Development and Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Indices (Keane and Wood. 2015). This questions the impact of 20 years of state-building efforts especially in areas of security, development, and governance.

**Indicative Literature Review**

This section covers an overview of existing academic literature. It first establishes the working definition of “development” and “foreign aid” followed by various perspectives from the ongoing debate on foreign aid effectiveness. It then leads to the description of the research problem, its relevance, and justification.

**Definition of Development**

The term ‘development’ is a complex one with multiple meanings attached to it. From building sustainable active communities based on mutual respect and social justice to changing structures of power and reducing barriers that stop people from having a voice in issues that affect their lives (Abuiyada, 2018). According to Pearson (1992) development is not only the betterment of a particular social, economic, or political perspective but it is rather a hybrid term adopted from various strategies which include improvement in the use of available resources either in qualitative, quantitative or both forms. Seers (1972) as cited in Abuidaya (2018), states that elimination of poverty, reduction of unemployment and inequality as well as guaranteeing of human rights and the progress towards these complex goals must be seen as development. Although the term development is a very politicized concept, in this study, development and improvement are referred to as reducing poverty, improving the life of the local population (health, education, reconstruction and creating employment opportunities) as well as creating a stable and secure environment as per the PRT handbook (NATO, 2010).

**Definition of Foreign Aid**

According to Pronk (2014), foreign aid is an inflow of finances to countries in developing or transitional status in form of financial loans for funding economic, security, and political
activities. Humanitarian aid is the efforts of donor countries aimed at fighting hunger, despair, and misery in poor countries while the economic aspect of aid is directed to the development of economically underdeveloped countries to improve their resources and conditions for sustainable development and self-sufficiency. The political, security, and military aid are directed towards achieving political stability, reducing conflict, maintaining political independence, strengthening peace and security, promoting democracy, and or creating the donor’s dominance in the recipient countries (Pronk et al. 2004). Although various donors and related governments have their own interests and incentives behind funding developing countries which makes it difficult to have a clear-cut definition of foreign aid (Elayah, 2016). Pronk defines the various forms of aid concepts applied by aid agencies around the world, more specifically developing countries. In this study, Pronk’s definition covers the hybrid aid in form of state-building operations where military, development, and political aspects are interconnected.

The Debate on Aid Effectiveness

The impact of foreign aid is not limited to state-building operations, and for decades there have been long ongoing discussion among practitioners, aid agencies, and academia claiming that aid can have both positive and negative impacts (Uvin, 1998; Knack, 2010; Williamson, 2009). Despite the lack of consensus, a massive amount of time and resources are allocated to foreign aid. This questions the stated purpose of aid agencies which is supposed to be “their ability in promoting economic and human development”, (Williamson, 2009:1). This might justify the contradictory decisions of donor countries (Elayah, 2016).

In this complex debate, there are those who are in favor of foreign aid and see foreign aid as necessary for helping poor and underdeveloped countries to overcome their financial gaps and be self-sufficient while others object and claim that this leads poor countries to be trapped in poverty and dependent on aid thus leading to their underdevelopment. Jeffrey Sachs (2006) presents successful examples of Western donors such as food production in Asia, renewed agricultural and soil nutrients, etc. According to him, foreign development aid turns the capital accumulation process, achieves economic growth, and helps per capita income in poor countries. He further argues that if foreign aid is big enough and lasts for an appropriate amount of time, it will guarantee economic growth, break the poverty trap, and transition the poor population to a stage of over self-sufficiency. He considers this type of aid not as charity but rather as an investment to help poor countries overcome the poverty trap.
On the opposite side, William Easterly is considered as one of the most contemporary opponents of foreign aid. He claims that despite the massive amount of aid spent in developing countries, it is accompanied by a decline in growth. He presents statistical evidence showing that much of the financial aid flow into developing countries has resulted in small amounts of economic growth and poverty reduction. William (2007) draws upon two major factors. First, that development is a purely domestic matter related to the local government and argues that most of these countries have inadequate management, corrupt institutions, and blatant regimes which are not concerned with achieving development. Secondly, despite the severe need for funds in developing countries and the allocation of massive resources, the funding of donor countries is not happening in an adequate manner. He states that donor countries which have a lot to offer, mostly offer some policies and implementation mechanisms to developing countries which undermines the ability of recipient countries to overcome the development issue. These policies and mechanisms are mostly foreign solutions provided as foreign aid without accountability and transparency from the donor side thus resulting in foreign aid ineffectiveness (Easterly, 2007).

Moose Elayah (2016) examines the various factors and reasons behind the ineffectiveness of foreign aid in developing countries (Yemen, Egypt, and Jordan). He argues that the shortcomings are within the ‘vicious circle’ of poor policies and institutional qualities in the developing countries and the self-interest and incentives of donors. Elayah (2016) concludes that on the one hand, the developing countries have corruption, weak policies and institutions, deficiencies, and interests, on the other hand, bureaucracies of donor countries and aid organizations have a negative influence on the effectiveness of aid programs. He suggests that importance should be given to understanding the social, economic, and political nature of the local environment and drawing policies accordingly could guarantee the foreign aid programs’ effectiveness. This aid effectiveness debate is more complicated in countries in conflict since aid in conflict areas has more potentials (Langenkamp, 2002).

In this regard, the research attempts to explore the outcomes of PRTs as state-building operations of the International Community. Although PRTs have certainly assisted the local population by providing security, welfare, and infrastructure services, their intended and unintended outcomes have not been studied. Moreover, most of the media and government reports from the leading nations on PRTs lack an Afghan perspective not because it does not exist but because “civilians were perceived as being appreciative or illogically insurgent to whose voices the PRTs responded” (Christie, 2012:10). To create further understanding on this matter, this will be case study research studying the outcomes of PRTs from a local perspective.
This is necessary for getting first-hand feedback and a clear current image of its aftermath by generating new knowledge and perspective and contributing to the aid effectiveness debate in state-building operations.

**Problem Description**

The complicated security environment of the 21st century where the focus is no longer on military victory but rather on political mobilization demands updated frameworks and vocabulary (Hrychuk, 2009). In such a situation, where the war exceeds beyond the warzones and result in various problems on regional and global levels including mass migration, insecurity, and illegal trade (Ibid). The cooperation with countries susceptible to terrorism was deemed necessary to ensure global security and eliminate future threats (Akramov, 2006). To provide security and stabilize these environments, the International Community responded with peace support operations (Rjetjens, 2007). In such state-building or stabilization operations, there is normally more than one agency involved. In fact, providing only security without social and economic development would not be sufficient to attain stability (Hochwart, 2009).

Therefore state-building operations are a combination of defense, development, and diplomacy efforts under the same umbrella which has been the result of bringing back the idea of counterinsurgency operations into the contemporary security environment (Williamson, 2011). Historically war has been the catalyst for interagency cooperation where the strategic environment since 9/11 has shifted significantly towards stability and reconstruction (Hochwart, 2009).

As a matter of fact, the International Community efforts regarding state-building operations in form of PRTs in Afghanistan has been accompanied by various other factors which challenged its effectiveness including continuously intensified war, inadequate coordination, and cooperation among the various actors such as civil-military relations and the lack of overall guiding principles especially in the start of PRT program in the country. Most of the research on PRTs has also focused on civil-military relations, coordination, lessons learned as well as relationship building (Lane and Sky, 2006). On a much wider level, it is a widely accepted belief that the strength and role of cultural, religious, and political traditions were underestimated (Langenkamp, 2002). Presented as either victims or insurgents, the perception of local Afghans by PRTs has misunderstood their subjective positions, where locals were expected to either resist (in the case of being insurgent) or welcome the NATO forces (if being the victim), thus ignoring the possibilities of further perceptions of PRTs within the broader rescue industry (Christie, 2012). This also indicates that the outcome of PRT programs lacks
the Afghan perspective which is necessary for understanding the aftermath of the phenomenon in detail and its future application in collapsed or collapsing states. As the literature on PRTs is limited (Mitchel, 2015) an in-depth study with those locals Afghans who have served or closely observed PRT programs in the field might serve a greater purpose.

**Justification and Relevance of the Study**

This research is believed to be relevant for several reasons. Firstly, it will contribute to filling the gap by creating new knowledge and insights regarding the PRTs’ outcome from a local perspective. Most of the previous studies by academia and or various other agencies have not covered the local perspective which is believed to be crucial for understanding the aftermath of such state-building operations. Secondly, the Afghanistan PRT case represents the first practical example of interagency cooperation in the contemporary security and development environment. This program (PRT) is believed to be an excellent stabilization approach of the 21st century for which NATO takes credit as the designer and innovator where governmental and non-governmental actors come together (Hochwart, 2009). Thus, it can be assumed that such state-building or a whole-of-government approach will continue to exist and might be applied elsewhere which makes it important to study. Lastly, this research might also have significance for policy formulation and implementation at different stages of state-building operations. This study will highlight the pros and cons of the whole-of-government approach in the specific case study and pinpoint how the International Community can support stabilization operations in fragile states in the best possible way. Therefore, this research will not only generate new knowledge and insights but also have significance in policy and practice. The lack of local perspective on the outcomes of state-building operations in form of PRTs in Afghanistan has not only been neglected but is also necessary to generate concrete findings important for future application. It will contribute to the debate on aid effectiveness, the militarization of aid, and the state-building operations particularly the PRTs.

**Research Questions**

While constructing research questions, there were several important criteria to keep in mind including the relevance of this study to the study program. The gap spotting method was used for discovering and constructing the research questions where the focus was to look for neglected blind spots in the previous studies (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013). This study will attempt to answer the following main questions:
RQ1. What were the intended and unintended outcomes of PRTs in Afghanistan?
The first question is to be able to gather information from previous studies and empirical data to find out what positive and negative consequences did PRTs have.

RQ2. How did the Afghans perceive PRT across the country?
Based on the existing literature the researcher believes that the perception of PRT programs might have been affected since these aid programs were administered and run by military personnel which might have played a role in its coverage and effectiveness. More specifically, this question focuses on the perception of Afghans regarding the PRT undertakings in the country.

**Limitations of the Study**

Like any other study, this study is not without limitations. Although the Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing travel restriction were already a good enough reason to argue for online interviews, the physical location of the researcher and the participants were not the same during this study which eliminated the chances of recognizing and interpreting facial expressions and body language. The second main limitation of this study was the list of participants or study sample which in this case included individuals who were employed by PRTs in Afghanistan or have worked with, military, development agencies, and or as government liaison officers. An equal number of participants working with activities specifically related to each PRT objective was not possible in this case.

**Organization of the Study**

This study starts with a general introduction to the topic and discussion on the foreign aid research problem, justification, and relevance followed by an analytical framework and review of the existing literature on the security-development concept or state-building operations, the whole-of-government approach with a focus on PRTs and their objectives. The third chapter includes the philosophical positioning and the methods and technique used for conducting this research. The fourth chapter includes the main findings of the empirical data, analysis of the findings, and discussion followed by the last chapter which includes conclusions, recommendations, and future research.
Analytical Framework

The analytical framework is based on theoretical findings regarding the three main objectives of PRTs namely Security, Development, and Institution-building. For this purpose, the impact of each of the objectives will be analyzed not only through its own lens but also the other objectives of PRTs.

The Whole-of-Government Approach

In the 1990s there was an emerging consensus over the complexity of new wars beyond the capacity of local communities to resolve thus leading various nations around the world to adopt integrated foreign policies which consist of military operations, development activities, and diplomatic programs (Christie, 2012). The changing international security environment and the realization of security and development linkage have led to the whole-of-government approach in foreign policies creation and implementation, where military power and civilian resources are brought together in a focused and coherent manner (Hrychuk, 2009). The main concept of this approach is that collapsed or collapsing states require a combination of defense, development, and diplomatic efforts reinforcing each other (Christie, 2012). Such multifunctional interventions include activities that could cause changes in a wide range of social, political, economic, and security systems which cannot be understood in isolation from one another (Jackson and Gordon. 2007). Social, political, and economic resources have been combined by creating a whole-of-government approach which has led to complications beyond policy creation, as new wars and security development nexus require more than the creation of integrated policies (Hrychuk, 2009). Although many international organizations who currently work with integrated approaches in developing countries have focused on integration in policy creation, only a few have realized the complex and necessary internal changes crucial for successful implementation of integrated policies, as well as fewer results from the ground support the claim (Hyrchuk, 2009:18). To cope with these issues and create a well-developed approach has been the emergence of PRT concept and structure, which indicates the realization and need for effective coordination of various forms of governmental responses to conflict situations (Jackson and Gordon. 2007:2). Applied in Afghanistan for the first time, the new nation-building strategy focused on bringing the governmental and nongovernmental players together at the early stages of crises and conflict management (Hochwart, 2009).

As the PRT concept was evolving, it led to various problems. If on the one hand, there were cohesion and communication incompatibilities existing among various government sectors
involved in state-building programs (Keane and Wood, 2015) then on the other hand the lack of precise definition has led to a lack of shared understanding among partners (Hrychuk, 2009:5). Problems not only arose regarding practical matters, but some problems were caused by the political contentions among the partner agencies. According to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), departmental egoism, intergovernmental rivalries, and political shortsightedness hinder the success of the concept of a whole-government and its integrated strategies of nation-building (as cited in Hochwart, 2009:46). Apart from that, there have also been studies on role conflict among the agencies involved in such multiagency mechanisms. According to Keane, and Wood (2015), the various organizational cultures with diverse role-concepts among which the military was dominant, caused this problem. Hrychuk (2009) focusing on the Canadian foreign policy of Defense, Diplomacy and Development in failed states, particularly the Canadian involvement in Afghanistan, states that although the Canadian ‘3D’ approach was the most appropriate mechanism for ensuring policy coherence in failed states, each department still took control over the part they were working with which is hardly a catalyst for interdepartmental collaboration and cooperation especially since they were unfamiliar with other departments and have engaged in actions that were neither familiar nor related to them.

This indicates that there were several necessary needs that needed a response so that the whole-of-government approach could be successfully implemented. First, there was the need to enhance the capacity for a comprehensively integrated (rather than coordinated) interdepartmental operational planning which required widely understood institutions (Jackson and Gordon, 2007) and there should have been joint interagency training experiences involving both military and civilians prior to deployment which would contribute positively to inter-organizational understanding (Leprince, 2013). Alongside the above, there was also the need for a central coordinating body at the heart of the government which has directive authority over the agencies, otherwise individual departments would not be able to exercise sufficient leverage over one another. In addition, governmental guidelines must determine interagency collaboration, must be subject to a defined overseeing authority and decision making must be decentralized (Leprince, 2013). Even though only a few PRT leading nations had a whole-of-government approach applied in their PRTs or in their foreign policies (Canada, Germany, UK, Norway), PRTs, in general, were assigned with implementing security, extending the authority of the central government, and building institutions as well as undertaking reconstruction and development efforts thus leading to a combined whole-of-government approach among the various nations and agencies involved in PRTs (Hochwart, 2009).
Analytical Framework

Figure 1: Relationship and impact of PRT objectives on one another. Source: Author.

Although a great deal of reliance on PRTs was put on the military which resulted in a lack of progress in non-military development goals (Jackson and Gordon, 2007). The appropriateness of military involvement in humanitarian aid and development has been questioned by various national and international organizations (Christie, 2012:16). Most of the work done in development was neither in tune with development reality (Keane and Wood, 2015:12) nor successful but also created new problems for civilian organizations and NGOs (Petrik, 2016). Indeed, the military involvement in development might have diverted their focus from their main task of providing security as well (Williamson, 2011), thus showing the impact of development on security. On the other hand, PRTs were involved in extending the authority of the central government thus working on the local governance and building institutions. PRTs strategies were in some ways contradictory to the national strategies of the Afghan government as “the international strategic effort of nation-building reached a dead end by 2007 where the centrally organized government was concerned” (Hochwart, 2009:16). The contradictory strategies might have affected the capacity of local government especially since most of the funds were directed to PRTs.

As shown in the above examples, the various functions in the whole-of-government approach had an impact on each other including the multiple agencies and nations involved. The case was the same when it comes to various objectives of PRTs. The complexity of the relationship between security, reconstruction, and institution-building as the main three objectives of PRTs would certainly require a multi-level and multiagency investigation. This is to say that there
were trade-offs and or priority orders as stated by Christe (2012), meaning in some cases PRTs had to claim self-security as a top priority. However, in this case, it would involve people and agencies who were in most cases not locals. Therefore, focusing on trade-offs and priority of objectives would not only be an issue outside the focus of this study but also not possible for the participants in this study to comment on. The impact of PRTs’ objectives on one another is a very possible scenario. Thus, to know and explore the intended and unintended outcomes of PRTs, a rather simple approach would be able to produce rich concrete information. This also allowed for each of its objectives to be studied within itself and from the direction of the other two as shown in (figure 1) above. To operationalize this concept and collect empirical data, a list of questions was formulated trying to explore these outcomes from various angles (See Appendix 2).
Literature Review

This chapter presents the various perspectives from academia and practitioners on the ground. It discusses the ‘new era of security environment’ and its connection with development in poor and least-developed countries thus leading to the re-emergence of counterinsurgency (COIN) operations followed by debates about humanitarian space, aid politicization, and militarization in such operations. The review then leads to the implication of whole-of-government approach also referred to as state-building operations in collapsed or collapsing states vulnerable to terrorism specifically the counterinsurgency or stabilization operations in Afghanistan and shed light on the objectives and outcomes of PRTs (PRTs), a collective effort of state-building operations of the International Community including the U.S, United Nations and NATO in Afghanistan.

The Contemporary Security Environment

With the end of the Cold War, the security environment has drastically shifted and became more complicated which involves state and private powers engaging in a new form of violence that requires updated frameworks and vocabulary. The new war is focused on political mobilization rather than military victory thus creating a new political economy (Hrychuk, 2009). In new wars, people are not mobilized to participate in war, but the mobilization is a war effort where violence by organized networks is directed towards civilians. In such wars, battles are rare and weak governmental structures and rule of law is visible in the country. This type of war damages not only the war zones but also the neighboring countries and regions creating flows of refugees, insecurity, illegal trade, and the need for global presence (Kaldor, 2012). The occurrence of several complex emergencies around the world has led the International Community (U.N, NATO, etc.), to respond by establishing peace support operations (Kosovo Force, International Security Assistance Forces-Afghanistan, Stabilization Force Iraq), aiming to provide security and stabilize the environment (Rietjens, 2007).

From the beginning of the 21st century, the industrialized countries realized the importance of collaboration with the governments of poor countries. To ensure global security, the collaboration with countries vulnerable to the phenomenal spread of terror was deemed crucial and thus led to the ‘War on Terror’ which became one of the vital parts of foreign aid programs directed to fight poverty, develop human resources, the capacity of government institutions and civil society organizations and economic growth in the countries susceptible to insurgency and terrorism (Akramov, 2006). Although the concept of counterinsurgency (COIN) operations has
been there for decades, the war in Afghanistan and Iraq has brought back counterinsurgency to the forefront of military planners and policymakers calling for revamping the manuals and developing doctrine to outsmart this new kind of insurgency (Williamson, 2011:2).

This led to the idea of ‘winning hearts and minds’ by blending military, political and economic means which became the main objective of counterinsurgency operations (Williamson, 2011). As a part of the rethink process, particularly in Afghanistan, the focus been on soft power to gain acceptance from local population while taking away support from insurgents. Therefore, a successful counterinsurgency operation will require less force and more gratitude seeking and consent winning elements (Williamson, 2011:2). Soldiers in COIN operations are expected to carry out various tasks including providing humanitarian assistance and rebuilding infrastructures such as schools and hospitals and promoting rule of law, good governance, and security. According to the U.S Army Counterinsurgency Manual, “the best weapons described are the ones which do not shoot, and the best force is the force which protects the civilians, not the Counterinsurgency forces” (Williamson, 2011:3). These operations took place in environments where multiple humanitarian and civilian organizations served an array of issues that were not military which has increased the need for managing the civil-military interface (Rietjens, 2007). Although the concept of security-development nexus encompasses much broader definitions once the concept of human security and human development are applied. However, in the case of Afghanistan where the focus was on gaining local support and addressing the root causes of conflict by focusing on stability, economic, political, and social changes, democracy, and good governance (NATO, 2010), the relationship mostly referred to the absence of conflict by bringing these changes.

**Security-Development Nexus and Militarization of Aid**

In the post-cold war era where the asymmetric warfare of the non-state actors defines security environment, military power to counter is no longer enough without the cooperation of other agencies (McArthur, 2011). Crises management has become more and more complex and multidimensional therefore “providing only security without social and economic development, rule of law and good governance is not sufficient for the stability” (Hochwart,2009:7). Security and development are interlinked and cannot occur alone thus requiring mutual enforcement to ensure a lasting peace (Kaldor, 2012). To defeat the root cause, it is necessary to progress in counterinsurgency operations. “Neither civilian nor military efforts alone could solely reach the minimum level of security and stability” (Hochwart, 2009:25). This indicates an obvious need for the military and civilian agencies in such operations to coordinate and collaborate
(Williamson, 2011). Soldiers serving together with civilian agencies to guarantee security, economic development and facilitate good governance has gained considerable importance in managing crises and conflicts in the contemporary security environment (Hochwart, 2009). Accepting the linkage between security and development of modern warfare where civilians are targets, the once impartial and neutral humanitarian and development workers have also lost their immunity by promoting development in the pursuit of security which aligns them with the military determined to resolve the conflict. On the other hand, political, economic, and developmental dissatisfaction indicates the link between security and development (Hrychuk, 2009). The surge in armed forces providing civilian activities has increased the debate on its legitimacy, principles, range, as well as rules of civil-military interaction (Gauster, 2008). According to the military commanders, military and humanitarian principles are both necessities where “aid is used to gain the support and loyalty of local population deemed important for the success of military operation because the local population must be convinced that supporting the legitimate government is better than insurgents” thus making humanitarian assistance an important toolkit of counterinsurgency operations (Williamson, 2011:7). On the other hand, “humanitarian agencies and aid workers complain that aid is used as a tactic by the military which compromises public perception of humanitarian assistance as politically neutral which led the local population to see the aid workers as a part of the military” (Sellers, 2007:28). Due to the asymmetric nature of Global War-on-Terror, the US military and policymakers have been actively searching for alternative ways to its conventional approach of direct action. Thus, the U.S policy has endorsed nation-building operations by changing regimes and carrying out reconstruction development work to address the grievances of people in the areas of concern and prevent them from becoming susceptible to insurgency and terrorism (Sellers, 2007). Humanitarian organizations are seen as an essential part of counterinsurgency efforts, “A key factor of any population-centric operation is humanitarian aid” (Major General Michael Tucker: as cited in Williamson, 2011:8). The fundamental principles of forming provisions of humanitarian assistance are challenged by counterinsurgency operations. The specific strategies often used to gain the support of the local population by counterinsurgency operations strategists have often been ‘carrot and stick’ where military force is used to punish and reward instead of ‘winning hearts and minds’ where the aim is to gain local support without the use of force (Williamson, 2011:6). The ‘concept of winning hearts and minds’ leads to concerns such as aid politicization. According to International Humanitarian Law (IHL), aid shall not be, nor shall it be viewed as a political act or partisan and thus should only be disbursed based on needs.
Yet, military strategists and policymakers who believe that aid is indispensable if a counterinsurgency operation is to work, might resist the IHL propositions (Williamson, 2011).

Countries like Afghanistan need capabilities to overcome their conditions which is impossible without foreign aid. The military view the border rescue industry particularly NGOs as unrealistic, unorganized, and unable to deliver services in such urgent situations. On the contrary, civilian agencies also consider the military as being unprofessional and unsuitable for delivering humanitarian assistance and development (As cited in Christie, 2012:11). Although both these parties claim that they are on the right path, a combination of their efforts is necessary in countries with on-going conflict especially since war has been the catalyst for interagency cooperation where the strategic environment since 9/11 has shifted significantly towards stability and reconstruction (Hochwart, 2009). For managing stabilization operations, neither the military-led Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC), nor the capacity building of traditional civilian development instruments has proven to be adequate (Jackson and Gordon, 2007).

Despite the differences in principles, what most of the Humanitarian Community in dire situations need and which is generally agreed upon is the acceptance of military involvement as the last resort (Sellers, 2007). Especially in cases of failed or failing states where the aim is to introduce and develop rule of law, good governance, and the capacity of domestic justice mechanisms (Williamson, 2011). This agreement between the humanitarian community and the military on crises management requiring a multidimensional action to secure and stabilize the environment raises questions as ‘what could be the right mixture of civil and military means? In other words, “the number of forces needed to first intervene and then stabilize the post-conflict scenario” (Hochwart, 2009:25) and what could be the appropriate amount of time, especially when a different number of forces which are deployed in various peace, security, and stabilization operations across the world show that “the longer the forces stay, the more insurgency emerges as they are seen as occupying forces” (Hochwart, 2009:30).

**Stabilization Operation in Afghanistan**

Following the collapse of the Taliban regime, the US sought the help of its allies in establishing a transitional government that would eventually lead to a democratically elected government capable of providing security and services to its people. In response, the UN Security Council passed a resolution establishing International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF), formed of Coalition Forces to secure Kabul and its surrounding areas so that the interim government and the UN personnel could easily operate in the area (McArthur, 2011). A secure and stable environment is the crucial importance of a nation-building effort where money, troops, the
duration of the operations, and peace agreement are the factors that affects the establishment of security in nation-building operations (Hochwart, 2009). Although providing security is a crucial requirement for stabilizing failed states, “it requires strong capable institutions, economic development, as well as law to enforce each other” (McArthur, 2011:5). As defined by the U.S State-Failure Task Force, state failure is ‘the collapse of the authority of the central government to impose order in situations of civil war, revolutionary war, genocide, politicide, and adverse or disruptive regime transition’ (Goldstone et al. 2000; as cited in Hrychuk, 2009). To view this from an economic perspective, Afghanistan lacked almost everything including institutions and sources of income. “At the time of the U.S invasion, nothing was left from spoilers” (Hochwart, 2009:25). Therefore, a complex and updated strategy was needed to stabilize the country. Although the security-development notion and the stabilization concept have been circulating for years, Afghanistan was the first tangible manifestation of this concept which started with the engagement of the International Community particularly, the U.S, NATO, and the United Nations in response to the September 11 attacks (Petrik, 2016).

As the security situation in the country started to get worse day by day and after almost 7 years from entering Afghanistan, a U.S General in a Security Conference in Munich during 2009 stated that “Afghanistan will get harder before it gets easier” thus demanding for more troops to be sent while the German Chancellor Angela Merkel stated that Afghanistan was on a promising path despite sufficient stabilization yet to be achieved, thus preferring focusing on stabilization and long-term development rather than combat operations (Hochwart, 2009:2-4). However, “larger numbers of funds do not always mean a higher number of successes as insurgency increased day by day which made the stabilization operation hard to define and conduct” for securing the environment (Hochwart, 2009:33). These various approaches and principles by the members of the International Community especially NATO member countries led to the creation of PRTs (PRT) since there was a lot to be done in almost all aspects and not much was left to start with (Hochwart, 2009).

**Provincial Reconstruction Teams**

The concept of civil-military unity of effort and cooperation has been put to a test for the first time in form of Provincial Reconstruction Teams where the various agencies could coordinate their diplomatic, development, and counterinsurgency efforts (McArthur, 2011). Deployed in conflict zones as a unique interagency and international effort for implementing a comprehensive stabilization approach (Petrik, 2016), “PRT is a newly emerged technology of
the rescue industry where military teams were engaged with the responsibility of development and security work” (Christie, 2012:2). The PRT mandate is based on the belief that underdevelopment and insecurity are linked and that working simultaneously towards both goals should be the focus of modern humanitarian operations where the military has a bigger role to play in achieving both ends (Christie, 2012).

Originally implemented by the United States in Afghanistan during 2002, PRTs were intended to serve as a means of seeking to build consent in areas of U.S military operations and kick start the stalled development process across the country. Initially named ‘Joint Regional Teams’ it was changed to PRTs at the behest of President Karzai to emphasize its importance as a contribution to coordinating various forms of donor aid and support on sub-national level across Afghanistan (Jackson and Gordon. 2007). It was because of the lack of proper institutions to work with donors on the one hand and that most of the donors were surrounding areas around the capital from the other. Because of such a complex contingency operation, PRTs illustrated the need for integrated and effective actions so that a wide ‘unity of effort’ could be achieved (McArthur, 2011).

From an organizational perspective, PRTs were prominent structures of stabilization and reconstruction composed of civil-military teams, elements of coalition partners, and host-nation involving multiple civilian and military agencies (Sellers, 2007). The limited capacity of the Afghan government and the need for security outside of Kabul led the US to develop the concept of PRT to expand the government capabilities and provide security and services beyond the capital Kabul. The PRTs assessed humanitarian needs, implemented small-scale reconstruction efforts, established relations with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) and other NGOs operating in the country thus serving as the primary interface between the Coalition and Afghan provincial and local government (McArthur, 2011:7). PRTs served a great purpose to a large extent in state-building operations. According to Petrik, PRT has been as important to security-development nexus as light bulbs to electricity. In other words, before Edison’s invention, many might have heard of electricity, but few knew what it meant? (Petrik, 2016).

As of 2006, several NATO member countries including the U.K, Germany, Canada, and others took control of some PRTs reaching 14 PRT leading nations as of 2008 (NATO, 2010). Most of the other countries joined with the leading-nations and supported PRT efforts. This resulted in various forms of implementations and formations depending on the priority of the leading state. NATO under ISAF mission established its PRTs with the condition of keeping its troops out of U.S military operation zones, thus constantly tried to keep its military out of
reconstruction and humanitarian work to comply with the principle of neutrality which afflicted the U.S Forces (Sellers, 2007). PRTs teams differed from each other, based on the involvement of other agencies including diplomatic and development representatives as well as their activities to an extent that “in some places, self-protection was the priority” (Christie, 2012:5). A comparative study by Woodrow Wilson School between the German, United Kingdom, and the United States models identified three main forms. The U.S PRTs had a smaller number of civilians and prioritized Quick Impact Projects, the German model consisted of a larger number of personnel with both civilian and military leaders and focused on long-term development projects often in safe provinces. The U.K model worked on local capacity building and was often operating in conflict zones (Abbaszadeh et al., 2008). The key factors determining the size and number of personnel in a PRT was related to the security situation, the effectiveness of the local institutions in the province, presence, and capacity of NGOs as well as the status of reconstruction projects (NATO, 2010). Although the concepts of lead nations of PRTs were different, they all had a common purpose: “representing a hope for a better future for the local populace” (Hochwart, 2009:14).

As the first trial of the evolving nation-building concept, PRTs encountered various challenges. First, most of the focus in PRTs has been on the military power which dominated its organization’s structure. Unlike the civilian agencies, the military also had a large number of funds available through the Commanders Emergency Response Program funding short-term projects which the commander or the military deem important. thus, under-resourcing the power in diplomatic and development aspects (McArthur, 2011). Second, although PRTs were mandated to implement a whole-of-government strategy at a ground level, the role conceptions of individual agencies involved often hindered PRTs’ functioning of unitary efforts towards achieving national objectives (Keane and Wood. 2015). Third, the lack of appropriate contribution of personnel from the various agencies involved, proper integration of these agencies in PRTs, as well as insufficient resources allocated especially in reconstruction and development aspects hindered its effectiveness (Sellers, 2007). In addition, “the lack of clear objectives and guidelines for the PRT key personnel was also one of the main challenges” faced by various PRTs in Afghanistan (McArthur, 2011:14). To cope with these challenges, an ambassadorial level committee called PRT Steering Committee headed by the Afghanistan Ministry of Interior (MOI) was established in 2005 to create a consultation forum among the Afghan government ministries, U.N, U.S, ISAF, International and local government. and non-governmental organizations working and establishing strategic level guidelines for PRTs across the country focusing on development and reconstruction projects (reducing poverty, improving the life of local Afghans and creating a stable and secure environment) whereas, by 2007, all
PRTs were under the same command with the number of leading nations reaching 14 by 2008 (NATO, 2010). In this regard, PRTs as an instrument of comprehensive conflict management and nation-building points towards a considerable potential (Gauster, 2008). Despite the critics from external actors on the success of its mission (Lane and Sky, 2006), “PRTs were considered successful on a tactical level, and must not be blamed for the strategic and operational failures” (Hochwart, 2009:52).

Although PRT was a mechanism for demonstrating international support to most Afghans by channeling funds to the provinces and extending the access of central government, this purpose was not understood as PRTs were often involved in stabilization activities and they should have been called Provincial Stabilization Team (Lane and Sky, 2006). PRTs were hugely important with a symbolic and practical significance and a cutting-edge military transformation but fighting the war and a procedure based on military doctrine and culture was incompatible with the whole-of-government mandate of PRTs (Keane and Wood, 2015). This leads to the question of whether the PRT concept was applied in the right circumstances or not? On the other hand, although PRTs were to be differentiated from the broader military campaign in the country, the local Afghans associated their development campaign with the military mission against insurgents in Afghanistan (Christie, 2012). Therefore, they were criticized particularly for combining, military, diplomatic, and development agencies under military control (Williamson, 2011). Others welcomed such a mechanism that could simplify the civilian aspects of conflict and create a one-stop-shop for delivering civilian lines of operations (Jackson and Gordon, 2007). PRTs were considered the softer side of counterinsurgency operations that became America’s primary tool for large-scale reconstruction to improve security in Afghanistan, however from the outside, they were primarily “military organizations led by the military” (Williamson, 2011:11).

On the one hand, the involvement of civilian agencies required protection which they could not provide themselves, and the best option was, therefore, deploying military personnel (Lane and Sky, 2006) while on the other hand the differences in activities and objectives in various PRTs was questioned, which NATO justify by referring to the different conditions in each province where PRTs operate (Jackson and Gordon, 2007). Some critics saw this as a ruse to justify the absence of strategic framework and national agendas and that PRTs acted as a tactical-level instruments for consent building rather than bringing together national civilian and military instruments (Ibid). Sellers (2007) argues that the dysfunctionality and ineffectiveness in the PRT was mainly due to its nature of planning and establishment. There was a severe personnel shortage in PRTs and the ones available were not qualified for the job. The civil and military
personnel did not get any training in interagency operations before arriving at PRT (Sellers, 2007). However, Afghanistan was neither wholly in conflict nor fully post-conflict where one cause fed another thus representing a hybrid situation in need of a complex sophisticated response for which there was little conceptual guidance to assist. Thus, “as an evolving concept, it is normal to criticize” (Lane and Sky, 2006:3-4).

Although PRT was deployed as a counterinsurgency tool and its effectiveness strongly depended on the level of cooperation among the various agencies involved, reviewing the literature, one could find diverse opinions from very successful to very ineffective and harmful (McArthur, 2011). The result of current studies on how successful PRT has been has led to mixed findings depending on one’s criteria for success and worldview. Partial success has been observed in some areas, yet “the biggest issue is the lack of management capacity to measure the effectiveness of PRTs” (Sellers, 2007:25). An anecdotal analysis of possible impact between PRTs and NGOs security was conducted by McHugh and Gostelow of Save the Children during 2004 covered the 4 years of PRT activities in areas of security, reconstruction, strengthening the authority of the central government, and relief operations. The result of their analysis shows a positive impact on human securities when PRTs were involved in activities related to security, reconstruction, and expanding the government’s authority. (McHugh et al. 2004: cited in Mitchell, 2015:6). PRTs in Afghanistan achieved a similar level of acceptance largely between 2003-2006 despite the various opinions regarding armament and rules of engagement. The international strategic effort of nation-building had reached a dead end by 2007 concerning the centrally organized government in the country and its national strategy (Hochwart, 2009).

With the Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement between the U.S and Afghanistan in 2012, the PRTs as one of the most significant military experiences of the 21st century began to close and were completely phased out by the end of 2014. Its total number reached 26 led by 14 leading nations. At the end of the two years transition period (2012-2014), the functions of all PRTs were handed over to the Afghan government, development agencies, NGOs, or the private sector. (Mitchell, 2015). As an “International offer of support for a limited period of time” (Hochwart, 2009:8), if placed within a clearer and more focused institutional and conceptual framework, they could potentially have a positive impact on the stabilization agenda (Jackson and Gordon, 2007).

Although there are several existing studies about PRTs in Afghanistan that have mostly focused on interagency cooperation, coherence in hybrid state-building interventions, role-conflict among the agencies involved in such operations, the existing studies lack a local perspective on PRT. It has often been ignored as stated in the research problem (See P.9 Chapter 1). The local
perspective itself is important especially since PRTs were the response to the voice of local Afghans (Christie, 2012). Besides, it is claimed that the cultural, religious, and political traditions in the country were underestimated (Keane and Wood, 2015), thus exploring the intended and unintended outcomes from an Afghan perspective could generate rich and valuable information which could lead us to know about the outcomes left behind by PRTs.
Methods of Research

In this qualitative study, the focus is to collect data from participants reflecting upon PRTs outcomes over a historic period (PRTs lifespan 2002-2014) in a retrospective manner. A qualitative approach is useful for an in-depth understanding beyond the physical events taking place to see how the participants’ sense-making and understanding is influenced by the phenomenon under study (Maxwell, 2004). This will be aimed at exploring the aftermath of aid programs coordinated and implemented by PRTs in Afghanistan. Questions like “how” and “what” were used intending to understand the research topic in width and depth (Saunders, et al. 2016), adopting an inductive approach aiming to create a summary format of the data gathered from interviews from which the findings of this study were derived (Thomas, 2006). Semi-structured interviews were conducted online between the 10th of June to 15th July with 9 former employees of PRTs who have directly or indirectly worked with PRTs. The purpose was to have room to maneuver and enquire detailed information without jeopardizing the focus by asking open-ended questions to create a discussion rather than a list of formalized questions (Doyle, 2019). Non-probability sampling and snowball technique was used for approaching potential participants. The criteria were 5 years of experience with PRTs. The data gathered was analyzed through content analysis to identify common themes, ideas, patterns of meaning, and their relationship.

Philosophical Positioning

The system of basic philosophical assumptions of knowledge development and the process of selecting methods to generate the knowledge is called research philosophy (Bryman, 2016). “It is the structure on which assumptions and beliefs of knowledge development in a research are based” (Saunders, et al. 2016:130). The understanding of research philosophy is important for generating knowledge, but due to the different goals and directions of each research, there is no best or most correct research philosophy (Bates and Jenkins, 2007). To learn about the intended and unintended outcomes of PRTs in Afghanistan from the perspectives of local Afghans, this study is positioned on the epistemological stance of learning and gaining new knowledge about the research questions through the lenses of others and to show how the knowledge was acquired (Saunders, et al. 2016: Bryman, 2016).

Furthermore, a social constructivist approach was used to interpret and understand the experiences of these individuals according to their beliefs and status (Shor, 1992) and to allow
a democratic and critical learning experience while maintaining neutrality. The focus was on the specific context of PRTs relying on a subjective meaning of experiences and the complexity of views and ideas (Creswell and Creswell, 2013). It also believes that all cognitive functions originate from social interactions and thus must be interpreted as a product of the social interaction which is constantly being revised (Galbin, 2014). As our personal, cultural, and historical background forms our interpretations, the goal in this study was to rely on the participant’s perspective as much as possible and be able to differentiate between the researcher and that being researched. Especially since I as the researcher in this case have worked closely with several PRTs across Afghanistan. “Providing and citing evidence, adding claims, and using literature for supporting views and solving problems is the core of social-constructivist theoretical stance” (Bryman and Bell, 2011:16-17). Therefore, the conclusions in this study will be based on empirical data collected through interviews with the participants of this study aiming to understand their perception of PRTs outcomes.

**Research Design and Approach**

The lack of an Afghan perspective and undermines the role of culture, religious and political traditions (Keane and Wood. 2015) particularly since PRTs were claimed to be a response to the voice of local Afghans (Christie, 2012:10) makes Afghanistan a unique case of state-building not only since “it lacked almost all resources including institutions and sources of income etc.” (Hochwart, 2009:25) but also because it was the first state-building test of the 21st century (Keane and Wood. 2015). Afghans were stakeholders in this and covering their perspective is crucial for acquiring new knowledge and for future applications of PRTs. Therefore, an exploratory study was the most suitable route for studying issues which we have little information on, or which have not been researched in the past (Brown, 2006). In this exploratory study, questions will start ‘how’ and ‘what’ to gain information and come to an understanding regarding the research topic (Saunders, et al. 2016). The unstructured interview is the most widely used data collection method in exploratory studies (Brown, 2016), in this case, semi-structured interviews were conducted (See ‘Data Collection’ P.28) so that the conversation could be directed towards the aims and objectives. The discussions started with the overall idea of disbursing the aid through the military in state-building operations particularly the PRTs. The research was used as a medium for exploring and understanding new insights to know what outcomes were produced as the result of PRTs undertakings in Afghanistan. This strategy helped me as a researcher to explore the phenomenon in detail and gain new insights from the various perspectives (See Appendix 4).
Furthermore, this study attempts to generate new patterns of meaning and strive to answer the research question in an inductive manner (Creswell and Creswell, 2013) by working with words, meanings, and experiences of the study group regarding the case study. Therefore, interviews were used to understand and make sense of the perception of these individuals on the outcomes of PRTs and generate ‘socially constructed meaning’ (Saunders, et al. 2016) often associated with interpretive philosophy (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). The basic and fundamental essence of a qualitative method is to make sense out of empirically collected data without jeopardizing its richness and height (Yin, 2016). It thus allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the responses of the participants. However, since qualitative methods generate meaning based on ‘fewer’ participants’ responses, it thus cannot be generalizable (Ibid). This might be contradictory to the nature of social sciences research as it often needs to be widely applicable. Thus, certain patterns, meanings and findings might be applicable in foreign aid, security-development, policy formulation and implementation, as well as state-building operations both on operational and policy levels.

**Data Collection**

The qualitative data in this study will be retrieved from both primary and secondary sources. For the primary sources, the data will be obtained through semi-structured interviews as studies based on interviews in social sciences are becoming more and more common (Crouch and Mckenzie, 2006). Although most exploratory studies tend to use unstructured interviews (Brown, 2016), in general, an interview conversation has a purpose and a set agenda regarding what should be addressed. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted where the participants not only had the freedom of sharing what they wanted to share but the discussions could also be directed towards the purpose of the study. Semi-structured interviews ask open-ended questions which create a discussion (Dolye, 2019). This was useful especially since the aim was to look for the perspective of others and be able to keep an open mind regarding the responses provided (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, creating an atmosphere for a discussion allows the respondents to express their views and experiences in their own words rather than the researcher influencing or directing them (Bryman, 2016). This is also in line with the social constructivist guidelines which recommend room for discussion to make sense of the participants’ experiences. Using interviews as a data collection method is very useful as respondents in interviews tend to provide in-depth information compared to what a survey could provide. Alongside the above, one of the best features of this approach was the possibility of asking follow-up questions for clarification purposes which also helped me to avoid misunderstandings during the process (Bryman, 2016).
Sampling

The research sample in this study was based on two main criteria: primarily, it was with those Afghans who have either worked with PRTs and or have closely observed PRTs activities in Afghanistan. The second criteria require the participant to have lived in the country for a minimum of one year, after 2014. This was to ensure the possibility of collecting data in a periodic manner. In total, out of 12 interviews, it was only possible to conduct 9 with individuals who worked on various positions with PRTs across Afghanistan including the military, development agencies as well as government liaison officers (See Appendix 4). The number of participants was based on the emergence of codes while aiming to capture all relevant perspectives on the phenomenon. The small sample size of in-depth labor-intensive interviews could be justified from an empirical perspective as it provides depth and width to the data (Crouch and Mckenzie, 2006). This is also covered by the mix of participants to create variation in perspectives (Bryman, 2016). Although it would be more interesting to have identified specific PRTs and interview individuals related to them, due to the snowball method used, it was not possible to find an equal number of individuals for each specific PRT. In addition, the PRTs were differentiated between ISAF- Regional Commands where some of the participants have worked with several PRTs across the country.

The Role and Position of Researcher

The knowledge produced in research requires the researcher to be value-free in most cases. Although the initial contacts for searching the participants started from my professional and social contacts who led me to several other individuals as participants of this study and or the fact that I have had the opportunity of having professional experience working closely with the phenomenon under study, there were various steps taken to ensure validity and credibility including data triangulation, the mix of the sample as well as referring to previous research in the field so that the findings could be justified from multiple sources. Furthermore, I have not involved my worldview in both theoretical and empirical data so that neutral information can be produced (Saunders, et al. 2016).

This study was an exciting experience that provided me with a chance to gain new insights from the experiences of other individuals (Corbin and Strauss, 2015) related to the state-building operations in Afghanistan which without the participants of this study would not be possible. The study focuses on various fields including policy formulation and implementation, foreign
and international aid, development, humanitarian assistance, state-building operations, and security-development nexus which have been a joyful experience.

**Interviews**

Due to the distance in physical locations, the interviews were conducted remotely through video calls. The interview participants were from diverse backgrounds, and the languages used for interviews were Pashto and Dari (Afghanistan national languages) alongside English. Although it is claimed that audio conversations or interviews could minimize the chance of participants being influenced by the physical characteristics of the interviewer (Bryman, 2016), on the contrary, video call interviews allowed for observations of emotions and body language of the interviewees which is helpful in avoiding misunderstandings and creating a comfortable atmosphere (Mayer, 2008).

Before starting each interview, participants were provided with information regarding the background and purpose of the research topic as well as their legal rights as respondents and that their volunteer participation and consents were required before proceeding. The interview questions were regarding the experience of the respondents with PRTs between 2002-2014. The questions further focused on the main objectives of the Afghan state-building operations and their outcomes during and after the duration of PRT with a reflection on previous work done. Furthermore, participants were asked regarding their worldview and experience of foreign aid especially in situations where the military oversaw humanitarian and development assistance. The interview guide and questions were formulated with the help of the framework of this study.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted which is one of the three most common types of interviews (Stuckey, 2013), and the aim was to guide the discussion towards the main theme while giving the participants freedom to share what they deemed necessary (Doyle, 2019). This has led to variation in responses since every single participant had their own experiences and worldview. This allowed them to respond according to their own judgment regarding their experiences of PRTs activities and outcomes (See Appendix 2). The variation in responses was also the aim so that multiple perspectives on the phenomenon could be generated (Saunders, et al. 2016). Furthermore, to avoid bias, every participant was provided with a transcribed version of the interview which they could edit, correct, or clarify to avoid misunderstandings (Doyle, 2019).
**Data Analysis**

Qualitative data provides fullness and richness for analysis (Bryman, 2016), especially since each person had their own experiences of the world around them. This adds to the variation and complexity in qualitative data analysis (Saunders, et al. 2016). Therefore, to be able to make sense out of these experiences, the main contents of the interviews were recorded, and field notes were taken so that no data is left out (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Bryman, 2016). To analyze the collected data, I used qualitative content analysis (Bryman, 2016). The qualitative content analysis looks for the characteristics of the language with a focus on the content or contextual meaning of the text (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Content analysis is a widely used technique in qualitative studies with three different approaches called conventional, directed, and summative analysis where the major differences are the coding schemes, origins of codes, and threats to trustworthiness (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). In this context, the primary codes were derived directly from the data to avoid preconceived categories which according to Kondracki, et, al. (2002) allows for new insights to emerge. Texts with similar meanings were classified into categories to show explicit communication, provide knowledge, and make sense out of the phenomenon under study. (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; as cited in Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

**Coding**

Coding or codes in a qualitative inquiry refer to “words or short phrases that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and evocative attributes for a portion of language or visual-based data” (Saldaña, 2009:3). I used a data-driven coding method so that the originality of meaning in the text can be captured and kept without needing to conceptualize. This was necessary for avoiding bias especially since I already identified various themes and patterns during data collection. Furthermore, similar words and phrases were first marked on a chart and then analyzed to generate patterns and themes that could generate meaningful information (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005), as final codes were derived and analyzed from preliminary codes (See Appendix 5).

**Scientific Criteria**

The quality of research is assessed through reliability and validity criteria. The first refers to the replicability of a study result in case it is conducted again on the same level while validity criteria are concerned with evaluating the quality and accuracy of what is measured in research.
The scientific criteria used for assessing qualitative studies are trustworthiness and authenticity of results (Lincoln, et al. 2011). Trustworthiness is the credibility, transferability, and conformability of a study’s results. The credibility criteria ask how believable the findings of a study are. For this purpose, I looked for consistency between theoretical and empirical information and double-checked the derived findings with respondents (Bryman, and Bell, 2011), as well as asking for clarification during the interviews to avoid misunderstandings. The fact that some of the participants were from my social and professional networks, thus preexisting trust also resulted in honesty and openness during data collection (Creswell, and Creswell, 2013). On the other hand, this could also lead to bias in certain cases. To make sure that the data collected is bias-free, the findings of the data are argued for in a rational manner to avoid the possibility of misleading information. Moreover, the fact that after the timespan of PRTs, it was realized that they must have dealt with multiple social, political, and religious factors in Afghanistan which impacted PRTs outcomes, it will be difficult to ensure a full transferability of the findings. However, some of the findings of this research can be generalized and might be applicable in future scenarios especially the case of militarization of aid and state-building operations and other social factors (Lincoln, et al. 2011). I have also provided comprehensive information about the process, data collection, and analysis to the readers to allow their own judgment (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Besides errors were detected during the data collection process (Saunders, et al. 2016). The participants were a mix of military and civilian agencies employees who have worked with PRTs (See ‘Interview Sample’ in Appendices). Thus, ensuring the transferability of findings by various measures. In addition, the processes of this research were documented in form of records, transcripts, and analyzed data to allow external inspection and critique (Lincoln, et al. 2011). In addition to this, the process was supervised on a regular basis with constant feedback which was very useful for consistency and reliability (Bryman, 2016) and ensuring the trustworthiness criteria.

For confirmability purposes, a researcher can show different realities by ensuring authenticity, fairness, and faithfulness in ontological, educative, catalytic, and tactical forms (Bryman and Bell, 2011). It is concerned with the objectivity of a researcher during data collection and analysis. Being completely objective is difficult especially in qualitative studies but despite this, the researcher tried to avoid personal values, experience, and theoretical learnings from having an influence on findings, to ensure the objective nature of the study (Given, 2008). Moreover, the research processes particularly during data collection and analysis were discussed with the assigned supervisor.
Ethical Reflection

Social norms, ethical codes of conducting research, and the concerns related to plagiarism are essential in research that otherwise could lead to ethical issues (Sanders, et al. 2016; Bryman, 2016). In this study, volunteer participation and informing respondents about their rights to withdraw at any moment or answer only what they want to answer were thoroughly followed. Furthermore, the participants received information regarding the purpose of the study and data collection and what purpose the data serves as well as information regarding my program of study and my interest in the research topic. Besides, the European General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), regarding information of participants and their consent regarding recording and using data was taken. A separate text was forwarded to the participants prior to interviews containing detailed information regarding the ethical consideration in this research (See Appendix 3). Moreover, a recorded version was obtained prior to each interview.
Findings

This chapter includes findings in a narrative form discussing the outcomes of the PRTs’ three main objectives (implementing security, development, and reconstruction, and extending the authority of central government/building institutions). The findings’ structure follows the themes and topics as per the ‘interview guide’. It has a separate section where these findings are triangulated and analyzed from different angles and perspectives. The last section of this chapter discusses the overall state-building operation as a form of foreign aid in Afghanistan and highlights some of the local realities.

Narrative

Security is the most important element for the development and progress of a person, society, nation or even the globe. The word security often highlights the ongoing conflict in the country. However, being in an unsecured environment for several decades has not limited their understanding of the meaning of security on a broader level. Freedom of expression, safety from danger and threats, progress and development on a personal and social level, the safety of basic human rights, and living in a safer environment are all vital factors. Threatened by the long war and stopped from all angles, for Afghans, security means prosperity without which nothing can take place.

“Security for me is living in a society where you do not witness random explosions killing people around you. it is to express myself freely without being threatened and being able to achieve what I want. It is the practice of the very basic rights and freedom every human being should have in the world. It is not being afraid of or threatened by anyone whether it is you, your property or your values and beliefs. Security is not living in a military environment as in Afghanistan, but a society formed of civil structures” (A. K, 19 June 2021).

Despite testing various strategies, PRTs’ security measures include positive and negative aspects and viewpoints. Training and assisting the local security forces and securing the areas where PRTs operated including other selected areas of interest to the foreign troops were the positive points. However, with the resources at their hand and the partners secured across the globe, PRTs could have done a much better job. Especially since the secure areas became insecure as soon as PRTs left. This also indicates the PRTs’ security measurements were temporary meaning they only lasted as long as they existed. The selective implementation of
security and the unfamiliarity with the reality on the ground especially from social and traditional aspects caused the partial success of security measures.

“Looking at the multi-combat forces and vast resources used, I can tell that their focus on the security was overlooking the security. to be honest, it was clear to see that it worked for a very short time and only until they were there. Their efforts of implementing security especially in equipping, training, and developing the local capacity were not very proper. They were more focused on temporary solutions to the issue of security in the area. Based on my personal observations, I can say that their own interests and security was more important than working for overall security” (U.D, 24 June 2021).

Regarding establishing whether these measures have unsecured the area, what becomes clear is that the existence of foreign troops in an area would often lead to an attack from the insurgent’s side. As the insurgents were mostly using small arms and were not as equipped as the international troops, using civilians who were trapped between both sides as a shield was a common tactic used by the insurgents. As a civilian, being impartial while stuck between two conflicting sides often became problematic as they were most likely to be forced by the insurgents to cooperate. If denied, it could easily cost their lives. This was also because the people living in the area were not informed regarding the military operations. Although secrecy was crucial for the safety of international troops and the success of the operation, it often created security problems for the civilians living in the area.

“The Taliban would take advantage of the situation and often attack in areas such as villages so they could have shelter to protect themselves in the houses of local civilians. they would not care if there were civilians. This also happened as the international troops responded since the civilians would get trapped between both sides. So, the civilians suffered greater casualties here, compared to both sides in the conflict” (A.G, 22 June 2021).

Showing a quick security impact to get credit, lack of regular mentoring and evaluation of the security institution and inspection of equipment supplied, etc., as well as lack of proper cooperation and coordination between the international troops and the local security forces were visible signs of security measure failures. On the other hand, the insecurity in Afghanistan has caused the country to remain one of the least developed countries in the world. Development of human capital, progress in social, economic, and political aspects of society were all attached to security without which development could not happen. However, for PRTs, development
meant delivering certain projects operated by military and often focused on small and quick development impacts. The lack of local knowledge, expertise in the development field, and not consulting the local development agencies has often led to wrong decisions affecting its success.

“I think they put a lot of effort into small development projects. However, where there was a need for school, they would build a mosque. Like they did not have local knowledge, nor did they do any proper assessment of what is needed and what can be done” (H.A, 28 June 2021).

Sometimes the development agencies involved would avoid going to the project site for assessment or inspection due to the risks involved by accompanying the military. In general, the development through PRTs was not viewed as actual development since only a small number of people could benefit due to various reasons including no proper assessment. In many people’s view, the development fund was put in the wrong hands and used inappropriately. If delivered through the appropriate agencies, a lot of development was possible which could have benefited more people.

“You know, if the aid meant for these people was to be delivered by civilian organizations, not only could it have helped the population benefit from these projects without fear ‘since the military with weapons, guns, armored vehicles moving through the villages made people nervous and reluctant to have contact with them and address their basic problems because the presence of military endangered their lives but also a lot more development would have been possible with the same resources and manpower used’” (R.A, 01 July 2021).

If on the one hand, the military used such projects to show their presence, on the other hand, the PRTs’ development was focused on the self-interests of the military which often happened in areas around their bases and was thus not useful for the civilians. To keep people busy, the military used development as a tactic so they could freely do what they wanted to.

“I have worked on almost 50 different development projects such as schools, clinics, roads, bridges, and canals. These projects were rarely useful for the locals. The military had their own aim of being able to successfully do their logistical activities in the area or to keep people busy, to keep them away from the influence of other groups and avoid any disturbance. They did not care about the development of Afghanistan, nor could such projects result in development” (M.K, 21 June 2021).
It is also believed that lack of security in the country was the basic reason behind military involvement in development in the first place. Yet it was not appropriate to deliver development through the military. Besides, the cost of security of a project would in some cases be much higher than the project itself.

“I think if these projects were in a safer country, I would say that it is not a good idea to lay the humanitarian and development assistance into the hands of the military, but in a country like Afghanistan, you need the military to implement these projects. If you do not provide a secure atmosphere for the civilian organization to come and do their work, it would not work. So, it was possible to see some people did not like it because they thought that presence of soldiers in their areas was putting their lives in danger. So, there were two or three categories in which a very low number of locals were happy for such projects but when compared to its benefits, they created more problems” (A.M, 23 June 2021).

The level of corruption involved in these projects was also very high as development fund was used irresponsibly by the military. Only a selected number of contractors who either had a close relation with the international troops or were leading the local institutions were given contracts. Bidding for projects was something rare and often only for showing that the projects go through a proper process. In some cases, if a contractor delivered quality results, it would also become a problem for them.

“We were working on some project together with the American forces. I was working for the stabilization team there. What I observed was that there was favoritism, sometimes, like the people who were in charge, I have many examples of this kind, so the person who oversaw the project would give it to his favorite person in the government, like the district governor, or the agriculture department, the Chief of police. These were the people who either had good relationships with the international forces or oversaw the projects. So, they will give the project to them to make some money, it was like indirectly supporting them, just by giving development projects to those people who were mostly corrupted, and their work had the lowest quality” (A.G, 22 June 2021).

Most of the projects would be implemented in certain areas. In most cases, showing only a photo would be enough proof of project implementation for the military. For the projects which were funded by the military, no one could interfere. The development fund was also used for
other purposes such as paying compensation money for the locals who either lost family members or whose properties were damaged by military operations.

“I wish the money was spent on building bridges, schools, clinics, but because of the war, they had to compensate for some of the things which were destroyed during operations, because local people in such areas suffer much and lost a lot.” (A.M, 23 June 2021).

The funding of projects was also very selective and most of the time focused on the self-interests of the military. This led to discrimination and internal feud among the villages living within proximity of each other. This especially becomes a bigger problem since PRTs were the focus of foreign donors in the area, and most of the development fund was disbursed through PRTs.

“In Helmand, the northern districts have seen zero to very little development. Nothing was done for these people. Indeed, there is a district in which, during the 20 years of this new government including the presence of the International Community especially the PRT, the only development project, which was partially implemented, I say partially because it was only finished 50% and was not even completed, was the construction of a school. In return, this district was always under the control of the Taliban” (H.M, 30 June 2021).

Although the PRT development was considered unfair, the fact that the security situation also played a role in the implementation of such projects should not be ignored. This could be the reason that the areas with popular Taliban support were ignored and overlooked because the military or the contractors would often come under attack while implementing projects in those areas. However, if these projects were supposed to ‘win hearts and minds’ that is exactly where it should have focused on. Besides, by doing so, they indirectly limited the access of civilian humanitarian and development agencies in many places as people became suspicious of their activities and believed that the overall objective of the humanitarian organizations is the same as the military. Not only did they lose trust among local civilians but also became a target that was underestimated. Development also became a target as most of the projects were destroyed by the opposing groups as soon as inaugurated.

“I remember that there was this school which we built, as soon as we opened the school, the day after its opening, the school was burned” (U.D, 24 June 2021).
The local people were not in favor of development activities through the military because not only did the development come under attack but also the people benefiting from such activities were harmed and could most often not access such aid due to the risks involved.

“Let’s say, the military was making schools and would ask the local elders to send their children to schools and the military would go there on a patrol for a few hours and distribute notebooks, pens and other stationery to the students. When they were going home, they would be stopped and asked by the insurgents ‘Why did you get that pen or notebook from the foreign forces? These are not the people we should accept in our area’, and they would even cut their fingers. So, it was causing more instability and more harm to the people” (A.G, 22 June 2021).

Just as with development, PRTs’ involvement in institution building greatly varied and were mostly focused on governance, law and order, and security institutions. In some areas, the institution was not properly equipped. In many of the cases, the higher positions in the institutions were occupied by local warlords which prove to be counterproductive as instead of extending the authority of the government, many lost their hopes for the government under establishment and turned away. This was one of the reasons for the high level of corruption in government institutions. However, PRTs seem to have either ignored or did not concentrate on this issue. On the contrary, the right people who were more effective and could lead to a successful institution functioning were rarely present. This was also due to the security situation as most of those put in charge of these institutions had either the support of PRTs or had support from their groups. Another important factor related to the situation in Afghanistan was the fact that these were the only people who worked for the government so the central government although equally corrupt as the provincial one, could not terminate them from their positions as these were the only people who were willing to work. For the international troops, showing results was the most important point. Although, it would often be something short-lived.

“In order to show that their efforts yield results, they would rush in everything and most of the time it would be totally unprofessional. For example, there was very high interest and support for female soldiers in the army, so they would enlist let us say 100 women to get training and be ready to be deployed by the army. In fact, 7 out of 10 of these women were underqualified in every possible way which includes health-related issues. But it was something that had good support among the International Community and donors, and they wanted to show results. They did not care about the consequences. Can you imagine these women going out on duty and representing the national army?” (N.A, 30 June 2021).
Another major problem was the very existence of PRTs as they operated as parallel government structures. PRTs were also involved in selecting the leadership of local institutions even though some of the people selected were neither suitable nor had local support. The local government was not only weak but also poorly equipped and mostly led by underqualified people so PRTs controlled everything and thus implemented their own plans, even if contradictory to the strategies and plans of the local government especially since it was already very much dependent on PRTs.

“There was a political advisor from the U.S State Department who acted as the governor himself and decided everything by himself. We even found out that he was militarizing local people using educational project money to get weapons for the militia he was creating in the area. Although the British Défense minister visited that area and said what the political advisor has done is very wrong. But he had very strong support back from the States” (A.G, 22 June 2021).

In general, the perception was that the representatives of foreign troops were in control of everything including the local government. The Afghan perception regarding the PRTs is a very negative one as they were against the involvement of the military in civilian activities. PRTs were also seen as a defense mechanism in response to the local insurgency. Locals also felt being pushed to a tight spot as they were stuck among the foreign troops and the local insurgents. PRTs followed their own strategies rather than considering the local realities on the ground. The most probable comparison of the last 2 decades’ effort was with that of Soviet Union time.

“One obvious point that everyone knows is that our people compare PRTs with the Russians. The most common comparison would be to see the quality and longevity of the work. The Russian worked on foundations and built things for the country while the Americans only built it to last a few days” (A. K, 19 June 2021).

Although in the beginning, PRTs had more supporters since most of the Afghans were hopeful for peace and stability in their countries, after just a few years, its negative consequences started to emerge which made the situation even worse. Foreign aid in state-building form especially if operated by the military has proven to be very counterproductive. The very foundation of such state-building operation was wrong as it was put in the wrong hands and based on improper strategies. Therefore, it can be said that bringing peace by using military might has not only proven to be counterproductive in Afghanistan but will also yield negative results for the
country in long run. The best alternative would be either to use civilian agencies or focus on local ownership.

PRTs in general were not deemed fully successful. Despite the partial short-lived success, what stands out to is the fact that they did not think about the consequences of what they were doing which generated more problems. Another fact which hindered their development was the formulation of strategies as these strategies were foreign-made and implemented in a different country without consideration of the local realities. Looking at the aftermath of these undertakings, what could be observed is that everything was left half-built, especially the institutions, and then the local government was left with a lot more problems than its very beginning. The security measurements also did not solve any security problem in the long run and in fact, even created more insecurity as their presence was a threat itself. With the resources at their disposal, they could achieve a lot more. Yet, their development efforts seem to be the most visible.

“If I say no, they did not do anything that would be unfair, they did a lot. They built schools, roads, and bridges. For example, they built facilities for the provincial government and hospital, but in terms of stability, it was getting worse day by day” (A.M, 23 June 2021).

The response to the question of whether it was soon to terminate PRTs was mostly ‘no’. Even though they provided certain services, people did not like the foreign troops to be in their areas. Thus, it would be better if the PRTs either closed earlier or did not exist as they were deemed to have created more problems than solving. It is therefore questionable whether foreign aid should continue to Afghanistan especially in a state-building form. Even though Afghanistan needs international assistance to stand on its feet, foreign aid in form of state-building delivered through the military was something disliked and unwelcomed as it was mostly conditional, implemented by foreigners, created corruption, was selectively implemented, resulted in weak institutions, led to instability in the country, undermined local factors and risked the security of NGOs, civilians, and development.

**Analysis**

**Security:**

Although claimed that the local population responded favorably to the restoration of security at least in the beginning (Williamson, 2011), the security measurements of PRTs were selective and limited to the presence of international troops in the area. This was not always beneficial
as they were prime targets for insurgents. However, where the foreign troops were located, securing those areas would be the main objective and priority. This would be crucial not only for survival but also for the achievement of the objectives. This created an environment where security measures were based on their self-interests. Security indeed is the most important issue of all. Something Afghanistan lacked for several decades. Without which, development and building institutions would not be possible (McArthur, 2011). The same fact is used by military strategists who justifies the use of the military for state-building operations. However, it can be argued that the military in a case like Afghanistan should have focused on security-related issues, not delivering development or building institutions. This indeed diverted the military from its main task and the resources and energy was used on something which was beyond their capabilities. However, for a short time, it might seem appropriate as the PRTs in Northern Afghanistan were more focused on development. PRTs in East and South, as well as South-West, were more often in need of more forces due to the insecurity to an extent that in some places self-protection was the priority (Christie, 2012). If we take the example of Northern province and then look at the current security situation in Afghanistan, most of the recent gains of Taliban started from Northern provinces which were comparably safer. This indicates that the International Forces focused on temporary security measures which mostly covered their interests on the one hand, but on the other hand the military was inappropriately used as it was tasked with multiple objectives some of which they stepped into for the first time. Therefore, the additional tasks of development and institution building impacted security as the military strength and focus were divided.

Some success has been documented especially when it comes to building security institutions by training, advising, and equipping the local security forces (Sellers, 2007). It is also said that the presence of the PRTs also reduced conflict by settling disputes among local warlords. The findings show that some of the institutions were led by warlords. These warlords filled most of the needed personnel from their own groups. If we consider this a deal for settling the disputes among warlords or a way to extend the security footprint and gain local support by giving them a share in the local government, it has shown a very negative impact on overall governance. Firstly, most of these warlords were interested in their personal benefits and secondly, it created a problem for the central government to remove these people from their posts. This defamed the local government since those who were disliked by ordinary citizens were in leadership. For the international forces, this might also have been a way of showing a quick security impact as these warlords were now allies who also filled the shortage of manpower very quickly, but the effect was the opposite as settling disputes was aimed to have a positive influence on security while handing over key positions to these warlords was actually an impact of security on
institution-building. In a case such as this one, the institutions limited the authority of government as it was led by corrupt warlords. On the other hand, although the Afghan Army in the past was destroyed by the Mujahideen, most of the previous officers including high ranking experienced ones still existed in the Afghan population which would have been an appropriate alternative, but they were left behind since they had worked closely with the Soviet Union in the past. Thus, undermining the development of local resources (Elayah, 2016). It should not be ignored that the Afghan Army personnel during the past were well-trained and highly qualified. So, a wealth of expertise was wasted which was a severe downside of the policies in use and led to a critical shortage of qualified people. In addition, the lack of cooperation and proper monitoring resulted in weak security institutions. However, in response to the situation created by the irresponsible withdrawal of the last international troops as of May 2021, the Afghan government announced the creation of a special unit of previously high-ranking military personals which was deemed important for the proper functioning of security institutions. Meanwhile, most of the warlords and their enlisted people switched sides as the Taliban progressed through war and influence. In many places, security personnel related to warlords left without any resistance showing a long-term negative impact of security and security institutions.

Another important issue related to security is the increase of instability in an area due to the presence of foreign troops. As most of the secure areas were often where foreign troops operated, they also visited various less secure areas. Being the prime target for the Taliban, their presence risked the security of local civilians as they would get trapped between two conflicting sides. This not only indirectly risked the lives of ordinary civilians (Christie, 2012), but they were also used as shields by insurgents to protect themselves. As the military was tasked with multiple objectives, it required their constant presence. However, their presence increased threats of attacks that would often lead to airstrikes which mostly accompanied civilian deaths (HRW, 2008). This started distancing people from supporting the government which was under establishment indicating the impact of security on extending the authority of government.

**Development:**

PRTs' activities regarding development have created various issues of their own. The fact that the military was unprofessional in development, offered projects to a selected number of people, their development efforts costed more while it was short-lived and many of the projects were either incomplete lacking material, manpower, etc. (Keane and Wood, 2015), or totally not implemented as there was corruption in these projects. In some cases, only a photo as proof of project implementation was sufficient. These projects were not properly assessed nor were the
local needs kept in mind. Although, military strategists and policymakers see this as essential for the success of their counterinsurgency operations (Williamson, 2011), PRTs’ development efforts were focused on the interests of military and were not appropriate.

On the other hand, as PRTs acted autonomously while spending money and carrying out projects (Sellers, 2007). The locals considered this a military tactic to occupy the people so they could operate without disturbance. Therefore, the ordinary citizens did not support these projects, as these projects neither did anything for development of Afghanistan, nor were in tune with development reality. It is also claimed that PRTs would need more resources to supervise long-term, sustainable projects (Gauster, 2008). Looking at the resources at their disposal, it would be sufficient for working on long-term development especially reconstructing the already existing projects. However, that would not show quick impact and could not be used for gaining support or showing results. In sum, from one side it shows the impact of security on development since security encompasses military personnel used for development activities which was neither appreciated nor appropriate. From the other, development fund was a tactic even on the policy level in this case it was to win public support as suggested by evidence that the development initiatives and improvements in economic condition have partially increased support for local government (Williamson, 2011). Based on the findings, a limited number of people benefited from such development projects who also supported it. However, the fact that there was high level of corruption involved, was either not implemented or hardly functional especially the small and quick impact projects. Moreover, these projects mostly did not reach its target population.

The fact that the development fund was put in the wrong hands is also claimed by various civilian agencies seeing the military as unprofessional and unsuitable in delivering humanitarian and development assistance (Christie, 2012). Besides, the development fund was used for purposes which the military deemed necessary as there was no proper inspection and evaluation of the development funds. PRTs were autonomous and could decide about what to fund and how to fund it. Therefore, despite the claims of military strategists and policymakers that providing aid to local population was beneficial, the current evidence shows that provision of short-term aid has not been a complete success in counterinsurgency operations, nor has it been proven beneficial to the civilian population as the focus of such operations is to deprive the insurgents of local support and might even have undermined the overall military goals as they were tasked with more than they were capable of (Williamson, 2011). On the other hand, the capacity of militaries to win consent through development is not only aimed at winning ‘hearts and minds’ but rather viewed by military and civilians within PRTs as a process that
enables multiple layers of interactions in community leaders aimed at facilitating a dialogue among local, provincial, and national leaders on construction of future political and social contracts (Jackson and Gordon, 2007), to strengthen the local government. Thus, it could be said that the PRTs did not carry out development for development’s sake which is why long-term development projects which did neither show quick impact nor could be politicized to show a good face of the government, were ignored (Ibid).

Moreover, as foreign troops participated in the development and humanitarian aid, any civilian organization working in this aspect become a target since the Taliban claimed that they all work towards the same objective of the military. This indicates that the PRTs used development as a tactic to achieve their objectives has not only been proved unsuccessful but also risked the safety of civilians and civilian organizations in the country (Petrik, 2016). Moreover, aid politicization was not an issue in PRTs as they had no problem withholding aid to villages if they were deemed sympathetic to the Taliban (Sellers, 2007) or were of no strategic interest to the military. This is contradictory to the very objective of ‘winning hearts and minds’ and turning Afghans away from the insurgency and thereby creating a stable environment. In fact, the specific strategies often used to gain the support of the local population have often been ‘carrot and stick’ where the military used aid to punish and reward instead of winning local support (Williamson, 2011). Furthermore, the selective implementation of projects not only resulted in aid politicization but also created internal feuds among the villages. Therefore, aid and development projects in counterinsurgency operations were ineffective and counterproductive. Besides, the fact that a selected number of people were granted contracts highlights that the development projects served a far greater purpose for the military than the civilians as these projects were mostly given to contractors who had good relations with PRTs. This resulted in inequitable disbursement of development aid, and a high level of corruption in development projects. A study by Feinstein International Centre (2012), shows that corruption and inequitable distribution of aid were made in such projects. This indicates the manipulation of humanitarian assistance and the fundamental principles of delivery of such assistance were violated. These projects were aimed to play a role in extending the central government authority and building local institutions especially for keeping a good relationship with the people appointed in the leadership of these institutions. In general, not only it resulted in above mentioned negative outcomes but also did not work for extending government authority as the corruption, favoritism, and exclusion involved, defamed the international troops’ efforts and the local government thus indicating a negative impact of development in areas of governance and security.
Another fundamental problem created by military involvement was the fact that it also risked the safety and security of infrastructure and development projects in the country which is still ongoing. The insurgents would destroy bridges, schools, roads, and clinics as they had been constructed by foreign troops. If they had been implemented by civilian organizations, not only would a lot more people benefit, but it would also not risk the safety of civilians, NGOs, and development projects. During 2020 Afghan President Ashraf Ghani announced that the cost of infrastructure damages by insurgents reached one billion dollars a year. Therefore, putting the development fund in hands of the military was not only a waste of funds but also risked the safety of civilians, NGOs, and development itself. In general, it might be empirically difficult to draw concrete conclusions, but some successes in social welfare programs did occur. Schools were built across the country because of which millions of children were enrolled in schools, children receiving pedagogical services increased from under one million to seven million, access to clean water, preventing diseases and improved life expectancy were the result of these undertakings. However, the negative outcomes outweighed the positive ones (Keane and Wood, 2015).

**Extending the Authority of Central Government/Institution-building:**

Regarding expanding the authority of the central government and building Afghan institutions, PRTs had some success as a state-building operation. Keane and Wood (2015) also states that the local population responded favorably to the restoration of security, introducing, and developing the rule of law, good governance, and the capacity of domestic justice mechanism. The focus on good governance and institutional capacity building varied from province to province. However, in general the PRTs focused more on building the capacity of security institutions, a crucial requirement for stabilization which would require strong capable institutions and economic development as well as law and order to enforce each other (McArthur, 2011). Alas the institution and the pillar of good governance in the country were not only very weak but also corrupt. PRTs controlled these institutions since they controlled funds and thus acted as a hub where local police chiefs shared information about criminal activities in the area (Sellers, 2007). On the other hand, PRTs selected people for local institutions and without their approval, the central government could not change the people in leading positions of local institutions. This resulted in a high level of corruption which spread into Afghan institutions. Something which the Afghans say was imported during the last 20 years by the presence of the International Community. This defamed the government as in the beginning most of the Afghan people were behind the government and yearning for genuine leadership to protect and serve them (Lane and Sky, 2006), but this changed over time. PRTs’ support for local governance was also seen as ineffectual, especially since PRTs acted as a
parallel structure or alternative power center (Ibid). The fact that PRTs controlled most of the local institutions which delegitimized the autonomy of the local the government in the eyes of many. This decreased the influence and authority of the Afghan government and served as a reason for the insurgents to justify their insurgency. They claimed that the Afghan government was an administration selected, trained, and equipped by the international troops and therefore not an autonomous authority.

**How PRTs Were Perceived:**

The PRTs as the state-building efforts of the International Community was perceived as a representative of foreign troops in the provinces with strict security measures, thus accessible only to selected individuals. They were primarily military organizations led by the military. The interests of various foreign agencies involved had led to contradictory decisions leading it towards failure as they were perceived to be ignorant of various local realities and were unaware of the root causes of problems (Easterly, 2007). Although PRTs were a mechanism for demonstrating international support to most Afghans by channeling funds to the provinces and extending the access of central government, (Lane and Sky, 2006) Their development efforts were associated with the broader military campaign in the country showcasing them as a defense mechanism of the international troops to the local insurgency. In general, PRTs efforts were not considered to be effective for stabilization and development of Afghanistan, as it pushed the local population into a situation where they were trapped between the foreign troops and the local insurgency. To be impartial became hard for the local civilians stuck between the two sides. If the international troops used much needed aid as a tactic to win their support, the insurgents used force.

On the other hand, the very involvement of armed foreign forces in uniform was the very first mistake. Despite that, the policymakers still viewed this as the only option especially since the military was also used for the delivery of much-needed humanitarian assistance to newly secured areas where humanitarian and development agencies were not present (Williamson, 2011), and the security of NGOs was another problem that NGOs could not overcome by themselves. This is true especially during the first years. However, the same strategy was prolonged, and it continued even though many civilian NGOs and International Organizations were present in the country. The military should have withdrawn from the country as soon as it was possible for civilian organizations to operate. Unfortunately, most of the policies were made to be implemented by the military. Therefore, the military was involved in most of the aspects of local governance. In fact, during the first years, the people also appreciated the efforts of international troops, and the security situation seemed to be totally under control. However,
that changed (Sellers, 2007). The involvement of military in development, institutional capacity-building etc., gave a perfect chance for the insurgents to use this as propaganda against the local government especially since the military was also dominant among the foreign agencies involved and were given more authority. Apart from that their procedures based on military doctrine and culture were incompatible with the whole-of-government approach (Keane and Wood, 2015), undermining its diplomatic and development aspects. However, from a practical perspective, the Stability and Reconstruction concept could not operate on the same level across the country as the PRT concept was developed for post-conflict scenarios (Gauster, 2009). Afghanistan has been neither fully secured nor in conflict. Therefore, the number of forces increased particularly after 2009. The longer they stayed, the more insurgency emerged which made the stabilization operation hard to conduct.

Although it is claimed that PRTs were successful on a tactical level and must not be blamed for strategic, and policy failures (Hochwart, 2009), PRTs on the ground level underestimated the role of cultural, religious, and political traditions in the country thus indicating issues on policy as well as tactical levels especially since PRTs were autonomous decision-making body. They did not have a proper assessment of their undertakings which had drastic consequences. It is also argued that PRTs played an important role by allowing the Afghan population to reject the causes of instability and by giving them the confidence to withstand the pressure they were under (Lane and Sky, 2006) and if placed within a clearer and more focused institutional and conceptual framework, they could potentially have a positive impact on the stabilization agenda (Jackson and Gordon, 2007). This claim however is ignoring the very fact that the involvement of the military led to more insurgency in the first place, hence even if placed in a post-conflict scenario, it will be counterproductive especially if led by the military. There would be no or less need for the military in a post-conflict situation where civilian organizations which are more professional and qualified could easily operate with more consideration given to development and diplomatic aspects.

**Discussion**

**Aid in State-building Form:**

Foreign aid in form of state-building operations which was led by the military has led to weak institutions, insecure environment caused by the presence of foreign troops, unequal and inequitable development, and has put the poor recipient countries in a hard position between accepting the aid with its consequences or staying in the already not so well status. In general,
the military has basically jeopardized the success of the state-building operation. In fact, it would be very much possible and highly effective if the military handed over control to civilians and withdrew as soon as the new government was established. Therefore, it can be said that civilian agencies could have minimized the risk, would have benefited more people, lead to more development, gain widespread local support and more importantly, it would not lead to instability. Afghanistan state-building operation has had some successes if one compares the situation to the time prior to 2001. However, at a very high cost with which a much greater success was achievable. On the policy level, if interagency cooperation had a unity-of-effort rather than every country having their own agenda based on their foreign policy (Easterly, 2007; Elayah, 2016) and if the national objectives of the recipient country were kept in mind, this would have overcome a lot of hurdles for the International Community. Moreover, if the military was the only option and to put everything in their hands, it would still have been useful to disburse aid according to local terms. Not the way it happened in Afghanistan where billions of dollars were spent without any sound and concrete results. Civilian activities should be left to the civilians as they are not only professionals on the ground but also trustable by the local population. The further the military refrains from such activities, the more successful the result of such operations will be. Not only does the military not have the capability of working in the civilian aspects of development and humanitarian assistance, but the meaning attached to the uniform has been the very cause for failure. Despite that they were to be differentiated from the broader military campaign in the country, ordinary Afghans perceived PRTs as the representatives of foreign troops and distanced themselves (Williamson, 2011).

**Exclusive Democracy:**

Another important issue on a political level is that in such regime change operations, the very foundation of the newly democratic government was not very democratic, as certain political groups ‘as the officials of former governments’ including the very political party, namely the Taliban, were left behind. Instead of sitting at the negotiation table, “No chance was given to the Taliban” (Johan Gultang; as cited in Webel and Tomass, 2007). The very decision of the U.S and its allies including the interim government at that time to prevent the Taliban from holding any sort of power was the first signal of a long war ahead. Hence the foundation of the new government was based on exclusion, therefore it can be claimed that it was not very democratic as it worked against the ‘rights-based approach’ on which much of the International Community bases itself. In addition, the role of diplomacy was totally undermined. Though later with efforts from the former president of Afghanistan ‘Hamid Karzai’ Taliban opened an office in Qatar to lead its efforts at the negotiation table but it was nearly a one and half decade later when the military campaign had already failed. This also shows unawareness of the local
traditions as in Afghanistan dialogue is a crucial part of the culture for thousands of years. Thus, even on national level, the role of culture and traditions was undermined and the Loya Jirga (a national level gathering where the leaders and politicians from all over the country discuss national issues and make decisions) which could have turned the status quo around and could have possibly resulted in an all-inclusive government, but these aspects were overlooked both nationally and internationally.

**Afghanistan: Training Soldiers and Testing State-building Concept**

The fact that the Afghan scenario was a perfect one for training the military of various countries during the past 20 years is not a secret. On the one hand, the tasks of development and humanitarian aid were new to the military and on the other hand the whole concept of state-building was an experience for foreign policymakers. This was also clear since the military was deployed for a period of 6, 9 and 12 months where most of the soldiers had to learn for several months to get a grip on the situation, which could be another result causing the failure. However, one can say that not all the efforts of the International Community have been a total waste despite the shortcomings. Certainly, a lot of compromises had to be made especially since the Afghan scenario was a complicated one not only inside the country but also on regional and global level. A good example of success could be seen in the capacity of local institutions if one compares with that of 20 years ago, because of the war, nothing in the country was left and almost all institutions were totally unfunctional. Besides, the number of Afghan security forces reached 300,000 some of which are trained and equipped to international standards. Despite the fall of the former government as of August 15, 2021, the Afghan Security and Defense Forces faced an uncertain future, this human capital exists and can be used effectively in future governments. This might be seen as a notion especially since the Afghans and International Community is doubtful of Taliban intentions of creating an all-inclusive government, but it could be a possible scenario. Furthermore, the country will always find it hard to live under the same political motives and ideology due to the various forms of diversity existing among its citizens which has always played a crucial role in the politics of the country. For Afghans, accepting the variety of political and ideological existence in the country is the only way towards peace and prosperity. No group, regime or foreign invader has ever had complete control over the whole country. Thus, political acceptance, and commitment towards a progressive Afghanistan under regional and international observation is crucial. Any regime or government where the Afghans live under a monopoly of cultural, religious, political, or economical ideology will neither function nor be able to stand on its feet for long.
Foreign Interests and Conflicts:

Another important issue in the Afghan conflict is the interests of regional and international players. The country is not only in this status due to its own problems but also since regional and global powers have always had an interest in the country which is proven by its history and is beyond doubt. The U.S, and its NATO allies, Russia, China, and regional countries such as Pakistan, Iran, India, Turkey, and the Arab States all have mutual interests and conflicts not only within the country but also about the country. Therefore, the International Community and the major players in the global security arena must work on their interests in the same way as the Afghans. If these conflicts and interests are not solved, Afghanistan will always be a battlefield for the proxy wars among the regional and global powers. The country has been under direct or indirect influence in the past few decades especially where foreign aid is concerned which has shaped most of its internal and external politics. Therefore, until the regional and global players do not settle their dispute, Afghans who have paid the ultimate price will continue to suffer. Hence a global and regional consensus should be reached regarding the future of Afghanistan alongside the Afghan peace talks.

The Light at the End of the Tunnel:

The fact that the Afghan government collapsed, and the control of the country fell in hands of Taliban was mostly caused by the Doha Agreement between the U.S and Taliban. During the time of negotiation and agreement, the Afghan government was totally undermined, and their concerns were not prioritized as the agreement mostly encompassed issues and concerns of the United States and Taliban. NATO also had to follow the agreement and started withdrawing their troops from the country. All this was supposed to happen especially since in many ways, the U.S and NATO allies could now foresee the negative outcomes of their military campaign in the country. This resulted in rapid gain for Taliban and a total loss for the Afghan government. This also indicates the issue of local ownership especially if one observes the recent political development in the country. Basically, most of the key fundamental pillars of the government were barely functional anymore despite that the international aid particularly in political and military aspects continued. The recent crises in Kabul airport particularly regarding its operations shows another example of how local ownership was not existing in important aspects of the state-building operations. On the other hand, despite the Taliban claims that their future government will be all-inclusive where all political parties and people in the country will be represented, the image created by Taliban during the past two and a half decades makes it hard for the Afghans as well as the International Community to be hopeful. The Taliban leadership is now responsible for any possible future of the country. What becomes of Afghanistan will be the direct result of their national and international policies. Looking for diplomatic recognition
in the region, Taliban already received green lights from China and Russia, two of the regional and global powers which most probably will fill the political vacuum in the country. In this regard, the International Community especially the western countries should look for long-term possibilities of working with future Afghan government and avoid sanctions as economic and political sanctions in the past particularly prior to 2001, isolated the country which had negative consequences and could very well be the reason behind increase in drug trade, and existence of groups posing threats to global security, etc.

On the other hand, despite that the sudden political change in Afghanistan changes everything regarding future aid especially in political and economic forms, the U.N and International Community has shown interest in working with Taliban based on protecting civilians ‘particularly women and girls rights’ and allowing humanitarian assistance (UNSC, 2021). For Afghanistan, an all-inclusive government could play a crucial role in securing future aid. The country also presents various economic opportunities for large scale investments. However, it will certainly require guarantees and agreements from the future government. On the other hand, Afghanistan needs aid not only to deliver basic services to its citizens but also to work on the capacity of its institutions and development of human capital to be able to stand on its feet. Therefore, in many ways this is an opportunity where the International Community can play an important role in building the future Afghan state. Afghanistan and its people will need the support of the International Community and they should not be left behind.
Conclusions

The outcomes of the International Community’s efforts regarding nation-building operations in Afghanistan has led to drastic consequences, some of which might be the very cause of its failure. Drawing concrete conclusions might be difficult. However, this study regarding the intended and unintended outcomes of Provincial Reconstruction Teams concludes that they risked the lives of impartial civilians by creating a military environment in areas of their control, leaving behind weak and corrupt institutions while acting as a parallel government structure during its time. PRTs had partially positive impacts on the security. However, most of their efforts for implementing security were temporary, limited to their presence, self-interest as well as self-protection. In the area of development, it had severe negative outcomes as they were not only unprofessional in the field but also used development as a tactic. Their development efforts were short-lived, delivered the lowest quality at a high cost and did not result in ‘winning hearts and minds’ as they funded selective projects, ignored the local needs, politicized aid leading to further problems among the local population and created wide-spread corruption. The military involvement in development also limited relevant civilian agencies from assessing the development efforts, risked the safety of civilians, NGOs as well as development and infrastructure. In general, the development fund was put in the wrong hands, benefited a very limited number of people, and created more problems. PRTs also rushed building local governance despite being unaware of the social, political, and cultural traditions which led to various problems of its own. They appointed local warlords to lead the very institutions they were building and affected the authority and capacity of local institutions. This resulted in weak, dysfunctional, and corrupt institutions which defamed the newly democratic government. The military also undermined the role of other agencies involved and jeopardized the success of state-building operations. However, PRTs failure on an operational level was due to policies rather than tactical level as they were mostly foreign made without a thorough consideration of local realities.

In general, the PRT perception was negative. The involvement of the military in PRTs showcased a very opposite message than that which they were to deliver, hence, the response to voices of local civilians turned to be a place that was neither accessible to civilians nor safe to be around. While in charge of various sources of foreign aid, they were mostly interests of the military. They were also perceived as a defense mechanism of the international troops to local insurgency and connected to the broader military campaign in the country. PRTs also benefited the local populace by creating a partially secure environment in the areas of their operations and by building schools, clinics, bridges etc. in various parts of the country. However,
compared to the resources used, a very limited number of people benefited from such projects. PRTs undermined the development of local resources. Regarding the institution building, although PRTs had to start from scratch, most of the institutions created were either very weak and or highly corrupt. The military involvement in building local intuitions and extending the authority of the central government resulted in defaming the very government they were helping as it was seen to be built by foreign troops who invaded the country. In addition, the lack of local support for those put in charge resulted in counterproductivity in aspects of institution building. It thus can be claimed that rather than undermining their role, the military should have focused on implementing security and should have not been used for other purposes. Moreover, the partial success was often hindered by the strategic and operational failures. Therefore, the aid in state-building form led by the military did not achieve its objectives and was counterproductive as focusing on military force produced a counterforce which further complicated the security environment in the country. The diplomatic and development efforts could have played a much greater role. However, this was overlooked as the military dominance was the focus of foreign policies based on which the PRTs operated.

**Recommendations**

Based on the conclusions of this study, the policymakers especially in case of state-building operations should focus more on the civilian aspect of state-building. The civilian diplomatic and development agencies could yield a far greater result compared to its military counterparts even though in situations of dire need, these agencies will not be able to function without provisions of security in which case the military should be appropriately used. Policymakers should also base their strategies on local realities. As concluded in this study, foreign-made policies implemented by foreigners undermine the role of various local factors involved which could hinder the success of such operations.

**Further Research**

To gain a better understanding of the implications of this study, future research could explore the outcomes of PRTs on a more comprehensive level including both local and foreign perspectives. To further strengthen this research on PRTs especially from a local perspective, future research could also explore the outcomes of PRTs in Iraq as it was the second country in the world where the PRT concept was used.
Reference list


Abuiyada, D., (2018). Traditional Development Theories have failed to Address the Needs of the majority of People at Grassroots Levels with Reference to GAD. International Journal of Business and Social Science, 9(9).


Appendices

1. MAP OF PRTs ACROSS AFGHANISTAN

Source: NATO SITCEN Geo Branch (2009).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic &amp; Themes</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Purpose &amp; concerns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Security:</strong></td>
<td>1. What does security and development mean to you? Or 2. And how did the PRT in your area implement security? E.g., by conducting operations, training police/army, building security institution? 3. How good do you think these security measures implemented by PRTs, were and how do you compare that to the current security situation? 4. How the security measures of PRTs directly or indirectly impacted on civilians? E.g., Taliban would not care if you were among civilians and would attack.</td>
<td>To see what the focuses of security measurements were. To find out if the security measures by PRTs were enough to provide security. E.g., after foreign and local troops operations in a certain area, once they left, Taliban would simply come back the day after and take control of the area. And to see whether the aim was long-term strategic security measures or quick impact security measures. To find out whether PRTs efforts of providing security had potentially insecure the area. E.g., wherever foreign troops went, that place would become target for Taliban.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security implementation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Short vs long term security measures and impacts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing security leading to insecurity</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Development:</strong></td>
<td>5. According to your experience, how do you see or evaluate PRTs involvement in development? Was it effective and necessary? Could it be done by agencies other than military personnel? 6. What was the reaction of the local population to development efforts by PRTs? 7. Have the development projects risked lives of</td>
<td>To see whether Afghans saw the development efforts of the military effective or was the military suitable for conducting development efforts. To find out/confirm the claims of humanitarian agencies that military conducting development and humanitarian operations has blurred the line between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militarization of development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Humanitarian Space</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicization of Aid</td>
<td>Do civilian locals and or civilian organizations working in the same area and field?</td>
<td>military and civilian agencies. Besides, to find out whether development projects have resulted in the insecurity of the area due to the presence of the military.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development for sake of ‘development’ or not?</td>
<td>For PRTs, it was both possible and most likely to implement their projects in certain areas based on the cooperation of the area, the security, and the contacts they had with PRTs. Have you come across such a situation where a lot of projects were directed and implemented in specific areas while not implementing such projects in other areas despite the need?</td>
<td>To find out whether aid has been politicized and used for selective people/areas despite the guidelines of International Humanitarian Law (need based, impartial, etc.). In case aid was directed to certain people or areas, that could lead to insecurity and opposition from people/areas which were not the target of development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The security of development efforts</td>
<td>A major argument for implementing quick impact projects was to gain local support. How do you think that has worked?</td>
<td>To find out whether the military strategy of ‘winning hearts and minds’ by providing development has been successful? To find out whether the military can be useful in development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption in development</td>
<td>Most of the infrastructure related development has been under constant attack in Afghanistan. How was this in case of PRT projects? And why do you think that?</td>
<td>To find out if the involvement of the military in development have resulted in attacks on infrastructure projects?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accountability and transparency were almost non-existing in most of the areas PRTs operated in, do you think this has paved the way for corruption in PRT development programs? If yes, how?</td>
<td>To see whether the PRTs efforts in development has led to corruption in the development efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institution-building:</strong> Extending the reach of government and rule of law.</td>
<td>12. What do you think was the focus of institution building in provinces? Economic, security, law &amp; order?</td>
<td>To see whether the PRTs emphasized equally on various institutions or have specifically worked on one point? Whether the focus was on different institutions in different provinces?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strengthening/Weakening the authority of government (in start and at the end).</td>
<td>13. One of the main objectives of PRTs was to extend the authority of the central government. In your opinion, was it done successfully? If yes, what has been the aftermath of the extended government authority? If no, what went wrong?</td>
<td>To see whether PRTs were effective in extending the rule of the central government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution building/building local capacity</td>
<td>14. In general, how did Afghans perceive PRTs? Especially since in the beginning the local government was either non-existing or very weak.</td>
<td>To find out whether PRTs created a parallel government. Whether PRTs related groups could be differentiated from other International Troops on the ground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term dependency</td>
<td>15. The PRT responsibilities were handed over to the local government after their closure, how does that work now?</td>
<td>To find out whether the institution building efforts in case of delivery services to civilians has been effective and whether the local institutions are strong enough to cover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. What has been missing since PRTs closed at the end of 2013? Do you think it was early to close? Was there a need for continuing PRTs for a longer term? If yes, how about the concern of occupation in case of long-term military presence? if not, how about the delivery of basic government services?</td>
<td>To see whether Afghans were dependent on PRTs in case of basic social, infrastructure and development services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of foreign aid in form of state-building operations</td>
<td>17. How effective do you think the PRTs were in achieving their three main areas of work namely security implementation, development and extending the authority of the central government?</td>
<td>To find out if how do Afghan perceive a hybrid intervention such as PRT where diplomatic, security and development efforts are intertwined</td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering/ignoring local factors (social, religious, cultural, etc.).</td>
<td>18. Where do you think the focus should have been?</td>
<td>To find out whether the PRTs efforts were based on local needs or simply foreign solutions implemented in the country without a thorough consideration of the social, political, and economic atmosphere in the country. And whether such operations of International Community have positive or negative result in stabilizing the country/area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future application of stabilization operations</td>
<td>19. Do you think the state-building operations have stabilized Afghanistan? If yes, how? If not, what could be done differently?</td>
<td>to pinpoint the major obstacles and success points in PRT operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Aid Effectiveness</td>
<td>20. What were the major points ignored by PRTs which hindered their success? And what were PRTs good at which added to their success?</td>
<td>To find out about the perspective of locals in a developing country regarding aid and what and how would they prefer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21. As an Afghan being aware about the situation on the ground, and knowing what aid could cause, should the aid continue?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The above questions were not fixed. The flow of the conversation and questions covered the themes and concerns discussed above. However, the questions were adopted according to the conversation during the interviews to create a room for the participants to share what they wanted to share.
3. GUIDELINES ON PRIVACY AND CONSENT FORM

I would like to thank you for your participation in this interview. As you have been informed during the interview booking time, in this research, I aim to study the aftermath of Provincial Reconstruction Teams as a form of state-building operations of the International Community in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the study will showcase an Afghan perspective of those local Afghans who have either directly or indirectly worked with PRTs in Afghanistan or have closely observed their activities as a direct beneficiary or local populace. Alongside the outcomes of PRTs, an Afghan perspective on any of PRTs related study is a shortcoming itself. The concept of PRT has first been tried in Afghanistan and might be applicable in future scenarios of state-building operations. Therefore, to know the local perspective several years after the program was closed could generate rich and inclusive information in this regard.

The objective of this research is to study and generate a final report as a master thesis for the Department of Peace & Development Work class 2021. The following points are the necessary ethical requirements of this research. It also includes participants’ consent which are essential for proceeding with this interview. In this case, the consent will be the agreement to proceed with the interview will also be recorded.

- This interview will be recorded. The sole purpose of recording the interviews is to transcribe the data and generate themes which is essential for further analysis of the acquired information. The records will be kept for audit and inspection purposes and will be removed by the time of publication of this research Aug/Sept 2021.

- You have the right to withdraw from this interview at any moment. If you do so you are under no obligation to explain why.

- If you tell me something that you subsequently have doubts about or would like to change, please tell me. You are entitled to change your opinions or words which you would like to either remove or edit. To help with this, you will get a draft of the interview text.
• I would like to make sure that you are not harmed by taking part in this interview. If you are, please inform.

• Your name and surname will be replaced only by the initial letters of your full name. This is to keep it confidential. Although research ethics and rights entitle you to mention your names if you would wish so, however, the confidentiality will be the same for all the participants. Your data and credentials will not be shared with anyone without your consent according to European General Data Protection Regulation and the Ethical Codes of conducting a research in Sweden and Linnaeus University.

Thank you!
Noorullah Ghairat
### 4. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS – SAMPLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name initials &amp; Age</th>
<th>Regional Command</th>
<th>PRTs worked with/observed</th>
<th>Employee/Civil Society/Government</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.G 33</td>
<td>South &amp; East</td>
<td>Khost &amp; Helmand</td>
<td>Military/Development Agency</td>
<td>22/06/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.K 34</td>
<td>North &amp; East</td>
<td>Mazar-e-Sharif &amp; Ghazni</td>
<td>Development Agency</td>
<td>19/06/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.M 35</td>
<td>East &amp; West</td>
<td>Gardiz, Herat, Badghis</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>23/06/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.A 41</td>
<td>South &amp; East</td>
<td>Kunar &amp; Ghazni</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>25/06/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.M 34</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Helmand &amp; Kandahar</td>
<td>Government liaison officer</td>
<td>28/06/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.K 57</td>
<td>South &amp; Capital</td>
<td>Kandahar, Tarin Kowt</td>
<td>Development Agency</td>
<td>21/06/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.A 36</td>
<td>East &amp; North</td>
<td>Kunar, Paktiya &amp; Baghlan</td>
<td>Government liaison officer</td>
<td>30/06/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.A 33</td>
<td>South/West</td>
<td>Herat, Qalat, Helmand &amp; Ghazni</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>01/07/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.D 36</td>
<td>South &amp; North</td>
<td>Kandahar, Badakhshan</td>
<td>Development Agency</td>
<td>24/06/2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Most of the employees of PRTs were ‘male gender’ as the presence of female was only limited to foreigner due to the security situation in the country or cultural factors. Therefore, the participants were only male.
### 5. CODING EXAMPLE – QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Data</th>
<th>Primary Codes</th>
<th>Final Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yeah, they were a threat. Indirectly to civilians in villages. Because going out on an operation like that, sometimes the police or the Afghan National Army, they would not even know what is happening, if there is an operation happening in that area. Second, the elders or the tribal leaders in that village was unaware of what is happening. They will either inform the elders or the police, but that was mostly after the destruction that they had caused there. Right. But even though it was a joint provincial Coordination Centre unit there. But unfortunately, most of the operations were just carried out without the consult consultation of our national police or other military so yeah, no doubt there was a big, big threat to civilians.</td>
<td>Security measures leading to insecurity in the area.</td>
<td>Risking safety of civilians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of coordination and cooperation among foreign troops and the local government.</td>
<td>Acting autonomously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creating mistrust among partners.</td>
<td>Self-interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Defaming government as it was back by foreign troops who risked lives of civilians.</td>
<td>Defaming the government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civilians trapped and unaware</td>
<td>Lossing local support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Civilian’s suffering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of course, because, you know, if the aid meant for these people, was to be delivered by as civilian organization or personnel, this would have helped the population for years and they would feel safer. the cooperation that PRTs expected from the population, I believe, would then continue for years to come, since it was, you know, military with weapons, guns,</td>
<td>Use of military limited civilians from accessing aid.</td>
<td>disliked by locals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delivering aid through civilians would mean more people benefiting.</td>
<td>Decrease in public support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civilian distanced themselves</td>
<td>more development possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>military presence</td>
<td>Civilians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>endangered civilians’ lives</td>
<td>endangered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

69
armored vehicles, you know, moving throughout villages, you know, people were kind of, you know, nervous, reluctant to, to help these groups to talk to, you know, to contact with them, yeah, and to address to share their basic problems with these groups that they were kind of, you know, trying to be as far as they could from these people, because scattered military personnel, you know, their presence as an endangered jeopardized people’s lives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No proper assessment was possible</th>
<th>Endangered civilians by military presence</th>
<th>Aid in wrong hands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>people were afraid of sharing their problems with military.</td>
<td>Militarized environment</td>
<td>Lack of trust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>