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The Network-Society Phenomenon in the Lithuanian-Led PRT in Afghanistan

This article analyses the implementation of NATO`s comprehensive approach in the Lithuanian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in the Ghor province in Afghanistan. The ambiguity of this approach – its meaning varies greatly accordingly to the specific organization or country implementing it – encourages discovery of the "Lithuanian" model of comprehensive approach. In order to achieve this goal, the network-society theory of sociologist Manuel Castells is chosen as the theoretical background of the analysis. By expanding this theory to the military domain and by conducting a quantitative, expert-interviews based analysis of the Lithuanian-led PRT, the level of "comprehensiveness" entrenched in the activities of the Lithuanian civil-military team is revealed.

Introduction

Lithuanian participation in the NATO-led *International Security Assistance Forces* (hereinafter – ISAF) mission in Afghanistan is called "the main Lithuanian contribution to international operations"[1]. This Lithuanian mission is exceptional not only in terms of its scope and duration but also in terms of organizational logic used for organizing and coordinating civil-military activities: an expert-based, intensively cooperating civil-military team is working in the Lithuanian-led Provincial reconstruction team (hereinafter – PRT) in the Ghor province. 'Comprehensive approach' constitutes the fundamental for civil-military cooperation in the PRT. One of the main assumptions of this approach indicates that, in order to act effectively in crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction operations, political, civil and military means must be combined.[2] As a result, responsibility for the implementation of the ISAF mission's

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[1] Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence, www.kam.lt/lt/tarptautinis_bendradarbiavimas/tarptautines_operacijos/kodel_dalyvaujame.html [Accessed 08 11 2012].

[2] NATO, „A 'Comprehensive Approach' to crisis management", www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_51633.htm [accessed 29 08 2012].

goals is shared by extremely different actors, including military personnel, representatives of political as well as non-governmental organizations (hereinafter – NGO`s). In addition to professional diversity, the PRT teams (in particular those ones controlled by smaller countries) can also be characterized by high internationality.

Although leaders of NATO emphasize the significance of heterogeneity prevailing in the PRT teams, which must work in extremely complex (post-) crisis situations, where economic, political, social and military problems interrelate[3], the way these expert-based teams operate remains vague. The reason stems from the ambiguity of the comprehensive approach. This concept includes many hard to define principles such as flexibility, mobility and situational awareness. Moreover, the comprehensive approach is not only developed by NATO but also by the United Nations Organization, the European Union as well as by separate states.[4] As a result, the content of this concept depends on the specific organization or country implementing it. Following one of the most universal principals of the comprehensive approach, namely, the need to react flexibly in complex situations, even those countries operating under the ISAF mandate interpret and implement the comprehensive approach differently. On one hand, the provinces of Afghanistan vary greatly in terms of the security situation, economic and social setup; on the other hand, political traditions of the NATO member and partner states leading the PRTs are also different[5]. As a result, the American-led PRTs have exceptional military structures including a few civilian representatives, whereas the German-led PRTs are based on civilian activities.[6]

All the aspects mentioned above—the significance of the ISAF mission for Lithuania, new experience of civil-military cooperation gained by Lithuanian personnel in Afghanistan, and the ambiguity of comprehensive approach—motivate the necessity of finding out how activities are organized and coordinated in the Lithuanian-led PRT[7]. Thus the goal of this article is to define the "Lithuanian" model of comprehensive approach, which is being implemented by the

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[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Christian Mölling, „Comprehensive Approaches to International Crisis Management", *CSS Analyses in Security Policy,* Vol. 3(42), 2008, 2.

[5] Robert M. Perito, „The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan. Lessons Identified", *United States Institute of Peace,* 2005, 2.

[6] Vincent Morelli, Paul Belkin, „NATO in Afghanistan: A Test of the Transatlantic Alliance", *CRS Report for Congress,* Congressional Research Service, 2009, 22.

[7] Although many of the PRTs led by different NATO member and partner states have already been analyzed, the case of the Lithuanian-led PRT remains underanalyzed. One of relevant publications on the Lithuanian-led PRT is presented by Robert Perito, Nima Abbaszadeh, et al, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams: Lessons and Recommendations,* Woodrow Wilson School of Public & International Affairs, Princeton University, 2008. Also a Lithuanian PRT analysis from the cultural perspective: Egdūnas Račius "The 'Cultural Awareness' Factor in the Activities of the Lithuanian PRT in Afghanistan", *Baltic Security and Defence Review*, Volume 9/2007.

civil-military team operating in the Lithuanian-led PRT in the Ghor province. In order to achieve the goal of the article, contextual reasons, which encouraged the development of comprehensive approach, are analyzed first. The network-society theory[8], which explains the type, reasons and consequences of organizational restructurization taking place nowadays, is chosen as the theoretical background of this analysis. In the context of this theory the main principles of comprehensive approach are defined assuming that comprehensive approach is a manifestation of the network-society phenomenon in the military domain. According to these principles an empirical research is conducted, systematizing the Lithuanian military and civilian personnel's experience gained while practically implementing comprehensive approach in the PRT.

The network-society theory is expanded into military domain in the first part of this article, while the second part explains the principal ideas of comprehensive approach. Finally, results of the interview-based case study of the Lithuanian-led PRT are presented in the third part of the article. Thirteen expert interviews have been conducted with three former leaders of the Lithuanian Military mission in Afghanistan, five former participants of the Lithuanian Military mission, two former leaders of the Lithuanian Special mission in Afghanistan, one former participant of the Lithuanian Special mission, one expert of the Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence responsible for coordination of international operations, and one representative of an NGO operating in the Ghor province. The questionnaire consisted of three main question blocks, which allowed finding out (a) the nature of the organizational logic prevailing in the Lithuanian-led PRT, (b) cooperational ties existing among the Lithuanian PRT and international organizations as well as NGOs operating in the Ghor province, (c) implications of differing civil and military organizational cultures on joint civil-military activities in the PRT.

1. Repercussions of the Network-society Phenomenon on the Military Domain

Although there is no universal comprehensive approach, in the broadest sense this approach can be understood as a new organizational logic by which interactions of heterogeneous crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction teams are regulated. A demand for this kind of concept arose because of extre-

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[8] Manuel Castells, *Informacijos amžius: ekonomika, visuomenė ir kultūra. Tinklaveikos visuomenės raida (I tomas)*, Poligrafija ir informatika, 2005. [Manuel, Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society. The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture,* Vol. I. Cambridge, MA; Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1996, 2000]

mely complex issues, which these teams have to deal with such as readiness to react flexibly to crisis situations that include military, political, economic and social dimensions. Since the need to organize various activities under the principles of flexibility, mobility and situational awareness emerges not only in the military but also in other domains, it is worth taking a broader perspective of the network-society theory in order to analyze the reasons that encouraged the development of comprehensive approach. This angle of analysis reveals the underlying principles that the ambiguous comprehensive approach is based on.

According to the network-society theory, nowadays an organizational change can be observed in economic, political and social domains: hierarchies are being replaced by networks. This change is taking place as a result of incapability of hierarchical structures (large business corporations, formal bureaucracies as well as military), which are characterized by clearly defined functions and vertical subordination as well as by structured flows of information and formal decision-making procedures, to solve the increasingly complex issues. The theory explains that the problem of hierarchies is that they must function under exclusively stable circumstances in order to be effective: if abrupt, unforeseen changes occur, rigidity and extensive procedural regulations entrenched in hierarchies hinder them from adapting to these unfamiliar situations.[9] As the world becomes increasingly unpredictable, the aforementioned character of hierarchically organized structures becomes a serious obstacle for those willing to act effectively.

An analogous situation can be observed in the military domain. Since the end of the cold war military organizations have to deal with new complex tasks – crisis management, post-conflict reconstruction, and support for civil administrations that supplement the traditional function of the military (namely, territorial defense).[10] Similar to the case of organizations operating in economic, political and social domains, the functional changes in the military domain highlighted the inadequacy of bureaucratic military structures, which were based on strict regulations, hierarchical subordination and vertical top-down command and control system[11], to the changed operational context. For the aforementioned reasons military as well as other hierarchically organized structures faced the need for reorganization.

The principal claim of the network-society theory states that network is the new organizational logic that allows overcoming the limitations of hierarchical structures. Networks, in contrast to hierarchies, are adaptive enti-

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[9] Walter W. Powell, „Neither Market Nor Hierarchy: Network Forms of Organization", *Research in Organizational Behavior,* Vol. 12 , 1990, 303.

[10] Christopher Dandecker, „Building Flexible Forces for the 21st Century", kn. Giuseppe Caforio (red.), *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military,* New York: Springer, 2006, 412.

[11] Joseph L. Soethers, Donna J. Winslow, Alise Weibull, „Military Culture", žr: Giuseppe Caforio, sudar., *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military,* New York: Springer, 2006, 240-242.

ties, able to react rapidly to fast changing situations. The main source of their adaptability stems from interdependence of actors belonging to a networked structure. These actors are dependent on the resources (knowledge, information, expertise) controlled by other actors of the same network but remain unbundled by common chains of command and control.[12] In this manner, the structure of networks is decentralized and united at the same time: members of a network are bound by the common goal of their activities.[13]

The essential advantage of networks is their ability to exercise full-scale information exchanges. Every network member, being an autonomous player, contributes to the goal of a networked organization by providing exclusive expert knowledge.[14] Despite the mentioned characteristics of networks, this organizational form began to dominate over hierarchies only recently: the essential shortcoming of networks was the lack of coordination predetermining the unreliability of networked organizations. However, this shortcoming was eliminated since new communication and informational technologies became a substantial part of organizational activities.[15]

A systematized comparison of "conflicting" forms of organizational logic – hierarchies and networks – is presented in the Table 1 below. The comparison is based on the criterian of effectiveness, expected results, type of subordination, information flows, strengths and weaknesses.

Table 1. **Organizational Logic: Hierarchies vs. Networks**

	Organizational logic	
	Hierarchy	Network
Principles of effectiveness	stability, predictability, control	flexibility, mobility, speed of reaction
Expected result	a standardized mass product	an innovative, interdisciplinary product
Type of subordination	vertical, actors belong to an integrated structure	horizontal interdependence, autonomous actors
Information flows	centralized	decentralized
Strengths	reliability, accountability, strict coordination of activities	unrestricted flow of information, ability to deal with complex issues
Weaknesses	rigidity, procedural shortcomings	lack of coordination and accountability

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[12] *Ibid,* 303.

[13] Henry Mintzberg, *Structure in Fives: Designing Effective Organizations,* New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983, 95.

[14] *Ibid,* 304.

[15] Castells, 181.

Considering the recent changes in the military domain, an urgent need to apply the logic of networked organizations in crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction operations can be observed. This trend can be explained by mentioning the following. First, since it is impossible to solve security issues in complex crisis situations by using military force solely, an interdisciplinary civil-military solution for these issues has to be applied. Second, there are no *one-fits-all* solutions for complex security issues, which increasingly overlap with social, economic and political problems. As a result, civil-military capabilities have to be organized in a flexible and comprehensive way. Consequently, regarding the complexity of security issues that military organizations face nowadays, an attempt to form interdisciplinary, network-based or in other words, comprehensive civil-military crisis management teams can be observed.

2. Comprehensive Approach – a Manifestation of the Network-society Phenomenon in the Military Domain

The comprehensive approach, including its version used by NATO, reflects a wider understanding of security, which involves military, political, economic and social aspects. Although this NATO`s approach is based on the "open-source"[16] principle – it is stated in the *NATO Comprehensive Approach Action Plan* that "[…] the Alliance's contribution to a Comprehensive Approach will remain an iterative, evolutionary process, continually adapted through a lessons learned process"[17] – the basic ideas of this approach can be defined according to the NATO`s documents (*Comprehensive Approach Action Plan Update, NATO Comprehensive Approach Roundtable, ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Handbook*). By interpreting the principles of comprehensive approach in the light of the contextual network-society phenomenon, the fundamental idea of the approach as well as its strengths and weaknesses can be clarified.

An attempt to eliminate subordination from civil-military teams is one of the most unique principles of the comprehensive approach that corresponds

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[16] An "open-source" principle is a decentralized and interactive way of collecting knowledge and is based on the unrestricted access to information and ability to modify it freely. Andrea Hemetsberger, Christian Reinhardt, „Learning and Knowledge-building in Open-source Communities. A Social-experiential Approach", *Management Learning,* 37(2), 2006, 188.

[17] NATO, *NATO Comprehensive Approach Action Plan*, ANNEX 1, Proposals to Develop and Implement NATO`s Contribution to a Comprehensive Approach, Bucharest Summit, 2008, 6.

directly with the logic of the network-society phenomenon. The above mentioned goal can be achieved by ensuring that political, military and civil units of crisis management teams preserve their decision-making autonomy, act under their specific mandates and do not belong to a standardized organizational structure.[18] While acting under the aforementioned principles, it is possible to avoid bureaucratic shortcomings that could emerge in the case of civil-military crisis management teams falling under a centralized control.

Despite the inner autonomy of military and civil crisis management units, unity and the ability to direct their joint activities towards the same goal is another important principle anchored in the comprehensive approach.[19] In order to implement this principle, a consensus-based decision-making process harmonizing the diplomatic, economic and military dimensions of a crisis management team has to be introduced.[20] It is also worth mentioning that in order to avoid subordination, cooperation of civil and military units has to be based on the principal of equality: the PRTs should not be understood as mainly military units containing some civilian personnel.[21]

In addition, horizontal information infrastructure is a crucial aspect ensuring equality between civilian and military personnel as well as enhancing situational awareness in complex crisis and post-conflict situations.[22] This aspect is extremely important in those PRTs, in which international personnel operates: not only the obstacles emerging because of differing civil-military working cultures but also issues of intercultural communication have to be minimized in these PRTs.[23] The striving for unlimited horizontal flows of information in the PRTs illustrates the generally changing understanding of communication processes in organizations operating in the security sector: the principle of the "need to know" is replaced by the "need to share".

The aforementioned characteristics of comprehensive approach are paralleled with the principles of the network-society phenomenon in the Table 2 below.

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[18] NATO, *Comprehensive Approach Action Plan Update*, (PASP(2011)0174), NATO International Staff, Political Affairs & Security Policy, 2011, 4.

[19] NATO, *ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Handbook*, Edition 4, 2009, 8.

[20] *Ibid*, 36-37.

[21] Oskari Eronen, „PRT Models in Afghanistan Approaches to Civil-Military Integration", *CMC Finland Civilian Crisis Management Studies*, Volume 1(5), 2008, 34-35.

[22] NATO, *Comprehensive Approach Action Plan Update*, 5.

[23] NATO, *ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Handbook*, 46.

Table 2. **Logic of the Network-society Phenomenon
in the NATO`s Comprehensive Approach**

	Logic of the network-society phenomenon	› ›	Principles of the NATO`s comprehensive approach
Organizational form	network	› ›	integrated civil-military team
Principles of effectiveness	flexibility, mobility, speed of reaction	› › ›	flexibility, mobility, speed of reaction
Expected result	an innovative, interdisciplinary product	› ›	ability to act in complex (post) crisis situations
Type of subordination	horizontal interdependence, autonomous actors	› › › ›	autonomous civil and military units working towards a common end
Information flows	decentralized	› › ›	common horizontal information infrastructure for civil and military units
Strengths	unrestricted flow of information, ability to deal with complex issues	› › › ›	security as a continuous process through economic, political, social development
Weaknesses	lack of coordination and accountability	› ›	tensions between military and civil organizational cultures, insufficient information flows

In light of the paralleled principles of the network-society phenomenon and comprehensive approach, this approach emerges as a new, increasingly unstructured organizational form, which regulates the interactions of multi-profiled actors operating in crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction operations. The main goal of this interaction is to integrate a wide spectrum of expert knowledge in order to react properly to complex (post-) crisis situations. According to the aforementioned goal, civil-military expert teams are decentralized, thus sustaining inner organizational autonomy of their members, but also united in terms of their common goals. A horizontal information infrastructure that includes all members of a networked-organization allows for its coordination. Although the aforementioned principles of the comprehensive approach are meant to ensure flexibility of civil-military teams, these teams have to deal with tensions arising because of differing civil and military working cultures.

However, it is important to emphasize that although it is possible to define the basic guidelines constituting comprehensive approach, the nature of a particular PRTs` coordination depends on national decisions and traditionally established civil-military relations of participating countries[24]. Although the ISAF controls the PRTs on the military-operational

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[24] Ibid, 10-11.

level, national PRT teams come to Afghanistan with differing mandates[25] and, generally, with a differing understanding of how comprehensive approach should be implemented practically in a civil-military team[26]. As a result, it is misleading to speak about the PRTs generally, as if they were organized by a single model. Considering the uniqueness of each and every PRT located in Afghanistan, the organizational logic of the Lithuanian-led PRT in the Ghor province is analyzed in detail in the next section.

3. The Civil-Military Co-operational Network in the Lithuanian-led PRT

The PRTs functioning in Afghanistan belong to the hierarchically organized NATO ISAF structure. Despite this structural dependence, in order to meet local security, economic and social requirements, every nation leading a PRT is free to decide how its reconstruction team should be organized[27]. Subsequently, the PRTs constitute a horizontal network of non-formalized entities under the hierarchical NATO ISAF structure (see Figure 1 below).
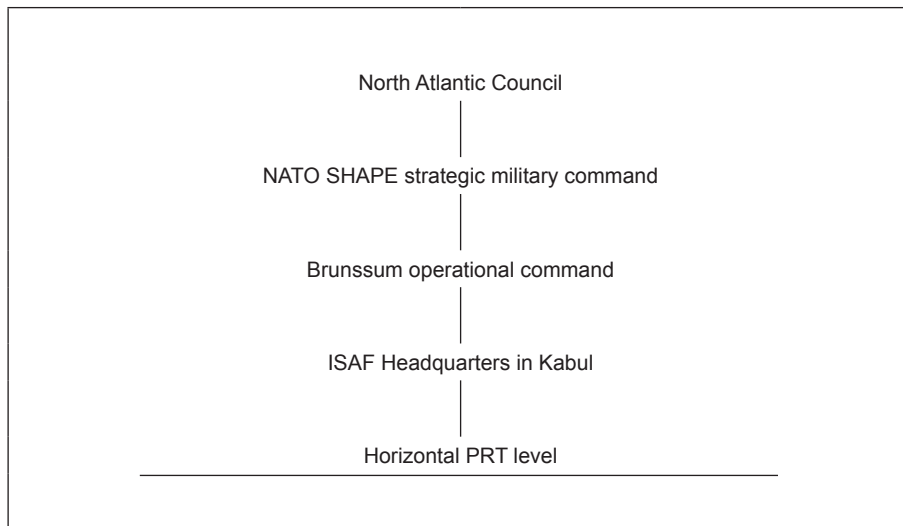

North Atlantic Council

NATO SHAPE strategic military command

Brunssum operational command

ISAF Headquarters in Kabul

Horizontal PRT level

Figure 1. **Horizontal PRT-network in the Hierarchical NATO ISAF Structure**

[25] NATO, ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Handbook, 22.
[26] NATO, NATO Comprehensive Approach Roundtable, 5.
[27] Robert M. Perito, „The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan. Lessons Identified", United States Institute of Peace, 2005, 2.

The already mentioned structural peculiarity of the PRTs encouraged finding out the organizational logic entrenched in the Lithuanian-led PRT in the Ghor province. As a result, expert interviews with civil and military personnel who took part in the Lithuanian Military and Special missions in Afghanistan were conducted. The analysis embraced the following two levels: organizational – in order to find out, what regulation and coordination system wils entrenched in the Lithuanian-led PRT; and cultural – in order to analyze the implications of differing civil and military working cultures on performing joint civil-military duties in the PRT. The analysis based on the two mentioned levels not only allows identifying formal circumstances which shape civil-military co-operational behaviour in the Lithuanian-led PRT, but also reveals whether such cooperation, which is based on contradicting civil-military working cultures, is successful and full-fledged.

3.1. Regulation of the PRT activities

Information derived from the expert interviews demonstrated that formal procedural regulations of civil-military activities in the Lithuanian-led PRT are rather limited. In addition to the *Strategy for Lithuania's participation in the activities of the international community in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*[28], the main document determining the civil-military interaction in the PRT is the *Joint order of the Foreign Minister and Defence Minister concerning the interaction of the military unit and civil element participating in the activities of the Lithuanian-led PRT in the Ghor province*[29]. The interviewed experts stated that this order was a legal framework or guideline, defining fields of responsibilities rather than strictly determining how civilian and military personnel should implement their mandates and how they

[28] LR Seimas, LR Vyriausybės nutarimas dėl Lietuvos Respublikos dalyvavimo tarptautinės bendruomenės veikloje Afganistano Islamo Respublikoje 2009-2013 metais strategijos patvirtinimo, 2009 m. rugpjūčio 19 d., Nr. 989. [Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania concerning the Strategy for Lithuania's participation in the activities of the international community in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 2009-2013] 19 08 2009 (in Lithuanian) www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=351998&p_query=&p_tr2=2 [Accessed 10 04 2011].
[29] LR Krašto apsaugos ministro ir LR Užsienio reikalų ministro įsakymas dėl Lietuvos Respublikos vadovaujamos Afganistano Islamo Respublikos Goro provincijos atkūrimo grupės veikloje dalyvaujančių karinio vieneto ir civilinio elemento sąveikos tvarkos aprašo, 2009 m. rugsėjo 3 d., Nr. V-846/V-155. [Joint order of the Foreign Minister and Defence Minister concerning the interaction of the military unit and civil element participating in the activities of the Lithuanian-led PRT in the Ghor province, Afghanistan] 03 09 2009 (in Lithuanian).

should cooperate. According to experts, this flexible way of "formalizing" civil-military activities allows avoiding excessive procedural limitations that would occur if bureaucratic regulations were implemented in a highly unstable and complex environment prevailing in Afghanistan. As a former leader of the Lithuanian Special mission in Afghanistan pointed out: "[c]ooperation through experience has anchored. The success of activities is now predetermined not by existence or absence of certain documents but by participating people: how capable they are, how willing to cooperate they are, etc."[30]

Since the integration of civil-military activities constitutes the core of the PRTs` idea, the minimum level of procedural regulations being used for determining civil-military interactions makes the PRTs innovative, networked organizations. As a result, the PRTs have clearly less formal procedural regulations than is typical for traditional military organizations and are able to react flexibly to rapid changes in their operational area. The interviewed civilian and military experts who took part in different PRT`s and Lithuanian Special mission's rotations supported the aforementioned idea by emphasizing that no broad generalizations should be made about the PRT as a crisis management instrument because "[b]oth the tasks of the PRTs led by different countries differ and the tasks of different rotations of our national PRT differ. Of course, it depends heavily on the leaders of the PRTs and on security situation – is it better or worse."[31] These remarks of Lithuanian experts confirm the idea that the PRTs being integrated civil-military structures function on an *ad hoc* basis according to the prevailing circumstances in the province. As a result, characteristics of such civil-military cooperation may vary greatly in different PRT rotations, since the reconstruction teams act according to actual situational circumstances and internal co-operational atmosphere.

For the above mentioned reasons, the PRTs might be described as unconventional, non-doctrinal entities: "the PRTs as military organizations do not exist – they do not exist in the hierarchic or any other way at all. The PRT as such does not exist."[32] According to the interviewed expert, if we talk about squads, battalions, companies, it is always clear what we have in mind. The organizational logic of the PRTs, by contrast, is unclear – there are many factors determining the constantly changing configuration of these entities. The expert also acknowledged that civil element and military unit, of which the

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[30] Former leader of the Lithuanian Special mission in Afghanistan (1), expert interview, Vilnius, 12 04 2011.

[31] Former participant of the Lithuanian Military mission (1), expert interview, Vilnius, 04 05 2011.

[32] Former leader of the Lithuanian Military mission in Afghanistan (1), expert interview, Vilnius, 13 04 2011.

PRTs are composed, can be and are different as a result of changing circumstances and goals of a particular PRT rotation: "[i]t depends on circumstances, on an exact situation. This leads to the emergence of a non-standardized entity, it leads to the deviation from the traditional type of military organizations."[33]

It is important to emphasize that, as the comments of the interviewed experts demonstrate, horizontal, network-based cooperation is a feature prevailing exceptionally on the level of civil-military interaction, and not, for instance, inside the military element: "[e]verything is based on personal relations – as well the tribal structure of Afghanistan as organizational structure of foreign forces, civilian and military. Of course, the military unit itself is strictly organized. But civil-military interaction, interaction with representatives of third countries is coordinated through personal relations."[34] Another expert also pointed out that there are principal differences in organizing internal activities inside the military and civil units. According to him, the internal organizational logic of the military unit is based on the traditional procedures prevailing in military organizations[35].

To sum up, the information derived from the expert interviews shows that in addition to the fact that activities of the Lithuanian-led PRT are organized autonomously from the activities undertaken by other PRTs operating under the ISAF mandate, its activities also change dramatically with the arrival of every new Lithuanian military and civil rotation to the Ghor province. The small number of introduced procedural regulations of the PRT`s activities allows organizing civil-military operations on a flexible *ad hoc* basis. In terms of the network-society theory, this organizational logic allows ensuring situational awareness in a complex Afghanistan crisis area, where security problems are intertwined with economic, political and social issues. According to the aforementioned characteristics of the Lithuanian-led PRT, the next sections reveal how few regulations are compatible with the effort to undertake coordinated activities in the Lithuanian PRT: the inner and outer co-operational networks of the PRT are presented. In addition, evaluation of the Lithuanian PRT`s horizontal information infrastructure, which should theoretically eliminate the biggest disadvantage of networked-organizations, namely, the lack of coordination, is presented.

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Former participant of the Lithuanian Special mission (1), expert interview, Vilnius, 04 05 2011.

[35] Former participant of the Lithuanian Military mission (2), expert interview, Vilnius, 11 04 2011.

3.2. The Inner and Outer Co-operational Networks of the PRT

The inner co-operational network of the Lithuanian-led PRT is identified in the *Joint order* in a statement that the PRT is "a common military and civilian mission, in which Military unit and Civilian element take part". This statement suggests that despite striving to form the PRT as an integrated military and civilian team, it avoids melting down these two units into one organizational unit. On the contrary, the organizational idea is to preserve the internal organizational autonomy of the military unit and civilian element: "both elements organize their inner activities separately but under active consultations"[36]. According to the interviewed expert, "[t]hese are two separate units with separate planning, separate procedures, separate reporting systems. […] Even in terms of their culture, these are two separate units. Their missions are separate, goals are separate, and ways of acting are separate."[37] This aspect corresponds to the logic of the network-society phenomenon: in order to ensure flexibility of an organizational structure, actors of a co-operational network must not be integrated into one procedural entity. In this manner civil and military actors sustain their inner jurisdictions but are unified on the co-operational level by common goals of their joint mission: "the PRT can be called a balanced team, in which there are different players fulfilling different tasks. To call the PRT homogenous would be misleading because of principal differences of organizations that the PRT is composed of."[38]

It is important to mention that the military unit and civilian element are not only two organizationally autonomous components of the PRT but they are also led by two separate leaders—the PRT Military leader and the PRT Civil leader. According to the comprehensive approach concept, actors in a joint network should be united by common goals of their activity but none of the participating units should dominate over the others. Formally, according to the *Joint order*, the Military and Civil leaders have equal rights and there are no direct or indirect subordination among them. However, the former leader of the Lithuanian Special mission argued that because of two reasons the Military and Civil leaders are *de facto* unequal: first, there are fewer civilians than military personnel participating in the PRT activities, and second, civilians are completely dependent on mi-

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[36] Former leader of the Lithuanian Special mission in Afghanistan (1).
[37] Former leader of the Lithuanian Special mission in Afghanistan (2), expert interview, Vilnius, 19 04 2011.
[38] Former participant of the Lithuanian Military mission (2).

litary personnel in terms of security, transportation and agenda setting[39]. Thus, the functional military personnel's responsibility for civilians is at least a theoretical leverage to restrict the performance of civilian activities in the PRT.

Although the main goal of the integrated civil-military composition of the PRT is to increase the amount and variety of expert knowledge controlled by the PRT team, the Lithuanian-led PRT lacks specialists in some important fields. Although there is a clear goal anchored in the *Strategy for Lithuania's participation in Afghanistan* stating that more agricultural specialists, engineers should be sent to Afghanistan, the expertise in these fields remains absent[40]. Consequently, there is a striving to fill this gap in the inner co-operational network of the Lithuanian-led PRT by supplementing it with the expertise provided by external actors. The nature of the inner and outer co-operational networks of the PRT is illustrated in the Figure 2 below.
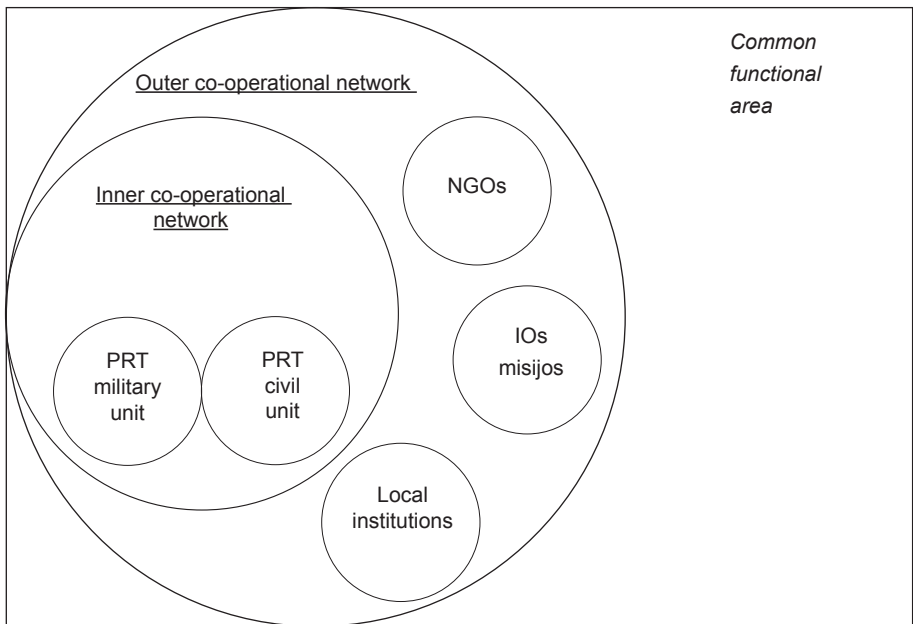

Figure 2. **Inner and outer co-operational networks of the PRT**

The outer co-operational network of the PRT consists of local Afghan institutions, international organizations as well as international and local NGOs. According to the interviewed experts, the NGOs working in the Ghor

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[39] Former participant of the Lithuanian Military mission (1).
[40] Former participant of the Lithuanian Military mission (3), expert interview, Vilnius, 19 04 2011.

province and the PRT are closely interlinked in terms of their activities. Howe-
ver, although the military unit and civil element of the PRT as well as the NGOs
operate in the same functional area, their impact on provincial reconstruction
differs when analyzed time-wise: "by contrast to our military and civilian per-
sonnel in the PRT, the NGOs create the long-term effect. The civil element of
the PRT creates a more short-term effect, and for us, military personnel, it is
important to be tolerated in the province. […] All of us are acting in the same
functional area but the effects of our activities differ."[41] Generally speaking, the
cooperation between the PRT and the NGOs is beneficial for the both sides:
the NGOs need safety in order to conduct their activities whereas securing
safe environment is the main task of the military unit of the PRT. However, the
civil and military personnel belonging to the PRT need to know the "mood"
of the society – that is, the information which NGOs are able to collect. Since
representatives of the NGOs know the needs of local community, "the NGOs
[are] the backbone of the development co-operation."[42] The aforementioned
relations prevailing among the representatives of the PRT and NGOs illustrate
clearly how actors belonging to a networked organization are dependent on
the resources controlled by other actors of the same network.

Although the interviewed Lithuanian civil and military experts argued that
their cooperation with the NGOs functioning in the Ghor province was generally
good, the interviewed representative of the British NGO *Global Partners* argued
that relations between his NGO and civilians working in the Lithuanian PRT were
sporadic and superficial and the military personnel were the more unwilling to
cooperate. However, the NGO representative expressed his own personal negative
attitude towards the PRT activities undertaken in the Ghor province and, gene-
rally, in Afghanistan. According to him, presence of the PRT in the province is
not only dysfunctional but also dangerous: since the local community is outraged
by the fact that international troops are deployed on the Afghan soil, security si-
tuation worsens and this in turn hinders NGOs from fulfilling their duties.[43]

In addition to the NGOs working in the Ghor province, the experts also men-
tioned other external partners of the Lithuanian PRT: the United Nations Assistance
Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the EU EUPOL mission and local actors, spe-
cifically, the head of the National Afghan Police and the head of the Security Autho-
rity.[44] However, information derived from the expert interviews suggests that coo-

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[41] Former leader of the Lithuanian Military mission in Afghanistan (1).
[42] Former leader of the Lithuanian Special mission in Afghanistan (1).
[43] Representative of the NGO *Global Partners*, expert interview, 23 04 2011.
[44] Former leader of the Lithuanian Military mission in Afghanistan (2), expert interview, Vilnius,
15 04 2011.

peration with representatives of both UNAMA and EUPOL is rather sporadic and formal.[45] Although UNAMA and the EUPOL mission as well as local Afghan institutions operate in the same functional area as the Lithuanian-led PRT does, in reality these actors are independent from each another in terms of their resources—that limits their interest in closer cooperation. In conclusion, the inner co-operational network of the PRT is significantly supplemented by NGOs and actors belonging to the otherwise weak operating outer co-operational network of the PRT.

3.3. Horizontal Information Infrastructure

Introduction of the horizontal information infrastructure in an integrated civil-military expert-team is an important aspect ensuring the team's cohesion. Concerning the exchanges of information in the inner co-operational network of the PRT – between the military unit and civil element, the interviewed experts mentioned day-to-day and weekly meetings. According to the experts, in these meetings routine issues are solved, details of actual activities are presented and implementation of the ISAF mission's tasks is discussed.[46] In addition to this instrument of information exchange, an interactive database, was also mentioned. According to the experts, this database stores important information concerning the local population and informs about the departures out of the PRT base.[47] A combination of the two mentioned instruments for information exchange is relevant because it not only allows the real-time information sharing but also systematizes the PRT`s "lessons learned".

The above mentioned instruments are based on the idea that information must circulate freely in a networked organization in order to enable coordination among autonomous network-units. Because of high sensitivity of security domain and the emerging partial subordination of civil personnel thereof, an important question is whether representatives of the military unit are willing to exchange relevant information with civilians. According to the former head of the Special mission, "it would be impossible to cooperate if there were no information exchanges within the limits of competence."[48] The expert suggested that there were questions which military personnel should not discuss with civilians or at the very least should do it selectively; and vice versa, there is some information at civilians` disposal that would be redundant and unnecessary to military personnel.[49]

Permanent contacts are also maintained with representatives of the wea-

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[45] Former participant of the Lithuanian Special mission (1).
[46] Former leader of the Lithuanian Special mission in Afghanistan (1).
[47] Former participant of the Lithuanian Military mission (5), expert interview, Vilnius, 15 04 2011.
[48] Former leader of the Lithuanian Special mission in Afghanistan (1).
[49] Former leader of the Lithuanian Military mission in Afghanistan (1).

ker operating outer co-operational network of the PRT. Concerning connections with local governmental bodies, "permanent meetings are organized, twice a week we go to meet local government in their consultations – shura`s."[50] According to the experts, representatives of both civil and military personnel, who have expert knowledge on questions concerned, take part in those meetings.[51] This aspect illustrates that the PRT expert-teams are based on the *ad hoc* organizational nature – since competence is extremely important while collecting relevant information, experts of a particular field are involved in consultations with the PRT`s external partners. According to the interviewed experts, no differentiation between civilians and military personnel occurs when deciding who is going to take part in those consultations.

As previously mentioned, the NGOs working in the Ghor province are extremely important for supplementing the activities of the PRT. The representatives of both civil element and military unit have a clear interest to exchange information with NGOs because, according to one interviewed expert, information controlled by those organizations is extremely important for understanding the "humanitarian picture" of Afghanistan, which includes information about problems of local community, mortality rates, diseases, and criminality. The NGOs, however, are also interested in information exchanges with the PRT – they are interested in information concerning security situations, that is, information which representatives of the military unit of the PRT are able to provide, since they have the most precise maps and the best informational systems.[52]

However, the interviewed representative of the NGO argued that his organization had very bad information exchanges with the Lithuanian-led PRT, although it was always demanded that the NGO activists provided relevant information to the PRT.[53] A Lithuanian expert explained this situation by stating that NGOs are able to provide information more easily than the PRT, which operates under limitations of the ISAF.[54] The aforementioned situation suggests that to some extent the problem of information asymmetry exists in the PRT: since a significant part of the ISAF information can be used only internally in the PRT, civil and military personnel are unable to perform full information exchanges with the NGO sector. This situation has negative implications on both sides – for the PRT and NGOs – because they both acquire only a limited understanding of their functional area.

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[50] Former leader of the Lithuanian Military mission in Afghanistan (2).
[51] Former leader of the Lithuanian Military mission in Afghanistan (3), expert interview, Vilnius, 29 04 2011.
[52] Former participant of the Lithuanian Military mission (5).
[53] Representative of the NGO *Global Partners*.
[54] Former participant of the Lithuanian Special mission (1).

In conclusion, the format of information exchanges among the multi-profiled experts involved in the provincial reconstruction activities of the Ghor province as well as the low regulations` level of their activities imply that the room for flexible horizontal interaction within the PRT is ensured. Actors working in the province are able to coordinate their activities unhampered by excessive procedural formalities and have good chances to exchange relevant information concerning security situation and actual needs of local communities. Despite these overall trends, the biggest obstacle for comprehensive cooperation and free information exchange emerges because of the PRT`s functioning in the highly sensitive security domain. This leads to the partial subordination of civil personnel by representatives of the military unit and aggravates the PRT`s information exchanges with the NGO sector.

3.4. Clash between Civil and Military Organizational Cultures

Another probable obstacle for the effective entrenchment of the comprehensive approach in the military domain derives from the cultural level. Inevitably the following question arises: is effective cooperation between strictly disciplined military personnel who are used to working under the principle of vertical subordination and civilians who organize their activities more freely or even – in the case of NGOs – ground their activities on the principles of neutrality, humanity and impartiality[55], possible?

According to the former leader of the Special mission, during the first years of the PRT`s existence in Afghanistan civil component was treated as a secondary entity. This perception arose from the fact that the Lithuanian Military mission was started earlier than the civilian Special mission: "[w]hen the first diplomat, who was meant to be an expert in all possible fields, was delegated, he had to fight for his involvement in the PRT`s activities because soldiers did not see any need in this contribution to the provincial reconstruction."[56] According to the interviewed expert, some time had to pass until it was fully accepted that a mixed, not solely military mission, was functioning in Ghor. Moreover, not only the format of the double civil-military mission had to be acknowledged but also understanding the necessity to act more flexibly in the context of this mission had to become entrenched. Although, as already mentioned, the legal equality between the civil element and military unit derives

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[55] Laure Borgomano-Loup, „Improving NATO-NGO Relations in Crisis Response Operations", *NATO Defense College "Forum Papers Series",* Rome, 2007, 33.
[56] Former leader of the Lithuanian Special mission in Afghanistan (1).

from the absence of subordination relations between their leaders, in reality "subordination of civilians can be felt… It is impossible to have two leaders in one mission."[57] This aspect can be illustrated by the opinion of another interviewed expert, who commented on the civil-military cooperation: "[w]e had good relations, maybe only at the beginning it was difficult for the civilians to settle in – they did not understand that they had to plan here. […] We trained them to do it."[58]

The majority of the interviewed experts denied the existence of the mentioned "training" of civilian personnel by stating that the way of solving problems depended on particular personalities involved in dealing with specific issues: "[s]ometimes there are more regulations in civilian organizations than in the military ones. And vice versa – some military units are based on less rigidness than it is used to be in the civil life. […] Everything depends on people involved."[59] Similarly, nearly all experts pointed to the role that personalities played in cooperation: according to them, the most important question is whether a person is willing to compromise, not whether s/he comes from the military or civil domain.

Despite the aforementioned importance of personalities, a general trend of strong group identity of military personnel prevails. A former leader of the military mission stated that "if somebody asks us whether we can fulfill our mission without civilian involvement, we, of course, answer – yes, we can. We can do everything. We are there in order to be able to do everything. This is our organizational culture."[60] As another expert argued, these comments demonstrate the tendency of increasing interdisciplinary knowledge of military personnel: being more intensively involved in social life, soldiers acquire more knowledge and experience, which used to be available only for civilians some time ago. Subsequently, representatives of the military are now able to deal with an increasing amount of issues, thus civilian involvement is increasingly perceived secondary importance.[61]

From the cultural point of view, even more contradictions arise when considering cooperation between the PRT as a civil-military instrument and the NGOs. As previously mentioned, the principles upon which NGOs ground their activities – neutrality, humanity, impartiality – clearly contradict the methods used by soldiers while implementing national defence policies. The interviewed NGO activist touched upon this aspect while talking about the implications of military involvement in the provincial reconstruction on the activities of NGOs:

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[57] Former leader of the Lithuanian Special mission in Afghanistan (2).
[58] Former participant of the Lithuanian Military mission (5).
[59] Former leader of the Lithuanian Military mission in Afghanistan (3).
[60] Former leader of the Lithuanian Military mission in Afghanistan (1).
[61] Former participant of the Lithuanian Special mission (1).

"[w]hile the military presence in an area seems to offer some sense of general security and also a haven for foreign workers, should a security crisis arise, it also is somewhat of a detriment at times. The high visibility of soldiers, foreign flags, and military vehicles certainly draws attention and most NGO workers prefer not to be in the vicinity of such obvious targets. In general, I think it is best for most NGO's not to be identified or associated with the military."[62]

However, according to the opinions of other experts, NGOs are forced to adapt their sometimes isolationist profile to reality. As a result of such adaptation, many so-called "security meetings" take place, where the Lithuanian PRT and the NGOs working in the Ghor province meet each other in order to discuss relevant issues of the provincial reconstruction.[63] Moreover, it is important to emphasize that every NGO organizes its activities individually: "[t]here are some [NGOs] shot through with radical pacifism but there are many NGOs, which cooperate with us on both formal and informal levels."[64] According to the individual characteristics of the NGOs working in particular provinces in Afghanistan, in which social circumstances and the level of `talibanisation` differed greatly, a natural law exists: the further to the South, the less willing the NGOs are to cooperate with the PRTs.[65]

Considering the aforementioned clashes between the civil and military organizational cultures, a conclusion can be drawn stating that no general trends exist that could adequately describe the civil-military activities in the highly complex context of Afghanistan. Although there are some signs of isolation from the side of the military personnel, some signs of the prevailing perception of civilians as a supplement to the military personnel as well as some signs indicating that NGOs distance themselves from the activities of the PRT, in reality these tendencies depend on particular personalities and situations rather than on settled practices.

Conclusions

The comprehensive approach, in which striving for flexible solutions to complex crisis and post-conflict situations is anchored, is the organizational background of all the PRTs operating under the NATO ISAF mandate. Although one might suppose that a common organizational background

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[62] Representative of the NGO *Global Partners.*
[63] Former participant of the Lithuanian Military mission (5).
[64] Former participant of the Lithuanian Military mission (4).
[65] Former leader of the Lithuanian Special mission in Afghanistan (2).

should automatically lead to an identical organizational character of the PRTs, it is not the case in the reality: since the core idea of comprehensive approach includes the principles of flexibility and situational awareness, crisis management teams are supposed to avoid organizing their activities in a routine way, following the misleading principle of *one-fits-all.* Consequently, the understanding about what a comprehensive approach is and how it should be implemented in a particular province of Afghanistan differs greatly depending on a PRT leading-nation. In accordance with the ambiguity of comprehensive approach, the goal of this article was to define "Lithuanian" model of comprehensive approach by evaluating the experiences gained by Lithuanian civilian and military personnel in the Lithuanian-led PRT in the Ghor province.

Since the network-society theory was chosen for the theoretical background of this article, it allowed a consideration of the comprehensive approach from a broader contextual perspective of organizational restructuring and provided guidelines for qualitative analysis. The following ideas, derived from the collation of principles of the network-society phenomenon and comprehensive approach, guided the qualitative research of the organizational logic of the Lithuanian-led PRT:

- the PRT is a non-routinized, expert-based civil-military team;
- activities of the PRT team are organized according to the network-logic in order to avoid excessive procedural restrictions that would impede the introduction of comprehensive approach with its principles of flexibility, mobility and situational awareness;
- the civil and military units, which the PRT is composed of, are united by the horizontal information infrastructure;
- there is a possible tension in the PRT because of incompatible civil and military working cultures.

With reference to the aforementioned guidelines and information gained from the expert interviews with civilian and military personnel who took part in the Lithuanian Military and Special missions in Afghanistan, the "Lithuanian" model of comprehensive approach can be characterized by the following aspects:

- the Lithuanian-led PRT is a non-doctrinal entity: there are few formal regulations of civil-military activities, what consequently allows organizing joint civil-military activities on the *ad hoc* basis. In addition, the organizational logic of the Lithuanian-led PRT depends on specific goals of a particular PRT rotation and on actual security situation in the Ghor province;

- the Lithuanian PRT strives to sustain equality between civil and military personnel. Both the military and civil units sustain their inner organizational autonomy, which, at least formally allows avoiding subordination. However, since there are less civilian representatives than military personnel in the Lithuanian PRT and since the military unit is responsible for security and transportation of the civilian personnel, the autonomy of the civilian unit is sometimes restricted;

- in order to effectively coordinate joint civil-military activities in the Lithuanian-led PRT, there is an effort to introduce horizontal information infrastructure in the PRT: day-to-day and weekly meetings are organized, interactive database available for both civil and military units is integrated. However, since some information of the PRT is classified, the full access to it is restricted. This aspect is disadvantageous for the PRT-NGO cooperation because most of the NGO representatives are not interested in asymmetrical information exchanges;

- the Lithuanian PRT team is extremely interested in cooperation with NGOs because these organizations implement the development aid projects and in this sense they continue the activities of the PRT in the Ghor province;

- the Lithuanian-led PRT has a rather formal relation with representatives of UNAMA and EUPOL; somewhat closer co-operational ties can be observed when concerning the PRT relations with representatives of local Afghan institutions;

- there are some cultural problems that arise when coordinating civil-military activities in the inner and outer co-operational networks of the PRT. This is predetermined by the existence of the exclusionist identity of military representatives as well as by the attempt of some NGOs to avoid identifying themselves with activities organized by international military forces.

The conducted research demonstrates that civil and military representatives who take part in activities of the comprehensive-approach-based Lithuanian-led PRT acquire a new experience in cooperation. Although the unavoidable functioning of the PRT in a highly sensitive security field as well as the still existent specific identity of military personnel limits the implementation of the network-logic in the civil-military team to some extent, the demand as well as endeavor to organize civil-military activities in a non-routinized way is present in the Lithuanian-led PRT. Consequently, there is reason to believe that the experience acquired while working in the PRT will have positive effects on future civil-military cooperation, not only during crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction operations but also on a daily inter-institutional basis.

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