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Winning Peace or Winning Hearts and Minds

The role of Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan

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Abstract

The thesis is dedicated to foreign involvement in the Afghanistan war, the initial phase of defeating the Taliban in 2001-200, asymmetric warfare that followed when the Taliban switched to insurgency tactics and finally the post-conflict reconstruction and reestablishment of an effective government. The main focus is on the last phase and the efforts of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams. They executed projects that helped rebuild the country and introduce democratic rule but also some carried out projects that contributed to counterinsurgency. Hence, the research question of this thesis is: “Did the Provincial Reconstruction Teams contribute to peace process in Afghanistan or were they only a part of counterinsurgency strategy?”

The dissertation discusses both concepts, their characteristic features and various interpretations. It also provides an overview of the conflict and the reasons behind it. Attention is also given to the opposing sides of the conflict, the insurgents as well as the international and domestic forces. Finally, it describes the details of the PRT concept and its implementation. Analysis is carried out by comparing this narrative with previously described theories. While no unequivocal answer is obtained the thesis provides valuable insight into the peace process in the biggest and longest conflict of the 21st century.

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