Strategic Conflict Analysis of Afghanistan

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Dr. Björn Holmberg
Khibar Rassul
Anisa Nuzhat
Jamila Wafa
Akbar Ludin
Thiyumi Senarathna

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not represent Sida’s or the Swedish Government’s policy.
“Aid has been tainted because of the militarization of aid. Before, during the Taliban time, we could move securely as NGOs; this is no longer true. It might change in the future, but it will take time.”

Afghan conflict expert in management position, Kabul, October 2011
Executive Summary

In preparation of the mid-term review of the Swedish Development Cooperation Strategy with Afghanistan, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) has commissioned this Strategic Conflict Analysis. The overall objective is to provide Sida with a better understanding of the conflict dynamics in that country. The conflict analysis will enable Sida to better understand the way Swedish development cooperation in the country affects and is affected by the conflict dynamics. It may also improve strategic guidance in the continued country strategy from a peacebuilding, state-building, and conflict-prevention perspective.

The civil society organizations Swedepeace (Uppsala), having the lead, and Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU, Kabul) were commissioned by Sida to produce a Strategic Conflict Analysis of Afghanistan and a specific Conflict Analysis of Northern Afghanistan (provinces of Balkh, Jawzjan, Samangan, Sari Pul). The methodology used was primarily influenced by Sida’s Manual on Conflict Analysis (2004, 2006), integrating conflict sensitivity as well as a rights perspective, a gender perspective, and the perspectives of Afghans. More than twenty staff members of CPAU and Swedepeace conducted over 300 interviews in Kabul and Northern Afghanistan (four provinces and six target districts), and a large number of interactive conflict analysis sessions were organized with stakeholders and experts. Two groups, the International and National Quality Assurance Groups, have reviewed the drafts and provided comments. Given that Afghanistan is experiencing an ongoing civil war, several limitations followed because of security and lack of statistical data.

Analysing actors’ attitudes, their behaviour and the underlying structural causes of peace and conflict, the study identifies the most important factors in the so-called conflict triangle, that is, how different factors drive peace and conflict. The most salient combinations of conflict and peace dynamics were identified through the workshops as drivers of peace or conflict, and possible programming options were connected to these drivers, as illustrated in the two tables below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DRIVERS OF PEACE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Economic Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Economic development seems to have some mitigating effects, decreasing frustration and providing alternatives to joining the armed opposition groups (AOGs) or the Government in fighting the war. This is, according to this analysis, primarily visible in urban areas in Afghanistan.</th>
<th>Support economic development and private sector development with emphasis on young males in rural areas. However, from a rights perspective, efforts should also be made to provide women and communities at large with job opportunities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Preparations are being made to extract natural resources, especially minerals. This could provide the Government with national revenue sources, presently almost totally absent, for building a future democratic state, delivering services, and being able to uphold a contract with its citizens.</td>
<td>Support exploitation of these resources, while taking into account environmental impact, conflict sensitivity, and corruption risk. These minerals could otherwise provide resources for conflict and become a conflict issue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### DRIVERS OF CONFLICT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Driver</th>
<th>Programming options</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Security dilemma</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic / local</td>
<td>Years of war dynamics have created a zero-sum game where the winner takes all. The strongmen’s fear of losing power, and thus security, drives several actors to continue the war.</td>
<td>Offer long-term support to the justice and security sector (soft1) to decrease fears.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Insecurity, threats, and a weak justice and security sector drive in particular young men, but also children, to seek recruitment with the Government or the armed opposition groups and thus feed the armed conflict.</td>
<td>Ensure child protection, disarmament, demobilization &amp; reintegration (DDR) for child soldiers, support to local justice and security sector (soft), and access to justice for young people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic / local</td>
<td>Communication from armed opposition groups and some mullahs, in combination with the international community’s behaviour, for example, civilian casualties caused by ISAF or night searches of houses as well as push for changing gender relations, increase the perception of threat towards traditional values and Islam. Furthermore, this increases support for and willingness to oust just another foreign occupation.</td>
<td>Consider strategic partnership with liberal mullahs/ulamas for proper and unbiased religious education and conflict-sensitive communication. Also consider being more cultural and conflict sensitive, while not abandoning core values, and while promoting gender equality. Furthermore, and outside the direct scope of aid, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) must show more restraint and behave in a more conflict-sensitive manner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Pakistan fears losing influence over Afghanistan and thereby continues to support both the United States (US) and the AOGs.</td>
<td></td>
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| **Power Struggle** | | |
| Strategic | Withdrawal/transition of ISAF and the US in 2014 will increase the leverage of the AOGs, war lords, and regional actors with specific interests – and, consequently, decreases interest in negotiation. The window of opportunity for a negotiated settlement is rapidly closing. Women’s rights will most probably be the first bargaining chip to be given up. | There is need to identify and influence key male stakeholders on the benefits of gender equality and women’s rights, and also, to support women’s participation in the work of the High Peace Council. Presently there exists uncertainty and fear, which also creates a security dilemma. The international community and the Afghan Government need to communicate – through community outreach programmes – what the transition and peace process means. |
| Strategic / local | Several actors are interested in keeping the state and rule of law weak so as to profit from instability | Consider strengthening the rule of law in those areas related to corruption and drug trade, where quick |

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1 Soft security-sector reform refers to the civilian part of the sector.
| Strategic | The Northern Alliance wants to preserve its power base and is less interested in power sharing with the AOGs, as this will possibly reinstate Pashtun dominance. | Strengthen the political dialogue with these actors in order to address their fears. Furthermore, to help them identify possible benefits of power sharing. |
| Regional | The power struggle for regional influence between actors such as Pakistan, Iran, India, China, Russia, and Uzbekistan feeds into the conflict (different kinds of support provided to a variety of actors). | It is important to support regional agreements, helping to reduce competition and affect incentives and possible fears (security dilemma) about support to Afghanistan. |

### Drug Trade

| Local | Local eradication of poppy crops increases unemployment and thereby feeds AOG's recruitment. | Promote dialogue between the Government and the IC on alternative ways of combating drugs and possible support for alternative crops, anti-corruption measures, etc. |

### Unemployment and dignity

| Local/Regional | High levels of poverty, limited employment possibilities due to rudimentary infrastructure, and weak economic growth, along with social pressure and damaged dignity facilitate recruitment to the AOGs and also help provide students to the madrasas in Pakistan. | Encourage private sector development, including infrastructure, with special focus on young men and sustainable job creation, vocational education, and training relevant for market opportunities and community needs. |

### Governance

| Local | Inadequate service delivery from the state due to low capacity, low tax revenues, and rudimentary infrastructure that limits access. Lack of social cohesion and sufficient good governance. Bonds between local elites and populations are fragile and based on patron-client relationships. Legitimacy is low, which affects the conflict dynamics (support, recruitment, participation, etc.). | Provide support for local governance at provincial, district, and community levels. Invest in infrastructure to increase access to state services. |
| Strategic/local | Weak parties and political movements (programmatic and organizational integrity), with many intellectuals not engaging, leave the political game to traditional strongmen accustomed to zero-sum games and violent means. | Consider supporting, in a gender-sensitive way, emerging independent and democratic political parties – essential for building a democratic culture – including possible election law reform, ensuring public financing of parties according to election results. |

### International Community

| Strategic/local | Continuing lack of support to the State/Public Financial Management (PFM) and the use of channels other than Government, creating parallel structures (not aligned or harmonized) has decreased the State's legitimacy and the trust in international donors. | Increase support to and through the State, but also strengthen anti-corruption, transparency, PFM, tax, and fiscal reforms, and civil service reform. Human resources are essential to increase capacity. |
| Strategic/local | Aid, especially military, feeds corruption, and in some cases, also finances the AOGs, thus providing resources for conflict and decreasing legitimacy of the IC. | Strengthen conflict sensitivity and anti-corruption practices (Sida, partners, donors). |
| Strategic/local | Aid in general is not conflict sensitive, especially military aid, and worsens local and national conflicts. | Strengthen conflict sensitive practice (Sida, partners, donors). |

One issue especially analysed is the militarization of aid and the so-called civil-military synergies. The study shows evidence that the counter-insurgency strategy (COIN) has blurred the lines and has had a negative impact on aid effectiveness and contributed to harm. Synergies are possible at
the strategic level, but much less so at the operational level. Furthermore, humanitarian principles are threatened by the way that ISAF is acting. The analysis of drivers and programming options was followed by a scenario analysis and identification of corresponding contingencies for development cooperation. The consultancy team estimates that the neutral scenario, a continuation of the present civil war, is the most probable, followed by the negative scenario, with escalated civil war. If a neutral scenario were to happen, it would most probably result, after some years, in a one-sided victory or escalation of the civil war. Possibly, in the absence of international troops, it would reach a state of "mutually hurting stalemate", whereby the actors would be more interested in negotiated peace. The likelihood of the positive scenario, resulting in strongmen-negotiated peace, seems very low because of the upcoming transition of Western troops, existing fears, and power interests. In the neutral scenario, development options are similar to the ones presented above; in a negative scenario, they are very limited and primarily humanitarian; and in a positive scenario, a national development agenda addressing the drivers of peace and conflict would be necessary.

A specific analysis was made of Northern Afghanistan, including more than 270 interviews, with an overview of the four provinces of Balkh, Jawzjan, Sari Pul, and Samangan and more detailed conflict analysis with programming options and scenarios for the six districts of Chimtal and Chahar Bolak (Balkh), Sayyad (Sari Pul), Qush Tepa and Darzab (Jawzjan), Dara-i-Suf Pain (Samangan). Overall, the region is more peaceful than Southern and Eastern Afghanistan, but during recent years the armed opposition groups (AOGs) have increased their presence and violence has increased. Of the six districts selected by Sida, all but one, Dara-i-Suf Pain, are suffering from a combination of armed violence, weak or absent governance, and AOG presence that the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) have not been able to counter. The most important observations that add to or differ from the strategic conflict analysis are as follows:

✔ The perception of women and men differs significantly, and women have a much more negative view of present and future security, which indicates that women are those who first are affected by violence. This is more pronounced in more violent districts;
✔ The view of present and future security is split. Half of the region see improvements, while the other half see deterioration;
✔ Asked if women can be peacebuilders, or messengers for peace, only 16% refute this possibility. More women believe in this statement, but to a lesser extent in more violent districts. Still, this indicates a great potential from a UNSCR 1325 perspective;
✔ In all districts but Dara-i-Suf Pain the AOGs are active, primarily Taliban, but in Qush Tepa and to some extent Darzab, also Hizb-e Islami. Criminals seem to be less active than expected;
✔ Religious motivations seem to be the strongest ones for the conflict, followed by economic reasons (greed and poverty). Women significantly more often mentioned religious motives, which could be an indicator of their vulnerabilities and perceptions.

**Implications for programming** of the interviews and analysis in comparison with the Strategic Conflict Analysis are:

✔ The governance structures at the district levels were found to be much weaker than foreseen and governed by strongmen. The consequence of this is that a more careful stakeholder and conflict analysis needs to be made before designing support in order not to perpetuate corruption and conflict factors (conflict sensitivity);
✔ Governance support must focus less on structures and more on human capacity and service delivery, that is, justice, health, and education;
✔ The creation of militias, supported by ISAF, is increasing the militarization of the justice and security sector and is most probably counter-productive to peace and development in a long-term perspective;
✔ Communities are under severe stress. While some of them maintain resilience in the absence of the state, they are trying to influence their context, find ways of resolving disputes, and contribute to justice. They should be supported, as stated before, to help strengthen the traditional civil society and thereby civic culture, peaceful conflict resolution, and democracy, while maintaining a human rights and gender perspective.
Programming recommendations are made to Sida, which cover both working methods and substantive approaches. The authors recommend reading the full chapter for details on programming and its relation to existing support.

✔ **Working methods**: Sida should help build its own and partners’ capacity to work “in” and “on” conflict. With a “good is enough” approach, this would consist of basic training on peace, conflict, and conflict sensitivity, and the special training and support to appointed focal points that can contribute to organizational change (outcome). Furthermore, the Agency should look at the possibility to have a more continuous conflict monitoring programme, insist on conflict-sensitive applications for funds and programming from partners, and integrate conflict sensitivity into the Project Committee procedure. However, to make this possible, human resources of the Sida Afghanistan team need to be strengthened;

✔ **Democracy and human rights**: There should be realistic expectations of the possibilities of promoting, in a conflict-sensitive way, democracy and human rights in a country torn by civil war. In addition, conflict management and peacebuilding support should be a pronounced part of this sector as well as the others, with specific initiatives. For example, there is a need for a continuous conflict monitoring programme in Afghanistan and community peacebuilding initiatives. When planning for interventions, power and conflict analysis must be used, as the distribution of power is challenged in a war setting. Support should be given to strengthening the state and its service delivery, not just formal structures but also human capacity, and its linkages to civil society. Also, it is important to support social cohesion and dispute resolution mechanisms in and between communities through the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), with a gender lens, and community peacebuilding. Alternative and new actors in civil society, more than just watch dogs, are important in order to build up a civic culture and alternatives to the strongmen. This can also provide a platform for proactive participation of civil society in building democracy and thereby also a mechanism for peaceful conflict resolution. However, elections stimulate conflict and violence, and specific measures need to be taken to integrate conflict monitoring and dispute resolution into election mechanisms. Human rights are severely challenged in Afghanistan and the justice and security sectors need to be strengthened. However, the conditions, because of the militarization of the sector, are less than ideal and existing support to Security Sector Reform (SSR) diverges from developing policies and good practice. Sweden should consider, based on Folke Bernadotte Academy’s (FBA) report, supporting the civilian part of the justice and security sectors. Civil society initiatives to scrutinise and support these sectors could be one means to do so. Child rights work, especially the right to education, can help prevent the recruitment of child soldiers. Sida should support child DDR (UNSCR 1612) and the work to address the six grave violations of child rights identified by the UN;

✔ **Education and social sector**: Aside from the need to increase conflict sensitivity, looking at the recent positive experiences of the Swedish Committee on Afghanistan, the value of this sector’s potential contribution to the social contract between the state and the citizen and state legitimacy cannot be underestimated. Also, school curricula can help encourage alternative values, especially with respect to peaceful conflict resolution and democracy, among youth, the future of Afghanistan. Education, including vocational training, also helps prevent recruitment. Even if Sida is focussed on primary education, secondary education and higher education are essential for the civil service, state-building, and peace. Sida should therefore engage in this sector or argue for other donors’ support in this area;

✔ **Gender and women’s rights**: As the promotion of women’s rights threatens traditional Afghan values, it is important to be conflict sensitive, for example, by working through mullahs, and find practical ways to show evidence of benefits to communities. Furthermore, the evidence that women are seen as “messengers for peace” should be used. Sida can support a national 1325 Action Plan and initiatives to strengthen women’s participation in the peace process at the national and local levels. Furthermore, given the evidence provided of the effect of the conflict on women, protection should continue to be an important area of support. Finally, the opportunity to promote alternatives to the violent male culture, through education and job creation schemes, should be utilized;

✔ **Humanitarian assistance**: This is a key component in the support to Afghanistan, especially in possible future negative scenarios. However, the humanitarian principles are not fully respected by all actors and must be clearly communicated. Furthermore, conflict sensitivity must be strengthened and Sida must continue to direct humanitarian assistance with staff other than that located in the Swedish Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT);

✔ **Dialogue issues**: Important areas of endeavour are to promote peaceful conflict resolution and dialogue, women’s rights in the peace process, and continuous civilian monitoring of the conflict; to argue against the militarization of the security sector and the creation of militias; to support national ownership and the aid
effectiveness agenda; and finally, to increase awareness of the risks of modernization and how to mitigate its effects through conflict sensitivity;

✔ Special programming recommendations for Northern Afghanistan: In general there is a need to increase conflict sensitivity. For example, Pashtun communities seem to have received much less attention, and Sida should also consider giving support to conflict management and peacebuilding activities in these communities. The recommendations above are also valid for Northern Afghanistan, but with the qualifications mentioned below. Given the difficult conditions for governance at the local level, where the state is the weakest, power and conflict analysis is of utmost importance in order to understand incentives of key stakeholders. Furthermore, it is important to initiate dialogue with possible spoilers and powerful stakeholders, aside from beneficiaries, to increase their engagement and to have them understand the benefits of change before deciding on support to province and district governance. In addition, Sida should exploit the opportunities of working more closely with the traditional civil society and helping to strengthen resilience, civic culture, and peacebuilding capacity within and between communities. Efforts within private sector development could provide Sida with an opportunity to help prevent recruitment. Also, support to infrastructure will increase access to state services, and thus legitimacy and peace, and improve conditions for economic growth and job creation. Possibilities to build or restore common assets, like schools, mosques, and so on, should be designed in such a way that the social cohesion and peacebuilding potential is utilized.

Finally, the study makes a number of recommendations to Sweden, aligned with the Swedish Parliamentary group report presented by Minister Gunilla Carlsson in August 2011.

✔ Sweden, and other countries supporting Afghanistan, should have more realistic expectations of the possibilities for short- and medium-term change and need to have a high degree of flexibility, combined with a continuous analysis of the conflict, to be able to support long-term change;
✔ Sweden should try to influence ISAF to stop the buildup of militias in Afghanistan. This is, as stated by one senior international analyst, “a recipe for catastrophe”;
✔ The recommendations by the Parliamentary group for long-term engagement, national ownership, and separation of civilian and military initiatives are strongly supported by this study. However, the focus on Northern Afghanistan can be questioned from an aid effectiveness perspective. Furthermore, a clear conflict management and peacebuilding focus is missing from Sweden's support to Afghanistan.
Acknowledgements

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<th>Description</th>
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<td>ABP</td>
<td>Afghan Border Police</td>
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<td>AGE</td>
<td>Anti-Government Element</td>
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<td>AIA</td>
<td>Afghan Interim Administration/Authority</td>
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<td>ANA</td>
<td>Afghan National Army</td>
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<td>ANAP</td>
<td>Afghan National Auxiliary Police</td>
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<td>ANBP</td>
<td>Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme</td>
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<td>AAN</td>
<td>Afghanistan Analysts Network</td>
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<td>ANDS</td>
<td>Afghanistan National Development Strategy</td>
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<td>ANP</td>
<td>Afghan National Police</td>
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<td>ANSF</td>
<td>Afghan National Security Force</td>
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<td>AOG</td>
<td>Armed opposition group</td>
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<td>ARTF</td>
<td>Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund</td>
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<td>ASNF</td>
<td>Afghan Special Narcotics Force</td>
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<td>ASOP</td>
<td>Afghan Social Outreach Programme</td>
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<td>BA</td>
<td>Bonn Agreement</td>
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<td>CAP</td>
<td>Country Assistance Programme</td>
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<td>CARD</td>
<td>Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development Programme</td>
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<td>CDC</td>
<td>Community Development Council</td>
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<td>CJTF</td>
<td>Criminal Justice Task Force</td>
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<td>CNPA</td>
<td>Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan</td>
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<td>CNTF</td>
<td>Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund</td>
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<td>COIN</td>
<td>Counter-insurgency strategy</td>
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<td>CPAU</td>
<td>Cooperation for Peace and Unity</td>
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<td>DDR</td>
<td>Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<td>DIAG</td>
<td>Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups</td>
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<td>DNH</td>
<td>Do No Harm (directive)</td>
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<td>FATA</td>
<td>Federally Administered Tribal Areas</td>
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<td>FBA</td>
<td>Folke Bernadotte Academy</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIRoA</td>
<td>Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan</td>
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<td>HiG</td>
<td>Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin</td>
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<td>HWC</td>
<td>Heavy Weapons Cantonment</td>
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<td>I-ANDS</td>
<td>Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy</td>
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<td>IDLG</td>
<td>Independent Directorate for Local Governance</td>
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<td>IMU/T</td>
<td>Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan/Turkestan</td>
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<td>ISA</td>
<td>Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence</td>
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<td>ISAF</td>
<td>International Security Assistance Force</td>
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<td>ISSAT</td>
<td>International Security Sector Advisory Team</td>
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<td>MASF</td>
<td>Munitions and stockpile destruction</td>
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<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MDTF</td>
<td>Multi-Donor Trust Fund</td>
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<td>MMA</td>
<td>Muttahida Majlis-e Amal</td>
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<td>MOD</td>
<td>Ministry of Defence</td>
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<td>MOI</td>
<td>Ministry of the Interior</td>
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<td>MOJ</td>
<td>Ministry of Justice</td>
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<td>MRRD</td>
<td>Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>NDS</td>
<td>National Directorate for Security</td>
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<td>NIU</td>
<td>Narcotics Interdiction Unit</td>
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<td>NSC</td>
<td>(US) National Security Council</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>NSP</td>
<td>National Solidarity Programme</td>
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<td>NWFP</td>
<td>Northwest Frontier Province</td>
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<td>OCHA</td>
<td>(UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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<td>OECD-DAC</td>
<td>Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<td>OEF</td>
<td>Operation Enduring Freedom</td>
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<td>ONSC</td>
<td>Office of the National Security Council</td>
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<td>PDPA</td>
<td>People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan</td>
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<td>PFM</td>
<td>Public Financial Management</td>
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<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
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<td>PRT</td>
<td>Provincial Reconstruction Team</td>
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<td>PSC</td>
<td>Private security company</td>
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<td>SAF</td>
<td>Securing Afghanistan's Future</td>
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<td>SAK</td>
<td>Swedish Committee on Afghanistan</td>
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<td>SALW</td>
<td>Small arms and light weapons</td>
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<td>SCO</td>
<td>Shanghai Cooperation Organisation</td>
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<td>Sida</td>
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<td>SSR</td>
<td>Security sector reform</td>
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<td>TNFSM</td>
<td>Tereek-na-faz-sharia-muslameen</td>
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<td>TRP</td>
<td>Taliban Reconciliation Programme</td>
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<td>TTP</td>
<td>Tereek-e Taliban/Pakistani Taliban</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>United Nations Office for Project Services</td>
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<td>UNSCR</td>
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1. Introduction and Objectives

Since the fall of the Taliban Government in 2001, considerable international attention has been directed towards Afghanistan. Key instruments in support of the new Government in Afghanistan and its people have been military operations through the United States of America (US) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and international development cooperation. The strategies and approaches of the international community have shifted over time, but international development has remained one of the cornerstones in promoting security, combatting terrorism, reducing poverty, promoting democracy and state-building, and fostering gender equality.

In preparation of the mid-term review of the Swedish Development Cooperation Strategy with Afghanistan, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) has commissioned this Strategic Conflict Analysis. The overall objective is to provide Sida with a better understanding of the conflict dynamics in the country. The conflict analysis will enable Sida to better understand the way in which the Swedish development cooperation in the country affects and is affected by the conflict dynamics. It may also improve the strategic guidance in the continued country strategy from a peacebuilding, state-building and a conflict prevention perspective.²

Important to note is that this conflict analysis is not a context analysis of Afghanistan, but focusses on the most salient thematic factors and dynamics. For the purpose of this study, it is important to note that there are some specific characteristics of the context of Afghanistan that affect Swedish development cooperation, providing both opportunities and risks:

- Development cooperation has required working in an increasingly difficult environment since the re-emergence of armed conflict between the Government and the Taliban in 2003, but especially since 2005, when battle-related deaths reached the level of war.³ That is to say, Afghanistan has been in civil war, with engagement of international combatants, jihad-related or Western, in support of the Taliban and the Government, for six years;
- The full transition of security responsibilities to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in 2014 and the withdrawal the same year of the bulk of the ISAF and US forces create many uncertainties. This will changes key actors’ calculations, attitudes, and behaviours, and will thus also have a profound impact on the conflict dynamics and opportunities for development cooperation and peaceful conflict resolution;
- International support to Afghanistan is complex, as aid and military operations have been inter-related and even integrated, especially by the US and the United Kingdom (UK);
- Sweden is a part of the conflict, with a military unit/Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) being part of the ISAF Command, fighting on the side of the Government and thereby not having a neutral role;
- The overwhelming military and civilian international presence in Afghanistan and the weak structure of the Afghan state highlight the importance of having a united and coordinated international engagement;
- The presence of several Swedish state agencies or bodies increases the necessity for coordination, complementarity, and coherence (3C), in order to manage for results in line with the Strategy for Swedish Support for International Involvement in Afghanistan (2010). And finally;
- In spite of a long history of Swedish humanitarian assistance and support for poverty reduction in Afghanistan, especially through the Swedish Committee on Afghanistan-, Sweden is a minor actor ranking as number 15 in size as a donor (number 8 in humanitarian assistance), while the US dominates with around 85% of the aid flows, and providing less

² Sida terms of reference for the study, 2011.
³ Uppsala Conflict Data Programme (http://www.pcrucdp.se) operationally defines war as 1000 battle-related deaths annually.
than 1% of ISAF's troops. Thus, political influence and strategic actions or interventions are even more important to influence developments.\textsuperscript{4}

The Strategic Conflict Analysis has two parts, first a desk review on the whole of Afghanistan, and then a field study of the four provinces, with a focus on the six districts in Afghanistan where Sweden has its PRT. The study is produced by the impartial and independent non-governmental organizations (NGOs) Swedepeace Foundation, Sweden, and Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU), Afghanistan, and the views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not represent Sida’s or the Swedish Government’s policies. The expected results are as outlined below.

### 1.1. Outputs of the process

- A Strategic Conflict Analysis on Afghanistan (primarily desk based);
- A Strategic Conflict Analysis on Northern Afghanistan (including scenario analyses, development of strategies, and options);
- Increase of Sida’s understanding of the ongoing internal armed conflicts and conflict dynamics in the country;
- Concrete operational recommendations on how Sweden in general and Sida in particular, through development cooperation with Afghanistan, can contribute to peacebuilding, state-building, and conflict prevention, as well as ensuring a conflict-sensitive approach overall;
- Recommendations for how Sweden, through development cooperation in Northern Afghanistan can contribute to peacebuilding, state-building, and conflict prevention, as well as ensuring an overall conflict-sensitive approach.

### 1.2. Expected outcomes of the process

- Increased conflict sensitivity of Sida’s development cooperation and humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan;
- Enhanced ability to promote conflict prevention and peacebuilding in Afghanistan and in Northern Afghanistan in accordance with the Country Strategy.

2. Methodology and Limitations

This chapter will give the reader a brief introduction to the theoretical foundation of the study, the data collection methods, how a gender perspective has been integrated, how quality assurance mechanisms have been applied, limitations to the study, and how conflict sensitivity has been addressed.

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

The consultancy team used the Sida Manual on Conflict Analysis (2004, 2006) as the basis for the analysis of peace and conflict in Afghanistan. Certain development of the methodology has been made to assure the validity of the conclusions and the quality of the following recommendations. By analysing actors’ attitudes, their behaviour, and the underlying structural causes of peace and conflict, the study identifies the most important factors in the so-called conflict triangle; see figure below.

By analysing the key interactions and dynamics between these three corners, their combined effect, it is possible to identify the key drivers of peace and conflict. Thus, this study is not a context analysis of Afghanistan, but focuses on the most salient thematic factors and dynamics. For example, a strategic conflict analysis of Afghanistan has identified a combination of factors that created a driver for conflict. The West was interested (attitude) in poppy field eradication and limiting conflict resources of armed opposition groups (AOGs); the AOG’s were interested (attitude) in recruiting soldiers. However, as a consequence of the poppy field eradication (behaviour) the young men lacking income possibilities (structure) were more easily recruited (behaviour). Consequently, a driving mechanism, or driver, for conflict had been created through the interaction between attitudes, behaviour, and underlying structure. The identification of key drivers was done by asking participants, primarily Afghans, in the various interactive conflict analysis workshops and interviews to identify the most important ones. Thus, the drivers have been validated through various discussions with analysts and stakeholders.

Figure 1 includes drivers for peace and conflict and related programming options, and how they can have a positive effect on the attitudes, behaviour, and structures of the conflict triangle – a feedback loop and essential link to understanding the theory of change in results-based management. In addition, scenarios will be presented that provide alternative programming options in the event that the conflict context changes substantially. When a driver, like the one given above, is identified, it will be related to a programming option for aid in general and for Sida in particular. Using the example, when revealing the combination of drugs, drug eradication, recruitment, and youth vulnerability as a combined driver, a programming option would be to counter the structural vulnerability of the young men, for example, through private sector development and vocational training with a specific emphasis on youth, while fighting the drug trade through other means, for example, border control or anti-corruption measures and strengthening criminal investigation in addressing organized crime, that is,

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support to security sector reform (SSR) \textit{(structure)}. In this example, programming options (see figure) are primarily directed towards structural causes.

The study takes conflict theory as a point of departure in combination with best practice in the promotion of human security\textsuperscript{7} and especially highlights the relation to the rights perspective and the perspective of the poor, as well as gender and women’s rights. Furthermore, conflict sensitivity, or how to avoid unintentionally having a negative impact on conflict dynamics through aid, has been analysed using the conflict triangle.

\textbf{2.2 Collection of Data}

The first part of the study primarily uses literature review as a means of collecting evidence. However, to gather more views and information, a number of interactive conflict analysis workshops were organized in Kabul, as well as key stakeholder interviews with representatives from the Government, the Taliban, civil society, the international community, Sida, and the Swedish Foreign Ministry. A total of 68 people participated in these interviews and workshops.

In the second part of the study, the field study of Northern Afghanistan, a research team of 17 field researchers collected data, after being trained in the methodology and in conflict sensitivity, in the following districts and their provincial capitals:

- Chimtal and Chahar Bolak districts in the province of Balkh
- Sayyad district in the province of Sari Pul
- Qush Tepa and Darzab districts in the province of Jawzjan
- Dara-i-suf Pain district in the province of Samangan

The interviews have, because of the security situation and need for a conflict-sensitive approach, been flexible in combining structured, semi-structured, and open-ended questions. Open-ended questions have been especially important because of the conflict situation; the “listening” methodology has been the point of departure, and the interviews have only continued to a more structured phase if this has been deemed possible by the interviewing team. The “listening” methodology, invented by CDA Collaborative Learning Projects and applied in more than 20 country studies, including Afghanistan,\textsuperscript{8} focusses on the listening process and allows the interviewed individuals to develop their thoughts, with just minor coaching, and thereby reveals issues that the researcher might have been unaware of, that is, an inductive approach. Meanwhile, if possible, the structured and semi-structured questions help to understand the dynamics of the conflict triangle. The field researchers were asked to make a stratified selection of different people to interview in the communities and capitals (province/district), thus striving to have a sample as representative as possible. See Appendix 6: Interview Questions Field Study for more details.

A total of 248 interviews, equally distributed between women and men, were done, combining closed and open-ended questions in the six target districts. The working conditions were very difficult because of the security situation, and the integration of a Do No Harm approach into the process was essential. Also, the security situation seems to have strengthened the gender divide and reduced access to the hired field researchers, as female team members could only be trained and debriefed by female members of the core consultant team, and vice versa for males. Furthermore, risks related to transportation made it necessary to move training and debriefing to two remote locations instead of Mazare-Sharif. All in all, this increased training and debriefing from 12 occasions in Mazar-e-Sharif to 24 occasions in two more remote locations. Consequently, the study was delayed, but local traditions and conflict sensitivity were respected. The insecurity might have affected the responses from the people interviewed, which might have affected the validity of the answers. Furthermore, it is a


\textsuperscript{8} For more information on the methodology, please visit http://www.cdainc.com.
comparably small sample, but the results were still found to be statistically significant when evaluating differences between female and male responses (see analysis).

2.3. Applying a Gender Lens

Swedepeace and CPAU have mainstreamed a gender perspective throughout the study based on their earlier experience of this in field studies in Afghanistan and elsewhere, with support from a gender expert in the international quality assurance advisory group. Furthermore, the team has strived to gather information about women/girls and men/boys from women/girls and men/boys, respectively, through a participatory method. UN Women’s recommendations on conflict analysis and UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 have been considered when studying root causes, triggers, and manifestations of violent conflict. While manifestations of conflict, for example, violence towards women or men, and especially sexual violence, can affect conflict dynamics, the specific gender dimensions of root causes have also been highlighted to increase the understanding of the drivers for conflict and peace. Finally, the study has analysed victims, perpetrators, and actors – women AND men – from a gender perspective.

2.4. International and CPAU Quality Assurance Groups

CPAU formed a quality assurance group consisting of the CPAU Directorate to assure that the institutional experience is transferred into the conflict analysis process, the quality of the methodology, and the final report. In addition, an international advisory group has had a similar function. In spite of this, the authors bear the sole responsibility for the final product.

2.5. Limitations

For obvious reasons, security is one of the main obstacles of this study. The level of violence has increased in the four provinces being studied, which creates limitations to the number of people interviewed and the depth of the interviews. Insecurity and road infrastructure also limit the geographical distribution (rural/city).

The strategic conflict analysis of the whole of Afghanistan is primarily a desk review. Still, and as a consequence of the dialogue with Sida, through the interviews and interactive conflict analysis in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif, the team has tried to strengthen this part.

A final limitation is the availability of statistical data. In spite of a rich stream of studies coming from Afghanistan, some key statistics are still absent. Nevertheless, the field study and its interviews ameliorate this situation to some extent, even though, from a statistical perspective, the sample is small, consisting of approximately 40 interviews per district.

2.6. Conflict Sensitivity

Throughout the process, CPAU and Swedepeace have made repeated Do No Harm (DNH) analyses so as to avoid having a negative impact on the conflict dynamics. The key approach has been to act impartially and transparently, while not uncovering the precise individual source of some of the information. Some consequences of the DNH analyses have been:

- To transparently inform the participants in the study of its purpose;
- To recruit field researchers from their home districts;
- To use the “listening” methodology as a starting point and only apply more sensitive semi-structured and structured questions if this has been deemed possible from a DNH perspective;
- To use impartial and neutral language in the report and not focus on individual stakeholders.

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9 Gender and Conflict Analysis, UNIFEM Policy Briefing Paper, October 2006.
10 Ibid.
3. Overview of Patterns of Violent Conflict in Afghanistan\textsuperscript{11}

This chapter provides the reader with the most recent statistics on armed violence in Afghanistan. For those less familiar with Afghanistan, Annex 1: Overview and Chronology of Violent Conflict in Afghanistan provides some reading background.

The statistics below help illustrate the changing intensity of the conflict. They also provide some information on the victims and perpetrators. To summarize the data below, and as already mentioned in the introduction, the levels of violence in Afghanistan illustrate a strong negative trend, and the country is in a state of war according to the two globally most accepted academic definitions of armed conflict and war.\textsuperscript{12} Furthermore, civilians continue to suffer the consequences of armed violence, and development initiatives, as illustrated by the NGO security statistics, are hampered. For more details, please see below.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{graph_a.png}
\caption{Different indicators of violence in Afghanistan 2001–2010.}
\end{figure}

The data in graph A show a steep increase in both battle-related deaths and conflict-related violence as shown by the UCDP and AOG trend lines. Moreover, ISAF fatalities have increased at an accelerated rate from 2008 onwards. The increased trend in civilian casualties (UNAMA) indicates that this development is not limited to military-related violence.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{UCDP:} The Uppsala Conflict Data Programme (UCDP) data indicate the total number of battle-related deaths, including both warring parties and civilians. Graph A excludes deaths resulting from non-state conflicts. \textit{Timeline:} 2003–2010; \textbf{ISAF:} The data from iCasualties.org indicates the fatalities in the ISAF. It only includes military personnel and does not include fatalities in the Afghan National Army. \textit{Timeline:} 2001–2010; \textbf{UNAMA:} The data from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) indicate the number of civilian casualties. These figures include deaths and kidnappings, as well as other injuries. \textit{Timeline:} 2008–2010; \textbf{AOG:} The data from the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (ANSO) indicate the number of AOG-initiated attacks. These attacks include close range, indirect fire, and suicide attacks. The data do not include any criminal activity or events. \textit{Timeline:} 2006–2010.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{11} UCDP: The Uppsala Conflict Data Programme (UCDP) data indicate the total number of battle-related deaths, including both warring parties and civilians. Graph A excludes deaths resulting from non-state conflicts. \textit{Timeline:} 2003–2010; ISAF: The data from iCasualties.org indicates the fatalities in the ISAF. It only includes military personnel and does not include fatalities in the Afghan National Army. \textit{Timeline:} 2001–2010; UNAMA: The data from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) indicate the number of civilian casualties. These figures include deaths and kidnappings, as well as other injuries. \textit{Timeline:} 2008–2010; AOG: The data from the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (ANSO) indicate the number of AOG-initiated attacks. These attacks include close range, indirect fire, and suicide attacks. The data do not include any criminal activity or events. \textit{Timeline:} 2006–2010.

\textsuperscript{12} Correlates of War, University of Illinois (\url{http://www.correlatesofwar.org/}); Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, Uppsala University (\url{http://www.ucdp.uu.se}).
The data in graph B indicate a steady increase in the number of AOG-initiated attacks, and also illustrate the seasonal character of violence, with a peak around July during the spring offensive each year. The highest peak in August 2009 coincides with the election period in Afghanistan.

Graph C shows that, although there were major peaks in the violence against NGOs in 2008, the average trend indicates that there was not any major increase during the reporting period. This is particularly interesting because of the major attention that has been directed at the issue of violence against NGOs.
The same regional pattern of violence can be observed in graphs D and E, especially the dominance of the Southwest region. But civilian casualties have a more even spread throughout the country than the ISAF fatalities. While regions other than the Southwest account for around half of the civilian casualties, the corresponding figure is around a third for the ISAF casualties.
4. Strategic Conflict Analysis of Afghanistan

This chapter will briefly analyse the existing studies and research on conflict in Afghanistan and then present some essential observations regarding key factors for peace and conflict in relation to actors’ attitudes, behaviour, and underlying structural conditions. Thereafter, the key factors are combined into the allegedly most powerful drivers for peace and conflict. Finally, programming options for development cooperation, to mitigate or strengthen these drivers, are identified. For readers not familiar with the context of Afghanistan, the authors recommend a review of the previous chapter and Appendix 1, since this one will not elaborate on contextual factors.

4.1 Existing Strategic Conflict Analysis on Afghanistan

While reviewing the existing literature and studies on Afghanistan it became clear that few structured conflict analyses, especially those informed by theories on peace and conflict, had been made. In its 2008 Strategic Conflict Analysis, the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) states

Rather surprisingly, no credible contemporary, nation-wide conflict analysis of Afghanistan is publicly available despite excellent localised efforts undertaken by the Norwegian and German governments.13

In spite of this, there is present and emerging research of high quality in several areas that relate to conflict analysis, like drivers for radicalization or the effectiveness of the ISAF counter-insurgency strategy (COIN) for security and stabilization.14 However, the DFID-sponsored study above was the first to use a nationwide and comprehensive approach to conflict analysis. This is quite surprising, since donors’ joint policies, produced by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD-DAC), as early as 2001 stated the following:

Peace and conflict impact analysis, and risk and vulnerability assessments, should be mainstreamed to become as common as cost-benefit analysis. These tools can identify potential harm and constructive actions, improve coherence and provide different branches of all governments concerned with fresh insights and angles to contemplate further actions.15

Furthermore, the political aid discourse on state fragility and its relation to poverty resulted in the OECD-DAC principles on development cooperation with fragile states, a category that Afghanistan belongs to:

International interventions can inadvertently create societal divisions and worsen corruption and abuse, if they are not based on strong conflict and governance analysis.16

The Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), in a 2011 review of conflict resolution theories in relation to the Afghanistan context, stated the following:

Despite the worsening conflict, many of these insights or initiatives have been neglected or understudies in Afghanistan. A greater willingness to draw lessons from theories of conflict

15 Helping Prevent Violent Conflict. 2001. OECD-DAC.
resolution, based on rigorous empirical analysis, could help to lay the groundwork for peace.\(^{17}\)

In the light of these facts, it is an important and strategic decision that Sida has taken to build upon existing studies, strengthening the Agency’s knowledge on conflict dynamics and its consequences for Swedish development cooperation.

There is a constant stream of regional or local conflict analysis being conducted, for example, by Germany, CPAU, and more recently, the Swedish Committee on Afghanistan, which provides valuable information about local and regional conflict dynamics.\(^{18}\) Also, the overall Swedish political strategy for Afghanistan integrates a brief conflict analysis. In particular, the German study of Northern Afghanistan, produced in 2010, has provided a good platform for the field study-based part of this conflict analysis. After reviewing the literature, some conclusions can be drawn:

- There is a tendency to highlight the drivers of conflict at the expense of the drivers of peace. This limits the analytical possibility of finding options for action for development cooperation. This study also identifies drivers of peace.
- There is a tendency to have an “actor’s perspective”, calling the Taliban “subversive” and other actors for “Government-friendly”, rather than following an analytical approach, for example using the term “confrontational and non-confrontational actors”, when analysing key actors in Afghanistan. This might be closely related to the fact that international development cooperation has supported one side of the overall conflict. This study strives to be impartial.
- There is a need to separate dynamics at the local or tactical levels, that is, districts and provinces, from the national or strategic dynamics. The causes of peace and conflict are different, even if they interrelate. This study has a dual approach, analysing both the national and regional levels.

In conclusion, this study can add some new analytical insights and contribute to the identification of valuable programming options for development cooperation. Furthermore, it will be able to build upon the rather recent conflict analysis supported by DFID and Germany, while contributing additional evidence and facts on the conflict dynamics.

4.2 Structures for Peace and Conflict in Afghanistan

This chapter will analyse some of the key structures, the C corner of the conflict triangle, that, according to the literature and consulted experts and stakeholders, seem to promote peace and conflict in Afghanistan. The chapter will also present some links to existing theories on peace and conflict.

4.2.1 Structures for Peace

In spite of decades of violent conflict in Afghanistan, there are structures that provide opportunities for peace. Expressions relating to identity and history, like Afghanistan being a “strong nation but a weak state”, illustrate that, despite years of politics of divide and rule, there is a sense of being an Afghan. Also, there is a history of comparably more functioning governance up until the mid 1970s and Islam is seen by many, including analysts, as a unifying factor. There might be differences in interpretation, and the ways these features are utilized by mullahs and political leaders, but still, Afghans identify themselves as Muslim. Furthermore, there is a widespread war weariness among Afghans and a wish for peace and security. Finally, there is a tradition and culture of mediation between communities through the Jirga and Shura mechanisms.

Looking at political power and access, the relative peace that came in 2001 provided some space for a slow growth of Afghanistan’s civil society and the initiation of a civic culture. Research indicates that democratization in post-conflict countries, especially where ethnicity has been politicized, as in the case of Afghanistan, can be a strong conflict-generating factor and that a democratic civic culture is one


\(^{18}\) For example, Gosztonyi, Kristof, and Jan Koehler. 2010. PCA Analysis North Afghanistan, ARC, and Conflict Analysis: Kunduz City, Kunduz Province. 2009. CPAU.
of the remedies for this tendency. In spite of being at the early stages of development, the advent of a civic culture is a mitigating factor in the conflict. Some also argue that the general liberalization in comparison with the Taliban Government has provided both individual and institutional opportunities, for example, political competition, free market activity and media freedom, that have led to decreased frustration in society. This seems to be especially obvious in relation to women’s rights, particularly for the middle class and intellectuals, as illustrated by their presence in the Afghan National Assembly. However, there is no clear evidence, in spite of the positive developments, that the liberalization or higher degree of freedom in society itself has a positive effect or causal effect on peace. The medium-term perspective is that the liberalization can actually increase conflictive tendencies. Nevertheless, internationally, increased participation of women in parliament is generally associated with a higher degree of respect for human rights.

Governance is a cornerstone of how power is exercised and key to legitimacy of those who govern. Furthermore, the capacity of the state to resolve and mitigate disputes and limit violent and opportunistic behaviour is essential in order to prevent violent conflict. This area has been one of the most scrutinized in Afghanistan as part of the state-building exercise. The 2004 constitution, as a result of the 2003 Loya Jirga, provided new conditions for a more equal society in regard to ethnicity and gender. There have also been efforts to strengthen the state in its centre-periphery relations with some positive results; some analysts claim that, even though facing severe fragility, a mid-level cadre of civil servants is slowly developing. However, both these two areas are more of a beginning of a trend than signs of a functioning state bureaucracy. A more pronounced tendency seems to be that traditional community decision-making structures are being revived, primarily in those provinces less affected by violence. This seems especially true in the wake of the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) that has contributed, through the development of Community Development Councils (CDCs), to these new or revived community structures. Evidence shows that these structures are also helpful in local dispute resolution and thus have a peacebuilding function. The CDCs have also helped to create links between community and sub-level structures of the state.

Socio-economic conditions, or changes in them, might sometimes contribute to peace. Some claim that the strengthening of higher and secular education in Afghanistan has started to contribute to civic culture in Afghanistan, important to a culture of democracy, when power relations are changing. Moreover, the relative increase in freedom for women means that their potential is slowly being unleashed, and they are seen, especially those with a higher education, as messengers for peace in society, in contrast to the men who have fought wars for the past 40 years. This assumption was also tested in the field study and was supported by the data. Furthermore, urbanization is argued to contribute to peace because of opportunities offered to youth that, consequently, discourage them from joining the war or supporting violent political means.

4.2.2. Structures for Conflict

Naturally, and as a consequence of decades of violent conflict and international interventions, there are many structures for conflict in Afghanistan. In the area of identity and history, as illustrated in Appendix 1, ethnicity has been used in a power game of divide and rule since the 1970s. Taking into account the long-cemented culture of violence and war, there has been a continuation and transfer of the logic of war into politics, in the form of zero-sum games. This approach to power was, and is, far from the democratic culture of peaceful dispute resolution mentioned above. This is also why democratization processes in the post-conflict setting present a steep challenge. At a more local level, this culture of violence and the identity of being a warrior or mujahideen, more pronounced as part of

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21 CPAU’s work with Peace Councils indicates this, as well as CDA’s Study on Aid Effectiveness in Afghanistan, 2010.
manhood and honour, is still present and plays into the conflict dynamics. Add to this the radicalization of some Muslim organizations (see under names of various actors) and the perception of many that the Afghan identity, and to some extent Muslim identity, is threatened by the West.

In relation to political power and access, the Bonn agreement in 2001 resulted in the creation of the Afghan Interim Authority (AIA) followed by the two-year Transitional Authority. This created a de facto dominance of the Northern Alliance, where Tajiks and Uzbeks were in the majority, while the defeated Taliban, primarily made up of Pashtuns, created a sense of "the winner takes all", confirming the logic of war and zero-sum games. Moreover, many have noted that the weak party system, mainly centred around wartime leaders playing on ethnic identity and network loyalties, and the lack of representation of large groups in politics, creates frustration and decreasing legitimacy for the nascent and fragile democracy. In other words, the country is democratic in structure, but not in culture. Amalgamated with a weak civil society and a lack of interest among the emerging middle class and civil society actors to engage in politics, this leaves the game of politics to a small elite that is questioned by many.

Governance, or the lack of it, is repeatedly mentioned as an issue that contributes to conflict. The state of Afghanistan is very fragile, and is seen as stained by corruption and infiltrated by criminal networks. Service delivery, including in the security sector, is tremendously weak, the access to justice difficult, and state legitimacy consequently low. Furthermore, the state is highly centralized, including in the management of budgetary procedures, and local governance weak, resulting in deeply pronounced centre-periphery differences. Related to this is the co-option of local structures by traditional warlords or strongmen, and increasingly, Taliban commanders. As stated by some analysts, the Taliban are not formally in local governance because of possible Government/ISAF retaliation, but they still control large geographical areas. This weakens the links and loyalties between centre and periphery. Essential to governance is the fiscal base of the state, the collection of revenues and supporting economic growth. Afghanistan's economy has experienced growth on an average of approximately 10% during the past 6 years, but according to World Bank estimates, more than 90% of the Afghan GDP is related to the international civilian and military presence and spending. Furthermore, state budget and state salaries are to an overwhelming majority financed through the international community. There are opportunities in the mining sector due to recent discoveries of valuable natural resources, which in extension can be sources of conflict and corruption, but the short- and medium-term outlook for state revenues is rather gloomy. Consequently, the sustainability of the present state and governance is highly dependent on continued international engagement.

Socio-economic conditions in Afghanistan are well illustrated by the country's placement as number 155 in the 2010 Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Programme. From a conflict perspective, especially emphasizing relative deprivation or "the conscious experience of a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectations and present actualities", there are several structural factors that possibly contribute to the conflict dynamics. For example, the so-called peace dividend has not been apparent to people. Aside from state service delivery, functioning at very low levels, insecurity prevails. In the face of weak governance to mitigate disputes, at the local level resource conflicts are common, concerning access to land and water. Illiteracy, general poverty, unemployment, and in spite of improvements, limited access to education and illiteracy expose poor young boys to education in the madrasa school system, which, according to many, promotes more radical and confrontational attitudes, and makes young men more vulnerable to recruitment. Moreover, girls are still underrepresented in the expanding primary and secondary school system, and thus, their potential participation in society is limited.

Abuse of human rights is a conflict-generating factor. The outcome of the Bonn agreement and the following forming of a Government between the main power brokers has been identified as a continuation of impunity. For the sake of short-term peace and stability, key stakeholders who would otherwise have been prosecuted for war crimes were given power and influence. This dilemma of balancing between peace and human rights has been highlighted in several studies. Some indications exist that, in a short-term perspective, amnesty for perpetrators decreases the likelihood of escalation to war the following years. However, on a structural level this promotes long-term impunity and might be a structural cause of conflict. Furthermore, and as mentioned above, access to judicial system at all levels is limited because of the weakness of the judiciary and police, and the Taliban's swift justice many times becomes more appealing.

Geography is a factor that causes a dilemma for the emerging state. There are ethnic fault lines crossing Afghanistan. For example, the existence of the "Durand Line" splitting the Pashtuns' community, and the country’s general history of being a melting pot, provides opportunities, as well as challenges, to different ethnic groups. Being land-locked with a poor road infrastructure and large territory, the geographical conditions limit the ability of the state to govern effectively from the centre to the periphery. It becomes difficult for the state to control opportunistic and violent behaviour of subnational actors, whether it is in the form of organized crime or AOGs. This has also historically been the case, as was illustrated during the presence of the Soviet Union and even later during the period of the Taliban, neither of whom could ever gain complete control over the entire Afghan territory. Another factor in relation to geography and environment is the arid terrain, which makes agricultural activities more difficult.

4.3 Attitudes and Interests in Relation to Peace and Conflict

Actors' attitudes and interests in relation to a conflict is a highly sensitive issue. The consultancy team has chosen, employing a conflict-sensitive lens, to consider the interests and power of groups, and not individuals. The analysis of stakeholders could have more details regarding individual strongmen, but given the purpose of understanding the main conflict dynamics in order to improve development cooperation, this level of detail suffices.

In this section, a brief introduction will be given regarding some of the key stakeholders in Afghanistan. They will be separated into the powerful, the potentially powerful, and the vulnerable actors, where the first are analysed in most detail. Important to note is the changing character of the alliances and preferences among stakeholders. The analysis will summarize the following aspects, commonly used in conflict analysis and stakeholder analysis:

- Attitudes: What is it that the stakeholder fears, and what are her/his grievances? Is greed for power or resources an important factor?
- Main interests: What is it the stakeholder wants to achieve? What are the objectives?
- Means of achieving objectives: Can they be reached through politics, violence, peaceful means, corrupt or criminal practices?
- Power: What are the resources of the stakeholder, and what opportunities does it have?
- Links to other actors: What are the (inter)relationships between the actors?

4.3.1. Powerful Actors: Government Associated

The powerful stakeholders, or the primary parties, are different types of actors with temporary or long-term alliances that circle around the present Government and President Karzai. This will be further explored in the section on behaviour. Still, there are several issues that unite most of them; see table 1 below.

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There is a fear among these actors of renewed Pashtun dominance, especially in the form of Taliban rule, and an interest in preserving power, both because of group interest and to maintain control of state resources. In order to preserve status quo the Government needs international support, especially of a military character. Due to the transition of security responsibility to the Afghans and the phase out of the bulk of the international military presence in 2014, the power game has changed substantially.

Table 1: Primary Parties to the Conflict, Associated with the Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Attitudes (fears, greed, and grievances)</th>
<th>Main interests (What do the actors want to achieve?)</th>
<th>Means of achieving objectives (What do the actors do to realize interests?)</th>
<th>Power base</th>
<th>Links to other actors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government of Afghanistan</td>
<td>Fear of losing power, fear of group and personal security and dignity, they believe in themselves as rightful leaders, desire control of state assets.</td>
<td>Desire control state and its resources. Promote peace and development. Promote their own networks.</td>
<td>Armed violence and negotiation. Intimidation because of lack of control of agencies and corruption. (Interest in negotiations for peace questioned by some analysts.)</td>
<td>International community, United Islamic Front, and political group, regional support. Not unitary actor.</td>
<td>The Government is a network of various actors and different power bases. International community. Alleged links to organized crime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamiat-e Islami</td>
<td>Fear of losing power in negotiations, fear of Pashtun dominance, fear for personal security, interest in maintaining economic benefits.</td>
<td>Maintain status quo, secure political and economic power, maintain IC troops and aid in the country, promote an Islamic state (more moderate than Taliban).</td>
<td>Armed violence. Being in the power structure. (Interest in negotiations for peace questioned by some analysts.)</td>
<td>Primarily Tajik group but also supported by Uzbeks and Pashtuns. Allegations of ties to organized crime.</td>
<td>Part of United Islamic Front/Northern Alliance. Some analysts state that support is received from Iran, Tajikistan, Russia, and India.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junbish-i Milli</td>
<td>Fear of losing power as an ethnic minority, fear for personal security, interest in maintaining economic benefits, open to new alliances.</td>
<td>Maintain status quo. Protect the Uzbek minority.</td>
<td>Armed violence and political alliances. (Interest in negotiations for peace questioned by some analysts.)</td>
<td>Uzbek communities. Internal power struggle weakens party and international support.</td>
<td>Part of United Islamic Front/Northern Alliance. Some analysts state that support is received from Turkey, Uzbekistan, and India.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People's Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan</td>
<td>Fear Tadjik and Pashtun dominance. Shia Islam.</td>
<td>Protect Hazara minority. Not interested in peace with Taliban.</td>
<td>Primarily political means and civil strikes.</td>
<td>Hazara.</td>
<td>Some analysts state that support is received from Iran.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hizb-e Wahdat-e Islami</td>
<td>Fear Tadjik and Pashtun dominance. Shia Islamic values. Interest in maintaining economic and political power.</td>
<td>Secure Hazaras, Islamic state, and economic and political power.</td>
<td>Primarily political means.</td>
<td>Hazara.</td>
<td>Some analysts state that support is received from Iran.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) become vital in the absence, or substantial decrease, of US and ISAF troops. Plenty of evaluations exist of the capacity and integrity of the ANSF, and some of them are quite positive. However, the majority of independent views highlight the low integrity of the ANSF, illustrated by contentious desertions and the allegations of a high level of AOG infiltration, and its capacity, exemplified by the low number of military units able to operate independently without ISAF support. Interviews revealed that not even members of the ANSF believe that its integrity and capacity will suffice to defend against the AOGs, if the US does not have military bases and troops in the country and financial support to sustain the size of the ANSF. This also highlights the lack of affordability of the ANSF, which is estimated to reach a number of over 400,000 men and some few women by 2012. In a country with extremely low tax revenue and tremendous social needs, the
security sector will most probably consume a large portion of the government's resources and still not be sustainable. Furthermore, independent observers are reporting systematic ANSF human rights violations against the civilian population.\textsuperscript{27}

The Government now has a shrinking window of opportunity, where the situation after 2014 might not be favourable to a negotiated peace or military victory. The opposite could be said about the AOGs, and this creates a political limbo until the transition is a fact.

The High Peace Commission has been tasked to negotiate with the AOGs, but so far the dialogue has not been substantial. The assassination in September 2011 of former President Rabbani, Chair of the Commission, has further decreased the prospects for a negotiated peace with the AOGs. Many analysts, including those with strong links to the Taliban leader Mullah Omar, doubt that real interest exists in the Government for negotiated peace. Given the core attitudes and interests of the actors on the Government side, this is not an unreasonable assumption.

4.3.2. Powerful Actors: International Support to the Government

The international presence through ISAF and international development cooperation is a truly multinational effort. ISAF integrates a large number of countries within and outside NATO. However, the engagement has largely been defined by the US. It provides the main bulk of international troops and around 85\% of international aid (ICG, 2011). A consequence of this for development cooperation is that the majority of funds since 2001 have not been in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, illustrated by the fact that the US has only made a minor contribution to the World Bank Trust Fund for the Government.\textsuperscript{28} Also, the initial counter-insurgency ambitions were highly dependent on the US military size. Because of its dominant role, the US Administration's attitudes, interests, and goals have determined the direction of international efforts in Afghanistan.

The onset of the war was much defined by the US security predicament after 9/11. Since the initiation of the US military engagement in Afghanistan, the fear of terrorism has been the single greatest driving factor, according to most analysts.\textsuperscript{29} This stands in contrasts to, although it does not necessarily contradict, the goals of securing the victory of the Northern Alliance and to winning the re-emerged war in Afghanistan or to promoting long-term state-building and peacebuilding. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 shifted US attention from Afghanistan during a period where state-building and peacebuilding initiatives could have prevented the war from re-escalating in 2005.

In spite of the above strategic orientation towards "war on terror", strategic focusses in Afghanistan have shifted over time, and the latest focus has been on counter-insurgency. Initiating this surge in 2009, and for the first time since 2001 according to ISAF, reaching sufficient numbers to match the AOGs, the US has shifted its orientation again. The strategic decision has been taken to phase down engagement in Afghanistan in the face of increasing war weariness in the US and a failing US economy. Already in 2011, aid flows have been substantially reduced.

Regarding the US attitudes to Afghanistan, and aside from fear of international terrorism, the political need felt to substantially downsize the engagement is balanced against the fear of a failed war resulting in renewed Taliban state control. President Najibullah's regime fell three years after the Soviet withdrawal, when the Soviet funding ceased, and South Vietnam only two years after the US withdrawal. A similar failure in Afghanistan would inflict substantial costs to the present US


Administration. The future presence of US military troops, even at a much lower level, and a continuous financing of the vast Afghan security sector might be two means to avoid this, but they are also solutions that would **hamper negotiations** with the AOGs for a peaceful settlement.

Needless to say, the US has regional interests and its strategic but troublesome alliance with **Pakistan**, a cornerstone in the war on terror, is of major concern. Recently, the US Administration has been outspoken regarding the Pakistani state Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) involvement in supporting the Taliban, especially the Haqqani network, which has caused disturbances in the US-Pakistan relationship. This relationship will most probably continue to affect Afghanistan.

### 4.3.3. Powerful Actors: Armed Opposition Groups

The armed opposition groups are in reality numerous groups with different relationships between them, different degrees of grievances and different goals. What unites them is the **resistance against foreign presence** in Afghanistan and the **perceived dominance of the United Islamic Front**. Furthermore, most of them have a deeply rooted feeling of **threat to traditional values and Islam**. Their goals are to oust the West, **gain power**, and **reinstate a theocratic state**.

The **Taliban** under Mullah Omar and the Haqqani Network, the main constituent part of the Taliban movement, primarily used armed violence to attain their goals. They seem to be **in favour of peace talks**; however, they express doubts about the seriousness of the Government in pursuing these talks, stating that no protection is provided for talks and that the High Peace Commission are only meeting with false Taliban. Moreover, the suspicion is deep towards the US, especially since the press leak regarding a recent meeting in Germany. Views on the integrity of the Taliban differ, but they can be conceptualized as consisting of three layers, with one significant exception. The first layer of the Taliban is the core around Mullah Omar. The second layer are more moderate Taliban associated with the Taliban regime until 2001. The third layer is not really made up by Taliban but of criminals using their alleged identity for protection. Some analysts believe that the first two layers are weakened and that the third is on the rise, while others insist on the integrity of the core group and the second layer.

**Hizb-e Islami** has been approaching the Government in a different way. Its political branch is part of the Government, increasing its influence and attracting many intellectual Afghans, while its military branch has refuted the peace talks. They initiated armed struggle as late as in 2007/2008 and are not associated with the Taliban. However, their **political branch is consistently gaining in support**.

ISAF states that all AOGs have been weakened and US Special Forces have targeted and assassinated many of the Taliban commanders, leaving younger, and **more radical, commanders** in their place. Most probably this means that fear is driving the AOGs at the same time as they know that the enemy has "the watches, but we have the time". Consequently, the **transition in 2014 will open a window of opportunity** that could completely reverse the power game. A sign of this resistance and continued fighting spirit is the past months' increase of spectacular, but militarily limited, assaults in Kabul and assassinations of Government-associated strongmen. The AOGs are a difficult target. This is especially true when COIN is being dismantled by ISAF and left to the ANSF, just as ISAF gain enough military strength to handle the task. The AOGs might be better off to stall negotiations and hope for a crumbling ANSF after 2014.

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4.3.4. Powerful and Potentially Powerful Regional Actors

Aside from the global tensions and war on terror, Afghanistan is located in what could be called a regional security complex. Pakistan, India, Russia, and China are sizeable regional actors or powers that are affected by and have influence on the developments in Afghanistan. The Central Asian states, Iran, and Turkey also play a certain role. The consequences of the Arab Spring, according to some interviews, might also affect the capacities and orientations of Turkey and Iran, depending on the resolution of the Syrian crisis. The struggle for influence and security will most probably increase with the withdrawal of all or the majority of ISAF forces in 2014. This process offers both opportunities and threats to the regional players, and for the sake of this study, Pakistan will briefly be analysed, as it is stated by most actors to be a key actor in Afghanistan. Pakistan has played a central role...

Table 2: Armed Opposition Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Attitudes (fears, greed, and grievances)</th>
<th>Main interests (What do the actors want to achieve?)</th>
<th>Means of achieving objectives (What do the actors do to realize interests?)</th>
<th>Power base</th>
<th>Links to other actors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taliban</td>
<td>Conservative interpretation of Islam, fear of western influence, Islam under attack, feel excluded from power, United Islamic Front have too much power and influence. High Peace Council and Government not genuinely interested in peace.</td>
<td>State control or significant influence over and participation in the state, theocratic state, implementation of Sharia law, western troops to leave Afghanistan, no US. bases in Afghanistan.</td>
<td>Armed violence, suicide bombing and intimidation of population. Possibly negotiated settlement if main interests are met.</td>
<td>Several layers of Taliban from hard core to more reconcilable. Multiple sources of funding. Several regional actors and diverted aid. Drugs a part of taxation, but not the main focus.</td>
<td>Haqqani are loyal to Mullah Omar and considered as part of Taliban. Some analysts state that support is received from Pakistan (ISI) and Iran.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hizb-e-Islami</td>
<td>Islam under attack, foreign occupation, feeling of not being properly compensated from Jihad. Feel that they have a lack of power and that they are not properly included in the Government.</td>
<td>Control of state or significant influence, maintain and gain access to resources, an Islamic state, implementation of Sharia law, dignity and recognition, removal of international troops.</td>
<td>Armed violence and political means. The unofficial political branch is present in the Government. The top military leadership has publicly stated that they are against peace talks.</td>
<td>Have a solid power base since Jihad and attract many young intellectuals. They are strengthening their political presence and have several Minister positions. Militarily, they have been recruiting soldiers and activated commanders and allegations exist that they have supported Taliban insurgents. Some state that they control poppy production.</td>
<td>Political branch in Government. Suspicion of Hekmatyar's links to Iran not confirmed. Alleged support from Pakistan and relations with Muslim Brotherhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haqqani Network</td>
<td>Islam under attack, foreign occupation, feel that they have a lack of power and are excluded from Government. More radical than Taliban.</td>
<td>Control of state, theocratic state, end of foreign occupation.</td>
<td>Armed violence, suicide bombing and intimidation of population.</td>
<td>Support from the Taliban.</td>
<td>Part of the Taliban. Alleged support from Pakistan (ISI).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terek-e-Taliban (TTP)</td>
<td>Islam under attack, foreign occupation of Afghanistan.</td>
<td>Weaken Afghanistan's Government, departure of international troops, victory for the Taliban, strengthen Pakistan's influence and decrease India's over Afghanistan.</td>
<td>Armed violence, suicide bombing and intimidation of population.</td>
<td>Support from Pakistan (ISI).</td>
<td>Afghanistan Taliban reluctant to this group as Pakistani Taliban are more radical.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The idea of the regional security complex is that security interests of states are interrelated. Furthermore, “complex” indicates that a security dilemma exists whereby one state’s actions to increase security might decrease the security of others. Buzan, Barry Gordon. 1991. *People, States & Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*. Prentice-Hall.
role as a platform for Western support to the Mujahideen during the Soviet occupation and today in supporting the Afghan Government. At the same time, Pakistan is a fragile state suffering from civil war and with a security sector that does not seem to be under complete Government control. Allegations have been put forward over several years that Pakistan is promoting two agendas, one as ally of the US, ISAF, and the Government of Afghanistan, and the other as supporter of the Taliban and especially the Haqqani network. More recently, a political crisis has emerged between the US Administration and the Government of Pakistan. The US has openly stated that the Pakistani Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISA) is supporting the Taliban. This dual role is most probably not only driven by Pakistan’s power play but also its fears. The Pakistani elites, including in the security sector, are under considerable pressure from different sides. The fact that the US has moved some of its logistics from Pakistan to Central Asia, and the alleged attacks by Pakistani-supported Taliban on these new logistics routes, also suggest that strong economic interests in the war, or “greed” as a driver in conflict theory, by several Pakistani groups also might be fomenting violence.\footnote{Simpson, John. 2011. “Karzai Accuses Pakistan of ‘Double Game’ over Militants.” BBC. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-15154497 (Accessed 4 December 2011); Fair, Christine. 2010. “Mapping U.S.-Pakistan Relations: Past, Present, and Future.” The Afpak Channel, Foreign Policy. http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/10/06/mapping_us_pakistan_relations_past_present_and_future (Accessed December 4, 2011); “US Can’t Live With or Without Us, says Prime Minister” 2011. dawn.com. http://www.dawn.com/2011/09/23/us-can%E2%80%99t-live-with-or-without-us-says-pm.html (Accessed 23 September 2011).}

India has been a strong supporter, if not militarily, of the change process in Afghanistan and is now also behind the possibilities for negotiated peace. India is a regional power and Afghanistan, at the crossroads of Central and South Asia, provides a strategic opportunity in various aspects. Thus, Pakistan’s and India’s classical rivalry comes into play, and speculations are many regarding India’s future actions and possible responses by Pakistan.\footnote{Shashank, Joshi. 2011. “India’s Strategic Calculus in Afghanistan.” The Afpak Channel, Foreign Policy. http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/10/06/indias_strategic_calculus_in_afghanistan (Accessed 4 December 2011).} In summary, Pakistan is a powerful, if not unitary, actor in Afghanistan which has and will have a substantial impact on the country while the others, especially India as a potential powerful actor, could contribute not only to positive change but also to increased rivalry and conflict. Therefore, aside from influencing Pakistani politics, regional agreements on support to Afghanistan that help decrease the negative impact of the nature of this regional security complex will be of the essence.

### 4.3.5 Vulnerable and Potentially Powerful Actors

With the present political map of Afghanistan, where military power defines political access and participation, the majority of Afghans are so-called “vulnerable” actors. This is especially true for women. In spite of advances in women’s rights over the past ten years, it is perceived as a great risk that these advances may be lost if there is a negotiated peace with the AOGs or a Taliban takeover.\footnote{“A just peace? The Legacy of War for the Women of Afghanistan. 2011. Action Aid.}

In the interactive conflict analysis and interviews organized by the consultant team, several issues were raised in relation to different categories of the general population. A general conclusion was that there is a widespread war weariness among Afghans. At the same time, decades of civil war or insecurity have strengthened the male culture of violence, while they have decreased space and opportunities for women in recently militarized areas, in spite of the positive trend of the past ten years.

The vulnerability, especially in terms of insecurity, of the population has also contributed to the support of strongmen, criminal elements, and AOGs, given that there are few alternative options. As mentioned under Structures for Peace and Conflict, the most enforced element of this vulnerability has been the recruitment of young men, which is enforced by the male culture of pride and violence. Furthermore, the UN Secretary-General Report on Children and Armed Conflict in Afghanistan\footnote{United Nations Security Council. 2011. “Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Afghanistan.”} urges the parties to implement UN Security Council Resolutions 1539, 1612, and 1998. Stopping the
recruitment of child soldiers may have large effects on the conflict dynamics. First of all, the heavily skewed age structure of Afghanistan, with 42.3% of the population between 0 and 14 years old, means that a large recruitment pool becomes off-limits for the conflicting parties. In the long term, eliminating child recruitment might help to affect attitudes, making youth less militarized and reducing the risk of a perpetuated conflict.

Another element of this vulnerability is the difficulties in fostering a civic culture, social cohesion, intra-group relations and a potent civil society. These elements would help create conditions for new, and more representative, social and political movements. One issue raised by several actors is the lack of intellectual, or modern, middle-class Afghans in politics. There is little space outside the existing power networks, corrupt practices are widespread, and security risks substantial. These impediments seem to keep these actors outside politics and leave the scene to traditional power groups. Still, a new generation of educated Afghans seem to be essential for an emerging civil service and for a future, non-strongmen-based, party system. The analyses identify young intellectual Afghans as an emerging group, in spite of the obstacles, and a potentially powerful actor.

Women are frequently mentioned as messengers for peace. That is, they can actively help solve family and intra-family, or micro-level, conflicts and thus bear the potential of influencing and affecting society in general at a meso- and macro-level. In interviews in the four provinces of the Swedish-Finnish PRT, only 16% of the 248 people interviewed, equally distributed between women and men, rejected the statement that women are messengers for peace; 44% agreed, while 28% indicated a "maybe". The latter two categories indicate that 7 out of 10 Afghans in this area see the potential, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325, in women making a contribution to peaceful conflict resolution. In the section on Northern Afghanistan this will be elaborated further.

Another potentially powerful group mentioned is the elders in the communities. The war and weak governance practice have left few structures in place in large parts of Afghanistan. The elders have many times been marginalized, but retain a potential to act as catalysts in strengthening or rebuilding social cohesion in villages.

In terms of peace and furthering the agenda to address root causes of conflict, the mullahs are mentioned by many as a potentially powerful group. Islam unites the Afghans and the mullahs are key players in the interpretation of Islam and how the Holy Koran shall impact daily life. Still, several actors see the possibility of a double-edged sword.

4.4. Behaviour in Relation to Peace and Conflict

This section, in the conflict analysis manual, includes the drivers of conflict. As this study has, slightly, modified the approach, the drivers are presented in a later section. This part will briefly present some of the power mechanisms that seem to influence the present Afghan Government. A separate analysis is made of the aid community’s behaviour and the consequences of COIN, and the close relationship between aid and military operations. The consequences of all these types of behaviour are amalgamated, together with the attitudes and structure analysis, in the drivers for peace and conflict section.

4.4.1. Mechanisms of Power Politics in Afghanistan

However the situation is much more complex. The current Government of Afghanistan is in many regards a “loose alliance of convenience” among some of the main political and armed groups in the country centred (with the Taliban as the major exception) around the President, who does not have any real military power on his own. All of the armed groups, who in reality are dominating the current Government, are groups that fought against the Soviet Union, and later on amongst themselves, for control of the country; this includes Hezb-e-Islami. Especially during the civil war between 1993 and 1994, almost all of the groups were involved in a war against one another, creating a great deal of “bad blood” among the different groups.

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Moreover, since the power-sharing agreement in Bonn, there have been constant inter- and intra-group rivalries among the different groups working in the Government for access to power and resources through the Government. The administration has also used these internal divisions among and between the different groups to "divide and conquer". These internal and external divisions have taken more precedence with the latest parliamentary and presidential elections, where the main contenders for the positions in parliament and the Presidency were groups within the Government, causing further division and fragmentation among them.

In addition to this, most of the groups who have captured parts of the Government also have militant and/or criminal elements to them. There are allegations of a great deal of drug, gem and weapon smuggling occurring among parties who are governing Afghanistan. Complicating the matter further, some elements, such as the Hezb-e-Islami, have both a political front that is engaged with the Government and a militant front that is fighting against the Government.

The mechanisms for governing Afghanistan are based on constant calculation and struggle among and within the different groups in the Government for access to power and resources both licitly and illicitly. However, it is also shaped by fear of being marginalized, and consequently fear is also a strong driver of politics and conflict. This continues due to the inability of any single group to overpower the rest.

The graph below illustrates the complex dynamics driven by interest in power, greed, and fear, but also by legitimate grievances.

4.4.2. Development and Conflict in Afghanistan

Interviews with development cooperation actors in Afghanistan and literature reviews of conflict sensitivity practice reveal that present practice in Afghanistan, on the one hand, and policy directions from OECD-DAC on best practice, on the other, are worlds apart. This partly has to do with the capacity and knowledge of development cooperation workers, but also most probably with the fact that Afghanistan is high on the global political agenda and because focus on security and civil-military synergies have blurred the lines. The unintended impact of military operations on aid will be discussed below, but there are, in general, related dynamics between how aid is distributed and the war on terror and the present COIN strategy.
Development cooperation is about change, as well as resources and expertise to help bring about this change. Consequently, in a conflictive environment these changes will threaten the positions of some actors, while benefitting those of others. Furthermore, aid resources might contribute to resource conflict or even contribute to the means necessary to wage war. Numerous are the examples given in interviews regarding infrastructure projects where protection is bought from criminal elements or AOGs, providing the latter with resources to continue to wage war.\textsuperscript{38} Also, the introduction of democratic structures and decision making has sometimes amalgamated with a zero-sum war logic and destroyed traditional consensus-seeking mechanisms.

Several actors, both donors and Afghans being interviewed, testify about the lack of cultural sensitivity in relation to Islam and traditions. For example, Western liberal ideas and women’s rights are seen as being imposed in a way that increases the perception of threat towards traditional values, and in the worst of cases, in fact decrease the rights of women as a negative consequence of this lack of sensitivity. Needless to say, this issue is tremendously sensitive also within the international community, as women’s rights is such an important normative value and goal. However, it does not seem to be a question of “if” these rights should be furthered by women and men but “how” this is best done. There is a vast body of good examples of how, for example, forced marriages are handled through the support of local peacebuilding councils and how sexual reproductive rights and school attendance of girls are supported through alliances with moderate mullahs. Consequently, increasing conflict sensitivity when promoting gender equality and women’s and girls’ rights does not solve all the dilemmas, but provides ways of increasing impact.

The creation of militias, supported by ISAF, including the Swedish Armed Forces, is another example where resources for conflict are provided and basic OECD-DAC, EU and UN are disregarded.

It is difficult to disregard the specific context in Afghanistan being an ongoing civil war with a parallel and substantial political, military, and development cooperation investment by the West. Still, isolating development cooperation as a specific phenomenon, conflict sensitivity practice does not, according to Afghan and international development cooperation workers, seem to be systematically applied and integrated into results-based management. This counts for donors such as Sida and for Afghan NGOs. The Swedish Committee on Afghanistan (SAK) has some staff trained in the Do No Harm methodology and has initiated a process of increasing conflict sensitivity. In spite of having a widely acknowledged capacity to act even in conflict areas, the organization acknowledges the opportunities to improve. However, there are other ongoing or recently initiated efforts. The UK’s Department for International Development is to start a conflict sensitivity analysis of some programmes, and CDA Collaborative Learning Projects has been training the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) for some years. They are even in discussion with the US military to train them on the Do No Harm methodology. Also, United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) has included a conflict analysis in their programme documentation since 2011.

At a strategic level, the majority of the aid flow has bypassed the Afghan state and a repeating theme in the interviews made by the consultancy team and in the literature is that parallel systems have been built with an over-emphasis on service delivery through NGOs and contractors, leaving the state in second place. From a Do No Harm perspective, this means that the traditional fragmentation in Afghanistan has been strengthened, while the state, which is key to donors’ vision of state-building, has partly been left aside during the first years after 2001. The changing trend and increasing pledges in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness is encouraging, but damage has already been caused.

This study does not have sufficient empirical evidence to give a more precise description of the current application of conflict sensitivity. However, it remains fairly clear that, as Afghanistan is an extremely gender-unequal society, and given that the country is in civil war, conflict sensitivity is one of the most important approaches when planning, implementing, and evaluating development intervention.

Humanitarian assistance is based on different principles than development cooperation and operates through neutrality and with the support of international humanitarian conventions. In

\textsuperscript{38} In interviews with Sida staff it has been pointed out that this is not the practice of Sida or its partners.
Northern Afghanistan, a joint working group focusing on information exchange between ISAF and humanitarian actors meets frequently. However, after the attack on the UNAMA compound in Mazar-e Sharif in April 2011, the UN system was severely weakened at the same time as there were reports of a humanitarian emergency developing in Sari Pul because of droughts. As a consequence, but without prior coordination with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) or the German-led Northern Command, ISAF HQ started preparing food distribution to 30,000 people, alleged to be suffering from food shortages. This was in all its good intentions a breach of good donor practice and humanitarian principles and the agreed separations of military and humanitarian activities allowing humanitarian actors to maintain neutrality and, foremost, humanitarian access. The above initiative was halted before being implemented, and the military humanitarian coordination is functioning well again, according to OCHA. Also, an agreement has been reached whereby ISAF, only if no other alternative exists, will provide assistance, but then in coordination with the humanitarian actors. The latter is important, as AOGs are gaining in influence in the North, and the humanitarian actors are therefore even more dependent on neutrality to gain humanitarian access. Interesting to note, conflict-sensitive practice is extremely important for humanitarian actors as part of gaining access and not doing harm, but such practice is not evident in the North. This would be an important issue to stress in future planning.

4.4.3. Counter-insurgency Strategy and Civil-Military Synergies

With the introduction of the Counter-insurgency Strategy (COIN) there was a strategic shift to increase territorial control and to win hearts and minds – undermining support for radical, insurgent, or terrorist groups. COIN can be seen as a military strategy or military operational orientation and through its core concepts (shape, clear, hold, build), the goals will be achieved. Interestingly, by submerging development cooperation, another political instrument in the international toolbox for peace- and state-building, military planning and execution have gained in importance at the expense of traditional development approaches. One aspect of this at a philosophical level, referring to the Prussian war philosopher Carl von Clausewitz, is that politics becomes militarized. Von Clausewitz stressed the supremacy of politics and held that war was just one tool, or continuation, of politics. One could argue that this is not the case in Afghanistan, where most energy seems to have been dedicated to militarily defeating or weakening primarily international terrorist networks and secondly the AOGs. The international community should consider the future consequences of this militarization of the political toolbox since 9/11.

Another critical aspect concerns the effectiveness of aligning development cooperation to military operations ("build" in the core concepts of COIN) through so-called quick impact projects. A US Congressional report outlines that 85% of USAid funds are channeled through quick impact projects, stressing the far-reaching integration of USAid's operations into COIN, and questioning the effectiveness of aid as an instrument in winning hearts and minds. An expert conference in Wilton Park in 2010 highlighted the weak evidence supporting the COIN approach to development cooperation. In fact, British COIN operations in Malaysia after the Second World War, touted by many as a success story, deviated from key development cooperation principles and relied on strong pillars of human rights abuse to be successful. The Feinstein Center is studying the effectiveness of quick impact projects, and looking at Helmand province, concludes that aid delivery seems to have created a divide and more resentment, or at least alienation, in areas that have not received support. In other words, from a conflict-sensitivity perspective, aid is not only ineffective but also potentially destructive. It goes without saying that more research must be conducted in order to validate the COIN approach.

39 Humanitarian imperative, neutrality, impartiality, independence.
40 Interview with a representative of OCHA in Mazar-e Sharif.
Sweden, as all other states providing military troops through International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT) and development cooperation to Afghanistan, has to relate to the tensions and opportunities of finding synergies between different political instruments, especially military operations and aid effectiveness. In a recent review, the Swedish National Audit Office highlighted the need for the Swedish Government to more clearly define the meaning of “synergies” between aid and military operations. In fact, the study was explicit in stating that no clear direction is given at all for the operational “on the ground” work and that Swedish civil servants were expected to find their own ways. When in Mazar-e Sharif, the consultancy team made a special effort to understand what these possible operational synergies could be.

At the strategic or macro level the Swedish goals harmonize to support security, stability, democracy, and development. Thus, through the actions of these agencies, Sida or the Swedish Armed Forces, these actors will provide, independently or in coordination, activities at the operational/tactical or meso-/micro-level that help contribute to expected results at the strategic level. However, looking at the latter level, inconsistencies start to become apparent. In “Appendix 7: Civ-Mil Synergies at the Operational Level, the table illustrates the similarities, but primarily differences, between Sida’s and the Swedish Armed Forces’ approaches.

The consultancy team’s conclusion is that goals, principles for engagement, methods, and timelines differ to such an extent that coordinated action is hard to imagine, unless policy areas are submersed into another. Humanitarian assistance, resting on the humanitarian principles and thereby being neutral, can in principle not be directed by Sida staff from the PRT. The present staff at the PRT have limited “synergies” to information exchange – or “cooperation through separation.” Still, this information exchange seem to consume, especially for the small Sida team, considerable time, and the effectiveness and efficiency of this information exchange in relation to expected aid results can be questioned. In fact, the co-location of Swedish personnel in the PRT should be analysed, as it might be more effective, especially for Sida, to separate civilian and military personnel, if few cooperative benefits exists and “cooperation through separation” is a practice. The present “civilian lead” through the Senior Civilian Representative of the PRT, as long as the PRT and its Commanding Officer are a part of the ISAF Command Structure, is more of a political than an operational arrangement, but could certainly serve to stress the strategic political lead. As the PRTs in Afghanistan shift towards more civilian tasks, especially after 2014, the effectiveness and political viability of maintaining the present PRT physical structure, in spite of changing name and orientation, should be carefully analysed. The PRTs are associated with military activities on the side of the present Government. Most probably, a totally different arrangement might be necessary from a strategic perspective, if Swedish contributions are to have a sustainable impact. This is especially true if the security situation were to deteriorate even more.

Thus, strategic synergies are in fact viable, but when looking at a lower level the story is different. One recommendation is that, preferably in an international context through NATO and the OECD-DAC with some regional organization, a study be done to collect more evidence and suggest ways ahead – outlining a separation or different and potentially fruitful synergies. One such possible area is security sector reform, where development cooperation dedicates itself to the civilian areas and the foreign military to its domestic counterpart. This is an area of support that might be developed at the Swedish PRT, but which is hampered by the unbalanced support, primarily military, to the Afghan security sector.

4.5 Most Salient Drivers for Peace & Conflict

This section summarizes and selects key drivers by combining the three corners of the conflict triangle: actors’ attitudes and behaviour and the underlying structures for peace and conflict. It will also suggest some possible programming options. However, more precise options for Sida, taking into account existing strategy, comparative advantages, and so on, will be elaborated in Chapter 7.

46 Citation from the present Commanding Officer, Swedish PRT in Mazar-e Sharif.
4.5.1. Drivers for Peace and Possible Programming Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DRIVERS OF PEACE</th>
<th>Programming options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic /local</td>
<td>A strong sense of national pride exists in Afghanistan, and Islam, as seen by many Afghans and international analysts, is a uniting factor. Build upon the uniting force of Islam as part of strengthening national ownership for change, while being aware of and actively promoting women's rights in parallel through Islam (conflict sensitive).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>One combination of factors that seem conducive to peace is the local culture of dispute resolution, the general war weariness, and the Government and international community's (IC) support, through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), to the National Solidarity Programme (NSP). Evidence exists that local governance has been strengthened at the community level and that the traditional community structures, or Community Development Councils (CDC), have a peacebuilding function. Provide support to the NSP, Shuras, and other local governance mechanisms, and support conflict resolution projects strengthening local traditional practice and mechanisms of dispute resolution and traditional justice. Also, cross-cutting identities, as an alternative to ethnic identities, should be supported to strengthen social cohesion. This will also increase the communities' ability to negotiate with armed groups and protect themselves. It is important to consider the gender aspect, as there is evidence that women many times are excluded from these mechanisms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Secular higher education is mentioned as important for the emerging party system and civil service. Tendencies are shown of an emerging intellectual middle class that is key to building civic culture and a democratic culture. Consider support for higher education, especially in relation to needs identified in the Afghan civil service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Economic development seems to have some mitigating effects, decreasing frustration and providing alternatives to joining the armed opposition groups (AOGs) or the Government in fighting the war. This is, according to this analysis, primarily visible in urban areas in Afghanistan. Support economic development and private sector development with emphasis on young males in rural areas. However, from a rights perspective, efforts should also be made to provide women and communities at large with job opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Preparations are being made to extract natural resources, especially minerals. This could provide the Government with national revenue sources, presently almost totally absent, for building a future democratic state, delivering services, and being able to uphold a contract with its citizens. Support exploitation of these resources, while taking into account environmental impact, conflict sensitivity, and corruption risk. These minerals could otherwise provide resources for conflict and become a conflict issue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5.2. Drivers for Conflict and Possible Programming Options

In regard to drivers of conflict, there are two theoretical and generic mechanisms that relate to causes of war; these are also a part of the Sida Manual on Conflict Analysis (2004). The first one is the security dilemma. Its basic assumption is that actors might want peace, but fear makes them continue the conflict or armed struggle. The other mechanism is the power struggle, and actors might be motivated by greed or grievances. This can mean interest in power or economic resources, greed, or grievances because of exclusion, human rights abuse, or other reasons.
## DRIVERS OF CONFLICT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Driver</th>
<th>Programming options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Security dilemma</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Offer long-term support to the justice and security sector (soft)” to decrease fears.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic /local</td>
<td>Years of war dynamics have created a zero-sum game where the winner takes all. The strongmen’s fear of losing power, and thus security, drives several actors to continue the war.</td>
<td><strong>Ensure child protection, disarmament, demobilization &amp; reintegration (DDR) for child soldiers, support to local justice and security sector (soft), and access to justice for young people.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Insecurity, threats, and a weak justice and security sector drive in particular young men, but also children, to seek recruitment with the Government or the armed opposition groups and thus feed the armed conflict.</td>
<td><strong>Consider strategic partnership with liberal mullahs/ulamas for proper and unbiased religious education and conflict-sensitive communication. Also consider being more cultural and conflict sensitive, while not abandoning core values, and while promoting gender equality. Furthermore, and outside the direct scope of aid, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) must show more restraint and behave in a more conflict-sensitive manner.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic /local</td>
<td>Communication from armed opposition groups and some mullahs, in combination with the international community’s behaviour, for example, civilian casualties caused by ISAF or night searches of houses as well as push for changing gender relations, increase the perception of threat towards traditional values and Islam. Furthermore, this increases support for and willingness to oust just another foreign occupation.</td>
<td><strong>Consider strengthening the rule of law in those areas related to corruption and drug trade, where quick wins may de-motivate profit-seekers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Pakistan fears losing influence over Afghanistan and thereby continues to support both the United States (US) and the AOGs.</td>
<td><strong>There is need to identify and influence key male stakeholders on the benefits of gender equality and women’s rights, and also, to support women’s participation in the work of the High Peace Council. Presently there exists uncertainty and fear, which also creates a security dilemma. The international community and the Afghan Government need to communicate – through community outreach programmes – what the transition and peace process means.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power Struggle</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Consider strengthening the rule of law</strong> in those areas related to corruption and drug trade, where quick wins may de-motivate profit-seekers <strong>Strengthen the political dialogue</strong> with these actors in order to address their fears. Furthermore, to help them identify possible benefits of power sharing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Withdrawal/transition of ISAF and the US in 2014 will increase the leverage of the AOGs, war lords, and regional actors with specific interests – and, consequently, decreases interest in negotiation. The window of opportunity for a negotiated settlement is rapidly closing. Women’s rights will most probably be the first bargaining chip to be given up.</td>
<td><strong>It is important to support regional agreements, helping to reduce competition and affect incentives and possible fears (security dilemma) about support to Afghanistan.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic /local</td>
<td>Several actors are interested in keeping the state and rule of law weak so as to profit from instability – greed.</td>
<td><strong>Consider strengthening the rule of law</strong> in those areas related to corruption and drug trade, where quick wins may de-motivate profit-seekers <strong>Strengthen the political dialogue</strong> with these actors in order to address their fears. Furthermore, to help them identify possible benefits of power sharing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>The Northern Alliance wants to preserve its power base and is less interested in power sharing with the AOGs, as this will possibly reinstate Pashtun dominance.</td>
<td><strong>It is important to support regional agreements, helping to reduce competition and affect incentives and possible fears (security dilemma) about support to Afghanistan.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>The power struggle for regional influence between actors such as Pakistan, Iran, India, China, Russia, and Uzbekistan feeds into the conflict (different kinds of support provided to a variety of actors).</td>
<td><strong>Promote dialogue between the Government and the IC on alternative ways of combating drugs and possible support for alternative crops, anti-corruption measures, etc.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drug Trade</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Promote dialogue between the Government and the IC on alternative ways of combating drugs and possible support for alternative crops, anti-corruption measures, etc.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Local eradication of poppy crops increases unemployment and thereby feeds AOG’s recruitment</td>
<td><strong>Promote dialogue between the Government and the IC on alternative ways of combating drugs and possible support for alternative crops, anti-corruption measures, etc.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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47 Soft security-sector reform refers to the civilian part of the sector.
## Unemployment and dignity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local/re</th>
<th>High levels of poverty, limited employment possibilities due to rudimentary infrastructure, and weak economic growth, along with social pressure and damaged dignity  <strong>facilitate recruitment</strong> to the AOGs and also help provide students to the madrasas in Pakistan.</th>
<th>Encourage private sector development, including infrastructure, with special focus on young men and sustainable job creation, vocational education, and training relevant for market opportunities and community needs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

## Governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Inadequate service delivery from the state due to low capacity, low tax revenues, and rudimentary infrastructure that limits access. Lack of social cohesion and sufficient good governance. Bonds between local elites and populations are fragile and based on patron-client relationships. Legitimacy is low, which affects the conflict dynamics (support, recruitment, participation, etc.).</th>
<th>Provide support for  <strong>local governance</strong> at provincial, district, and community levels. Invest in infrastructure to increase  <strong>access to state services</strong>.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic/local</td>
<td>Weak parties and political movements (programmatic and organizational integrity), with many intellectuals not engaging, leave the political game to traditional strongmen accustomed to zero-sum games and violent means.</td>
<td>Consider supporting, in a gender-sensitive way, emerging independent and  <strong>democratic political parties</strong> – essential for building a democratic culture – including possible  <strong>election law reform</strong>, ensuring public financing of parties according to election results.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## International Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic/local</th>
<th>Continuing  <strong>lack of support to the State/Public Financial Management (PFM)</strong> and the use of channels other than Government, creating parallel structures (not aligned or harmonized) has decreased the State’s legitimacy and the trust in international donors.</th>
<th>Increase  <strong>support to and through the State</strong>, but also strengthen anti-corruption, transparency, PFM, tax, and fiscal reforms, and civil service reform.  <strong>Human resources are essential to increase capacity.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic/local</td>
<td>Aid, especially military,  <strong>feeds corruption</strong>, and in some cases, also finances the AOGs, thus  <strong>providing resources for conflict</strong> and decreasing legitimacy of the IC.</td>
<td>Strengthen  <strong>conflict sensitivity</strong> and  <strong>anti-corruption practices</strong> (Sida, partners, donors).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic/local</td>
<td>Aid in general is not conflict sensitive, especially military aid, and worsens local and national conflicts.</td>
<td>Strengthen  <strong>conflict sensitive practice</strong> (Sida, partners, donors).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Scenario Analysis of Afghanistan

The scenario analysis aims at providing contingencies to Sida and Swedish development cooperation in the face of substantial changes to the conflict dynamics. Most probably, none of the exact scenarios will be realized, but they still provide a menu for choice as future development will be more or less closely related to one of them. The scenarios take their point of departure in the "Transition" in 2014, which is prepared by ISAF and the Afghan Government. The planning for this transition, also depending on the results from the recent Bonn and Istanbul conferences, will give more insights into the exact components of the transition, but the assumption here is that it will entail a substantial reduction of foreign troop presence and some reduction of international development cooperation in Afghanistan.

Below, the following three scenarios are presented:

1. Neutral Scenario: Continued War with Few Changes
2. Positive Scenario: A Strongmen Peace Agreement in Afghanistan
3. Negative Scenario: An Escalation of the Civil War

To foresee the most likely scenario is very difficult, but future scenarios have been discussed with several groups in the interactive conflict analysis sessions. Based on these, the consultancy team estimates that the neutral scenario is the most probable, followed by the negative scenario with escalated war. If a neutral scenario were to happen, it would most probably result, after some years, in a one-sided victory or escalation of the civil war. Possibly, in the absence of international troops, it would reach a state of "mutually hurting stalemate" whereby the actors are more interested in negotiated peace. The likelihood for negotiated peace at the present seems very low because of the upcoming transition of Western troops, existing fears, and power interests. The figure below illustrates the possible scenarios. Negative peace illustrates the absence of violence, but continued structural violence, that is, political, social, and economic injustices.\(^\text{40}\)

5.1 Neutral Scenario: Continued War with Few Changes

This scenario is primarily a continuation of the present situation of conflict dynamics, in spite of some key changes. The major bulk of the ISAF forces have withdrawn, the US has reached an agreement on military bases in Afghanistan, but the AOGs and the Government have not been able to reach a peace settlement. The Government continues to be represented by the present power groups and presidential elections in 2014 do not bring about a political change. The Government continues to have

\(^{40}\) Johan Galtung, the founder of the Peace Research Institute, Oslo, defined these concepts.
only limited societal penetration, and the security sector maintains formal territorial control, while AOGs continue to exert substantial levels of influence in more rural areas and control pockets of territory. Levels of violence continue to be high, maintained at war levels, and the Afghan security sector, as well as the Government, is dependent on Western, especially US, support to maintain the size and capacity of the security sector. The security sector remains highly militarized, and human rights abuses and civilian casualties follow. AOGs continue with high profile killings, suicide bombing, and to some extent, organized military operations confronting the Government security sector where it is weakest or where it is politically beneficial to do so, for example, by attacking provincial Government headquarters. Pakistan continues its support of the AOGs, while other regional actors support the Government. Long-term sustainability of the Afghan Government is severely threatened, and the environment for development cooperation actors is gravely limited.

Generic options for aid: Options are similar to alternatives given in the last chapter and the Sida-specific recommendations. However, sustainability of aid means that it will be concentrated in areas where relative security prevails, while humanitarian assistance will be present in the war zones. Aside from the general direction of aid mentioned above, conflict sensitivity remains essential, and development cooperation should also try to support agents for change/peace and counter the spoilers, or those in favour of war, at both the local and strategic levels, to promote a political solution to the civil war.

5.2 Positive Scenario: Strongmen Peace Agreement in Afghanistan

The full withdrawal of ISAF, leaving no NATO-related military bases in the county, has taken place, and the High Peace Commission, supported by international mediators and regional powers including Pakistan, and a sound mediation mechanism and procedure, has managed to reach a peace and power-sharing agreement in Afghanistan that includes the main AOGs. This is a "strongmen"-based peace, which does not include other actors and those with power. Islam and sharia law, in accordance with the peace agreement, will be more present in governance, and elections will be held no earlier than 5 years after the first interim “Unity Government”. The Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Army will be downsized; there is an agreement on security sector reform and of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of both AOG and Government personnel. Some elements from all sides will be integrated into the security sector. A reconciliation process will be initiated and a pledge for international assistance, especially from Muslim countries, has been made for social and infrastructure investments. The ability of the State to function will be heavily dependent on the funds provided by the international community. Conditions for development cooperation are conducive because of reduced levels of violence, but national ownership is stronger, and there is less space for “traditional Western and liberal ideas”.

Generic options for aid: A strong focus will have to be given to sustainable and nationally owned implementation of the peace accords. That is, both traditional poverty reduction and governance, possible through a revised and more "peace-oriented" national Poverty Reduction Strategy addressing drivers of peace and conflict. However, given the power distribution of the peace accords, there is a need to widen national ownership. Aid levels should be more evenly distributed, as the initial absorption capacity will be limited and needs increase with time. That is, the international community should follow the needs curve. The World Bank has revealed that aid usually decreases five years after a peace agreement, at the same time as the needs and capacity of the receiving country increase. Women’s rights will most probably be negatively affected by a negotiated settlement, and therefore, culture and conflict-sensitive political influence has to be exercised to safeguard some of the advances in Afghanistan, and through strategic alliances, strengthen the incentives among men for women's involvement in the peace process and decision-making processes at the strategic and local levels. The West should not press for early elections, as this will have, especially in Afghanistan, a counter-productive effect; as is known from conflict theory, this will only play into war and power politics and politicized ethnicity. Efforts should be directed towards strengthening civil society and cross-cutting identities in order to strengthen the social and conflict-preventive fabric, that is, a civic culture.
Furthermore, support should be given to an emerging and non-ethnic and non-strongmen-based party system. In addition, key components related to attitudes and structures of war need to be reformed, that is, support to a long-term reconciliation process, not pushed too early, combining both healing and justice and a reduction and reform of the instruments of war. The latter means support to both the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegation and security sector reform processes, especially the SSR, because war has corrupted the sector and made it suboptimal and too big for peacetime needs. International presence, for the sake of effectiveness, will be necessary to support a DDR process. International presence to observe these processes might be a challenge, as the UN might have lost its independent mandate because of historical developments.

5.3 Negative Scenario: An Escalation of the Civil War

After a substantial reduction of ISAF, the Government security sector cannot resist the AOGs and their control over province after province crumbles. The Government maintains control over regions where they have loyal networks and supporters, and the situation is similar to the mid-nineties, that is, chaos. The Taliban take control of Kabul after some time, but do not manage to gain total control of the country. The civil war deepens the ethnic cleavages, and alliances shift over time, making the political environment even more complex. Levels of violence are very high during long periods, infrastructure is destroyed, and there is a humanitarian emergency taking place in a very difficult security setting for Afghans as well as foreign aid workers. The former and vast security sector, including the militias built in 2010–2014, has split up and added resources and interests to the conflict, thereby making it more intense and destructive. The drug trade spikes in areas controlled by some actors as a source for conflict.

Generic options for aid: Development cooperation opportunities are very limited and aid will have to focus on humanitarian assistance and initiatives to protect vulnerable groups and, in spite of meagre opportunities, try to support initiatives for peacebuilding in secure “islands”, and mediation, track one and two, and so forth, at the strategic level. More long-term development cooperation is still possible, while being aware of its limited potential, in areas where security allows.
6. Conflict Analysis of Northern Afghanistan

Moving the conflict analysis to Northern Afghanistan, that is, the area of the Provincial Reconstruction Team based in Mazar-e Sharif covering the Jawzjan, Balkh, Sari Pul, and the Samangan provinces, the main source of information is the more than 270 interviews, equally distributed between women and men, done by the 17-person team of CPAU and Swedepeace. For more information on the data, please refer to the section on methodology.

Needless to say, national or macro conflict dynamics and the above presented scenarios will have a profound impact on the provinces in the North, at the same time as they have their own local and regional dynamics. It is our strong belief, based on conflict research and practise, that lasting peace in Afghanistan will depend on addressing the causes of peace and conflict at both levels, so as to create a cumulative and linking effect.49

This part of the study will primarily analyse structures, actors, and scenarios at the district level, with a regional and local lens, aiming to present programming options to development cooperation in general and Sida in particular. It will also give a brief overview of the conflict and peace dynamics in each of the four provinces. However, the district studies provide a more in-depth analysis and programming recommendations. As stated before, it is not a context analysis, and the main orientation is to find the factors that perpetuate conflict and the ones working in favour of peace, so-called drivers, bearing in mind that the drivers of peace are more rare in an ongoing civil war.

In Appendix 2, all the six districts are systematically analysed and overall programming options presented in relation to key drivers of conflict. The scenarios are local or regional in their nature, and if on the national stage, for example, a peace deal or an escalation of the civil war were to take place, these local and regional scenarios would shift. In reality there are too many variables to predict between the national and local level, and therefore the scenarios are based on the Northern context and defined as (a) continuation of the present situation, (b) deterioration, and (c) improvement.

6.1. Overview of Conflict Dynamics in the Four Provinces of the Swedish PRT50

Northern Afghanistan has enjoyed a relatively stable and secure situation compared to the South and East of Afghanistan. This situation has changed and a strategic reorientation of the AOGs, especially the Taliban, to increase presence in the region has changed the conflict dynamics. With the expansion of the ANSF and the COIN approach, the Government, supported by ISAF, has engaged in more combat activities to take and hold areas where the AOGs are present. With these two changes combined, and adding criminal and drug-related activities, the security situation has dramatically changed. For civilian casualties, please see the graph to the left.

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51 Data from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) indicate the number of civilian casualties. These figures include deaths, kidnappings, as well as other injuries. Timeline: 2008–2010.
ISAF supplies are being shipped through the North rather than the South, creating an incentive for the Taliban to strike ISAF. As ISAF logistics have been shifted from Pakistan to pass through Central Asia, there is an incentive for Pakistanis, according to some analysts, to disturb ISAF logistics in the North, to get them transferred back to Pakistani territory.

Nevertheless, Northern Afghanistan is still a relatively less conflict-ridden region, but there are local conflicts that do relate to the civil war and the absence or weakness of the state. Northern Afghanistan and its key power stakeholders have a relative strong presence in the Central Government due to the outcome of the war in 2001. The United Front is still an important actor in Northern Afghanistan as well as in the national arena, although with shifting internal coherence and strength, as illustrated earlier in the study.

### 6.1.1. Balkh Province

The Balkh province’s **structural conditions** are comparably favourable in relation to the rest of Afghanistan and in 2009, after revealing positive governance indicators of its capital, Mazar-e Sharif was ranked as the city with the best governance in Afghanistan. Being a hub for transportation to Central Asia and in the North, the province has experienced positive economic growth. Trade and industry employs comparably more people than in the other provinces. Balkh is dominated by Tajiks, and in areas with more Pashtun presence (districts of Chahar Bolak, Chimtal, Dawlat Abad, and part of Balkh and Sholgara) governance is weaker and the Pashtun population is more vulnerable because of conflict and lesser benefits from international development cooperation. The more peripheral districts have even weaker governance and the state is partially absent. The justice system is seen as weak and corrupt, especially at the district level. Locally, disputes exist regarding the ownership of land and use of water. It seems like poppy production is not playing an important role, but in spite of Balkh’s relative economic development, youth unemployment is high, which contributes to the fact that young men are recruited to the AOGs and the ANSF, thereby fuelling the war.

In Balkh, some of the main national **actors** are present, and their **attitudes** and **behaviour** do not only influence Balkh but also the North and Afghanistan at large. The power struggle, which now seems to have settled, between Dostum, the leader of Junbesh, and Atta, the Provincial Governor of Balkh, played an important role some years after 2001, until a settlement led to Junbesh control of Jawzjan and partly Sari Pul; Atta was left to govern Balkh. The latter is seen by many as a modernized former commander who has contributed to governance, growth, and security in Balkh. He is also deeply involved with the private sector in Northern Afghanistan and has strong economic interests. However, his breakaway from President Karzai in the last election stirred some uncertainty, now resolved, regarding his future position. The leadership in Balkh is seen as progressive, but allegations of links to organized crime remain. There are observations that the Governor, being Tajik, has become more interested in engaging the marginalized Pashtun population, which is a positive sign. Governor Atta has considerable influence within Jamiat, and the death of former President Rabbani, the party leader, means that Atta might change or merge its present political arena to the national one. Fear of Pashtun dominance at the national level and a desire to have independence from Kabul are other attitudes and goals.

As illustrated in the districts studies (please see below) AOGs are present in Balkh in the districts where Pashtun populations are located. The Government does not have territorial control, and militias, supported by ISAF and Sweden, are being built to increase security. The AOGs’ activities have decreased the presence of the state and its service delivery, and put the population in an even more vulnerable position. The ANSF’s, the militias’, and ISAF’s response has not improved the situation, according to the interviews, and the AOGs are partially governing some areas. As illustrated by one police officer in Sholgara:
In the course of the year, operations have taken place by ISAF and the army. But when they went to the villages the Taliban escaped. When they left the villages the Taliban returned.  

### 6.1.2. Jawzjan Province

The **structural conditions** in Jawzjan province are not as favourable as in Balkh, but according to analysts, the province’s governance is rather effective. This, however, decreases substantially when looking at the Uzbek-dominated districts of Darzab and Qush Tepa (see district analysis in Appendix), where insurgents are active and governance is much weaker and has partially retreated. The province has a large minority of Uzbeks and Turkmens, but there are minorities of Tajiks, Pashtuns, and Kuchis. The economy is primarily dependent on agriculture and trade and as in most areas, unemployment plays into recruitment to the ANSF and AOGs. Conflict lines are partially ethnic, but primarily about land conflicts dating back to the time of Soviet occupation.

When it comes to the key **actors** and their **behaviour** and **attitudes**, the Junbesh leader Dostum has played an important role. Since the settlement with Atta, Junbesh has been in control of Jawzjan. The former governor was removed during violent protests in 2007 and the present one, Muhamad Alem Sayii, has been competing with Dostum for the leadership of the party. This has created some tensions and most recently a reconciliation process is on the way between the two. Some believe that possibilities are opening up for Junbesh to become a more modern party. There are indications that ethnic lines are becoming less important in the elections, and the comparably peaceful elections in the province in 2009 resulted in less support to Junbesh from the Uzbek and Turkmen population. As in Balkh, where the Provincial Governor seems to be adopting a more active approach towards the Pashtun, this might show the possibility of a slight breakup of ethnic politics, a positive trend that should be supported from a conflict and peace perspective. The AOGs in Darzab and Qush Tepa and the negative perception about the future from most of the population in these districts show that the relative stability, as in all of the four provinces, varies very much between the districts. In the most vulnerable districts, the state and AOGs are contributing to increased poverty indicators and the ANSF and ISAF are not able to provide security.

### 6.1.3. Sari Pul Province

The **structural conditions** in the Sari Pul province are much worse than in any of the other three provinces. Infrastructure is underdeveloped, governance very weak, and its population heavily dependent on agriculture, with no industry present. This also means that opportunities for insurgents are stronger and AOGs’ control, the strongest conflict factor, is a fact in the Sayyad district. Still, the demobilization process is stated to have been successful in some of the districts. Governance indicators are weak, partly, aside from the access problems, as a result of lack of sufficient qualified human resources. For the justice system this means that impunity is rather dominant in Sari Pul, where commanders and AOGs can operate with a larger degree of freedom. Statistics on ethnic composition indicate that Uzbeks are an important minority.

An important **actor** in Sari Pul is Junbesh. However, the Governor Sayed Anwar Rahmati is affiliated with Vice President Khalil and **(attitudes and behaviour)** is not supported by Junbesh, Jamiat, or Wahadat, according to analysts interviewed. This means that the Governor lacks support from key political stakeholders in the province and is thus confined in the exercise of power. Combined with the track records of earlier Governors, power struggles, and the structural conditions, the governance prospects are dim. AOGs, under the leadership of Mullah Nader (see district analysis in Appendix), are active in Sayyad and connected to the AOGs in Jawzjan and Faryab. They are successful in limiting state control, and the ANSF and ISAF are not able to provide security. The reintegration process seems to have been somewhat successful, but not with hardliners and not in Sayyad.

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6.1.4. Samangan Province

The structural conditions in Samangan are challenging from a development perspective, at the same time as conflict and peace indicators are rather positive. Samangan is mountainous and rural and heavily dependent on agriculture. Also, the quality of governance needs much improvement, in spite of the province-level governance having been observed to be somewhat effective. Still, quality of human resources, though not to the same extent as in Sari Pul, is a challenge. The justice and security system might work reasonably well, given the low number of reported human rights violations, but militias seem to play an important role, which can be a danger for the future (see district studies in Appendix). Samangan is experiencing very low levels of armed violence and AOGs are primarily passing through the province on their way to Sari Pul or Balkh, according to people interviewed. The majority of the population is made up of Uzbeks and Tajiks, with minorities of Hazaras, Turkmens, Tatars, and Arabs. The number of Pashtuns is low, and this is possibly one of the reasons why the Taliban have not been able to establish a foothold in Samangan.

In relation to actors and their attitudes and behaviour, a key stakeholder in Samangan is Ahmed Kahn, allegedly with ability to mobilize strong support and used to using violent means, a former Junbesh commander who has broken away. He has been a main player in defining the future of the province, and the conflict with Junbesh, from which he brought many of his supporters, has created tensions. As a consequence of supporting President Karzai’s opponent Abdullah Abdullah in the presidential elections, which also strengthened relations with Balkh’s Atta, who was a former adversary, Kahn’s influence has decreased. However, once again in parliament, after having organized violent protests when he was denied a seat in the parliament, he maintains a strong influence over the province and the power of balance seems to have been restored, according to analysts. The Governor in Samangan is Khairullah Anush Anoosh, and he, according to interviews, is governing quite effectively, but has to have the support of Kahn for his decisions to be able to govern. Jamiat is increasing its support and can become a contender for power in the future. There seems to be a strong anti-Taliban alliance in Samangan that has helped to keep AOGs out of the province.

6.1.5. Impact of National Scenarios

Of the three scenarios presented in the last chapter, two would have a profound impact on Northern Afghanistan while the neutral scenario, continued war at present levels, would mean little change. In the case of escalated civil war, it is possible that the region would try to preserve its integrity and avoid being dragged into the dynamics of an escalation. Still, and as illustrated, fears of Pashtun dominance might create a security dilemma that would make Jamiat, Junbesh, and Wahadat take actions and increase the risk of the civil war also escalating further in the North. The present creation of militias in the North would facilitate this negative scenario. Also, economic development would take a toll and fragmentation and increase of AOG activities might be hard to hold back. The other alternative scenario, a negotiated strongmen peace would by definition involve key political leaders in the North in a future Government. This would open up opportunities for positive development and would, compared to the neutral scenario, most probably facilitate the possibilities for development, poverty reduction, and peacebuilding. Still, women’s rights will most probably be challenged.

6.2. Summary of the Conflict Analysis in the Six Districts

The six Districts analysed clearly demonstrate the weak governance structure at this level, but also how Northern Afghanistan power politics come into play at the local level. The rivalries between Jamiat and Junbesh as well as the influence of Balkh Governor Atta are more than evident. Powerful actors during the Soviet occupation and the civil war in the 1990s remain important power brokers.

Another factor that emerges is the fact that development cooperation, especially in war-torn districts such as Chimtal, Chahar Bolak, Qush Tepa, and Darzab, cannot be implemented without a careful stakeholder and Do No Harm analysis. Many contexts are so infested by fear, violence, corruption, and strongmen influence that aid risks deepening cleavages and contributing with resources directly to the conflict. These areas are also questionable from a development cooperation perspective, and most
probably, aid can only be effective in the form of humanitarian assistance, protection, and initiatives to build community and intra-community cohesion, including society checks and balances in relation to strongmen, through small-scale initiatives based on community decision making. Still, all these types of initiatives should undergo a stakeholder and Do No Harm analysis.

In areas where support to governance is possible, it should not only be oriented towards building formal structures but rather to human capacity and institutional integrity and capacity. Furthermore, it should focus on basic service delivery of education, health, and justice. The latter is severely challenging because of the war context militarizing and co-opting the justice and civilian security services, that is, the police. Furthermore, the creation of militias, disregarding local power structures and agreed international principles on security sector reform, makes efforts in the justice and security sector an uphill battle. A key international political analyst within a multilateral organization stated to the consultant team:

The creation of the militias is a recipe for future catastrophe.

Independent of support or not for the formal governance structure, it is essential to help strengthen traditional community structures, traditional civil society, and an emerging modern civil society. These can provide checks and balances to the, many times corrupt, governance structures and strongmen, and in the future also be the foundation for alternative political forces for a more modern political system, a strengthened civic culture, and alternative means of dispute resolution. Unfortunately, in several of the districts this might be the only way forward, as support to the formal structures might perpetuate and strengthen the capacity and integrity of negative power structures, in other words, do harm and provide additional causes of grievances and violent conflict.

There are some findings that, given the numbers of interviews, should have a certain significance and thereby allow for generalization when speaking about the six districts. First of all, when making a statistical significance test, the consultancy team identified that the differences between female and male responses are statistically significant in most of the questions; please see below for details. This highlights, once again, the importance of designing change processes in such a way that both women and men can contribute and benefit in an equal way. Furthermore, the picture regarding the perception of security shows different trends in different districts. As illustrated in the graph below, only in Dara-i-Suf Pain is there a strong positive perception, while in Darzaba and Chahar Bolak the situation is the opposite. Overall this split picture is confirmed and 38% of those interviewed in the six districts have seen security improve, while 45% have seen it get worse. Obviously, COIN has not managed to bring security to the most war-affected districts.

From a gender perspective, the negative perceptions among women illustrated in several other studies are confirmed. Aside from Dara-i-Suf Pain being the exception were women are more positive, in all other districts the women have a more negative perspective than men of the present security situation. This might be an indication that

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53 Because we cannot make any assumptions regarding the distribution of the answers, it is suitable to conduct a χ² test. The result can only tell us whether the difference between the two groups is statistically significant, but not what this difference looks like. “2. Can women be messengers for peace?” – significant at 99% confidence level; “3. How do you think security will change in the future?” – significant at the 99% confidence level; “4. Who are more active in your area?” – significant at the 95% confidence level.

women are more confined and have more limited opportunities when violence increases in communities and thereby perceive the changes much more acutely. Asked about future prospects, aside from Chahar Bolak, in all other districts the women have a much more negative outlook for security in the future. At an aggregated level this becomes visualized in the attached graph, where approximately 70% more men are positive about the future prospects for security. Still, independent of sex, it leaves 40% of the population believing that security will improve and the same number of people believing the situation will get worse.

In spite of this more negative perception among women, and as mentioned previously in this study, they are generally believed to be messengers for peace in society, with only 16% rejecting this notion. However, belief in this is lower in more conflict-ridden districts.

When asked which actors are most active in their communities, the answers differ between the districts. As illustrated in the graph above, The Quetta Shura Taliban are active in all districts but Dara-i-Suf Pain, and the Hizb-e Islami primarily in Qush Tepa and to some extent in Darzaba. To the consultant teams surprise, criminal groups seem to be much less active than expected. Furthermore, only in Dara-i-Suf Pain are pro-Government militia/arabakia seen as the most active, it also being the most secure district.

When asked about the reasons for conflict (see graph below), there are some interesting disaggregated observations. In Qush Tepa, Darzaba, and Sayyad a significantly higher number of women than men mentioned religious motivations. Looking at all respondents, religious motivations are the dominant reason, while economic reasons are the second most important. Even though fear seems to be an important factor in many of the interviews, in this closed question it is of less importance, as is the removal of foreign troops. Furthermore, exclusion and Government corruption are not significant at all. Interestingly, the conclusion that Islam is a uniting factor could be seen as refuted by these statistics, at least for these districts. However, the frequently mentioned threat to Islam because of Western military, seen as Christian, presence might be an underlying factor. That is, war is fought to protect Islam. Also, greed as well as economic vulnerability can be behind the economic motivations. This interpretation would corroborate the conclusions in the Strategic Analysis. Also, as respondents mostly

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55 Even though the respondent could chose several actors most only indicated one. This could indicate that the graph shows "which" of the groups that are more active.

56 The questions were translated to Dari and the correct interpretation in English is "economic motivations". That is, it could be interpreted as out of economic needs or grievances. Thus, the precise meaning of this is not clear.
only chose one option, the numbers might not represent the totality of the respondents' perception of motivations for conflict.

The above statistics give an overview of the perceptions in the six districts. In Appendix 2: Conflict Analysis of Districts, an analysis is presented of each of the districts, including structures, actors, scenarios, drivers, and programming options. The latter are synthesized in the following chapter with policy and programming recommendations for Sweden.
7. Policy and Programming Options for Sweden

This chapter gives some recommendations at the policy and programming levels to Sweden and to Sida. They are a result of the field work, the subsequent analysis, and the dialogue that the consultant team has had with representatives of Sida, the Foreign Ministry, and Sida partners. The sole responsibility of these recommendations rests with the consultancy team.

7.1 Policy Options

It is needless to say that Sweden, as many others, is caught in a very difficult situation where the scenarios are quite gloomy, many countries are preparing for a reduction of their presence, and the level of influence on the outcomes is limited. There is political agreement within NATO, as in the Swedish Riksdag, to withdraw forces, and Sweden’s policy options will consequently more be defined by civilian instruments in the future, as stated by the Swedish Government. Below, this is the point of departure and some suggestions are given at the policy level.

7.1.1. Theory of Change – a Future Afghanistan

As presented in the study, the prospects for negotiated peace during or after the transition in 2014 are not very positive, and the chances are that the civil war will escalate and spread in Afghanistan; please see section on scenarios. It is important for Sweden, as for other countries, to have realistic expectations and to be open to different scenarios. The key assumption and theory of change, that a prerequisite of peace in Afghanistan is state-building, influenced by Western ideas, might be flawed, given the negative developments and the weak legitimacy of the state in Afghanistan.

Different scenarios might render a completely different approach, like a more Islamic-influenced state or renewed fragmentation, which would demand new approaches for international support. Also, the belief in building a state, fostering democracy, strengthening gender equality, and promoting peace in a country with extreme poverty indicators and suffering an ongoing civil war indicates that the theory of change most probably has been weak from the start, or has overestimated the possibilities for short- and medium-term change. An important aspect of this has been the belief that the military instrument would provide security for development, while statistics show the opposite trend. The buildup of militias, disregarding conflict lines and strengthening strongmen, is directly counter-productive to lasting peace and a security sector governed by a rights perspective. Sweden’s active support to the buildup of militias in the North, through the Swedish Armed Forces, should be reconsidered.

The US willingness to end a large share of its engagement in Afghanistan, as discussed before, is a strong indicator that most of the support to Afghanistan is less related to the situation on the ground, or the needs and interests of the Afghans, and more to the global war on terror and the global economic recession. Thus, a strong portion of realism, long-term civilian engagement, and a high degree of flexibility will be necessary. The latter must be supported by a continuous political analysis, informed by conflict theory, in a more organized form that helps Sweden and other actors to adapt to different scenarios.

7.1.2 Swedish Parliamentary Group

The recommendations presented by the Swedish Parliamentary Group led by Development Minister Gunilla Carlsson in August 2011 make several important remarks for the future Swedish Development Cooperation Strategy with Afghanistan. Below, this will be used as a point of departure for policy recommendations.

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57 "Fortsatta civila- och biständsinsatser till Afghanistan Arbetsgruppens rapport till partiledarna inom ramen för överenskommelsen mellan Regeringen, Socialdemokraterna och Miljöpartiet de gröna" [Continued civil and aid efforts in Afghanistan - The Working Group’s report to the party leaders within the framework of the agreement between the Government, the Social Democrats, and the Swedish Green Party], Regeringen, August 2011.
Long-Term Engagement in Afghanistan and Willingness to Accept Risks

The conclusions from this study support the strong recommendations that Sweden should continue its long-term engagement. Aside from the development needs, continued conflict will generate humanitarian needs, and whatever scenario the future will present, it is essential to address the drivers of conflict and support the drivers of peace. Also, the US, being the dominant donor, has already announced a drastic decrease of different types of aid, and tax revenues are slim, thus threatening the existence of the Afghan state. Nevertheless, Sweden, as stated by the Parliamentary Group, needs to be aware of the risks and the fact that the outcomes of this development investment are highly uncertain. Also, a more systematic monitoring system for the conflict, based on conflict theory, needs to be used to make appropriate risk assessments as well as fostering a conflict-sensitive approach.

National Ownership and Institutional Capacity

The report indicates that, from 2002 onwards, addressing the drivers of peace and conflict would have been essential. An asymmetry has been created through the tremendous investment in parallel delivery structure for development, driven by others than the Afghans, and the buildup of the military part of the security sector. This has resulted in a security-oriented state that cannot deliver services and the benefits that are supposed to be associated with the social contract between the state and its citizens. Therefore, this report supports this recommendation, but with a rather large reservation. The likelihood of genuine national ownership and successful buildup of institutional capacity, especially top down, is much less likely today than in 2002, and negative scenarios might severely hamper any such efforts. Continuous analysis of national stakeholders, or agents of change, to understand the theory of change and a serious effort to act in line with OECD-DAC’s Fragile States Principles and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness are necessary but not sufficient conditions for aid effectiveness.

Special Focus on Northern Afghanistan

From an aid effectiveness perspective, to share the country between donors seem to be “old thinking”, which can have severe ownership and coherence consequences for Afghanistan. From a conflict-sensitive perspective, this approach might also counter the ambitions to increase unity in Afghanistan. In addition, it means different working methods and approaches to those that Sida is used to, which calls for an additional effort from the Agency. Hence, staffing issues and working methods must be revised to allow for a more territorial and more of a meso- than a strategic approach in the North. A benefit of this is that Sida will have more knowledge of local power and conflict dynamics if staffing were in accordance with expected results. At the present, it is the Consultancy Team’s conclusion that Sida staffing at the PRT is not sufficient.

Separation of Civilian and Military Initiatives

This study provides and summarizes evidence that an overwhelmingly military focus has had a negative impact on effectiveness and sustainability of aid. The Parliamentary Group’s recommendation for a clear separation, but allowing for interchange of analysis and information, is welcomed. Furthermore, the Swedish Government should consider separating the civilian and military staff to different locations in Mazar-e Sharif. There seem to be few benefits of the co-location, more for the Swedish Armed Forces that gains civilian competence and political knowledge, and negative future scenarios might emphasize, from a security and effectiveness point of view, the need to distance development cooperation and Sida from the Swedish Armed Forces. Still, from a perspective of political coherence, the trend towards civilian leadership, at least formally, of the Swedish contribution should continue. Furthermore, the Swedish Armed Forces should consider capacity-building in “conflict-sensitive operations”. The US Armed Forces are presently considering becoming trained on the Do No Harm principles in order to avoid unforeseen negative consequences, from a community and force protection perspective, of its operations.

Civilian Crisis and Conflict Management

The Parliamentary Group does not define in more detail what it means by “civilian crisis and conflict management”. This study shows that aid, in general, has not been informed by thorough conflict analysis. Efforts seem to have been guided more by general state-building and development concerns
and not by a strategic approach to weaken drivers of conflict and strengthen drivers of peace. Several of the efforts, like the militarization of the international support and the non-conflict-sensitive modernization, seem to have fuelled the conflict, that is, Done Harm. An example of this is the international development support in the Balkh province that, because of lack of proper analysis, has systematically benefited Tajiks and not Pashtuns to the same extent. Interviews reveal that Pashtuns feel left out, and consequently, development cooperation strengthens the divide. Hence, a precondition, as stated above, is a system of conflict monitoring, and at least, a more conflict-sensitive approach. Furthermore, and as defined by the OECD-DAC in 2001 in “Helping Prevent Violent Conflict”, development cooperation has a very rich tool box to proactively assist national actors on conflict prevention, management, and resolution. Sweden should, with its long tradition of supporting peace through development cooperation, emphasize this potential and mainstream peace and security in all the sectors it is active in. In the section below, some suggestions will be given in line with this proposal, but efforts must continue beyond this report.

7.2. Programming Options at the Strategic Level

In this sub-section some recommendations are made regarding Sida’s work in Afghanistan. The recommendations at a sector level are as qualified as this process allows for, but must be further developed by Sida itself together with partners, and possibly, with expert support. The reason for this is that each intervention must be preceded by some type of informal or formal conflict analysis before more concrete approaches can be defined. Therefore, the first subsection will develop some proposals for procedural and organizational changes needed at Sida and among its partners. Following this, recommendations are made for the different sectors and thematic areas. The reader should observe that the recommendations are made from a peace and conflict perspective – how to contribute to peace or to be conflict sensitive – and only indirectly address overall development results. Sida needs to evaluate its own comparative advantages in light of other donors’ complementary and specific programming conditions to make the final decision on the relevance of the recommendations below.

7.2.1. Capacity and Procedures to Work "In" and "On" Conflict

Throughout the study it has become clear that Sida’s work in Afghanistan is guided by a loose conception of how to act in a conflict-sensitive way (to act “in” a conflict environment), but the approach is not systematized, and it seems like time, knowledge, and resources are too scarce to allow for change. The components below could help counter this, but also mean that the issue must be given some priority and resources set aside for implementation. However, it should be done with a “good is enough” approach, as other important themes should not be left aside. Still, it is recommended that management at Sida push for peace and security as one of the priority themes that deserve more attention. A precondition for this and other priorities seems to be to strengthen Sida’s human resource management and the number of staff working on Afghanistan. At the present, interviews provide evidence that the Sida team does not have the resources to fully manage for results.

General Capacity Building

Sida staff in Afghanistan and Stockholm should have basic training on causes of peace, security, and conflict, and conflict sensitivity. This should also be extended to key partners in Afghanistan and could consist of a one-day training followed by support by Sida’s thematic advisors, Sida’s Help Desk, and focal points; see below.

58 The Consultancy team is not making general recommendations on poverty reduction, but is taking its point of departure in the conflict analysis. That means that efforts, for example, to increase child rights, women’s empowerment, or human rights are not proposed if they do not have a direct link to peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity.

59 It is not the assignment of the consultants to evaluate the capacity of Sida working on Afghanistan. However, it is clear that the capacity of the Sida team is too low, as revealed by the interviews with Sida staff, the size of the overall Sida contribution to Afghanistan, staff being distributed in two countries and in three locations, and the working conditions resulting in high staff turnover.
More in-depth training should be offered to focal points in the Sida team and among partners. These focal points should be trained enough to be able to support their colleagues and help change organizational behaviour towards conflict sensitivity, and if so desired, how to proactively support peace in their areas of work – working "on" conflict. These focal points should also be offered advisory support over time from experts in the field, to allow for sustainable change. A focus on building national capacity is essential. The overall purpose would be to promote change in practice and programming in line with the ladder of impact below.

![Ladder of Impact](image)

**Procedural and Organizational Changes**

Capacity building is never enough, but must be preceded by changes to procedures in the organization. With the proposed capacity building above, enough knowledge would be acquired to make these changes to organizational behaviour sustainable. Change could include the following components:

1. Sida should look into the possibility of having, preferably together with other donors or through partners, a continuous peace and conflict monitor that builds upon this Strategic Conflict Analysis and that provides information to constantly question and revise the theory of change of Swedish support. Conflict analysis, as stated by the Sida manual, needs to be updated continuously. This analysis should be part of the fundament for making Sida's yearly planning and also for trying to identify peacebuilding initiatives.

2. **Partners applying for funds** should always be informed in advance that they need to make explicit how the intervention relates to the peace and conflict dynamics, and at a minimum, include a conflict-sensitivity analysis. Partners should also have a plan for how to integrate this approach into organizational procedures. For those proposed peacebuilding initiatives, a more thorough conflict analysis to explain the programme's theory of change is essential;

3. Sida should provide expert support to partners, aside from the capacity building above, in order to help them integrate conflict sensitivity into programming. This could possibly be done through the Sida Help Desk or through a separate consultancy contract. Please see Appendix 4 for a sample of how conflict sensitivity can be integrated into programming through an interface with results-based programming;

4. Sida should integrate conflict sensitivity into the Project Committee procedures as an obligatory theme. No support should be granted if the application does not include an explicit conflict sensitivity, or Do No Harm, analysis.

Several of the proposals above would be valid for Sida's project “Sida at Work” and not only for Afghanistan.
7.2.2. Democracy and Human Rights

The overarching observation is that the promotion of democracy and human rights is very difficult in a country suffering from a civil war, as the war defies the core elements of democracy and human rights. That is, the power struggle is violent, resulting in human rights abuse. Consequently, Sweden and Sida need to have realistic expectations and prepare for meagre results and continuous setbacks, until peace is established and real conditions for change are present. To help build a democratic culture, much more than just structures, is a generational process that takes 20–30 years in a post-conflict country – a situation which is yet to be present in Afghanistan.60

This also means that conflict management and peacebuilding should have a more pronounced part in the overall Sida programme in Afghanistan and specifically in this sector. The consultancy team therefore proposes, in line with the former Development Cooperation Strategy that defined peace as a strategic goal, that a strong subcomponent of this sector programme aim at supporting peacebuilding and conflict management projects and programmes. This is further developed at the end of this subsection.

The interaction between war dynamics and democratization and human rights means that conflict sensitivity is of utmost importance. Research provides evidence that semi-democracies are more prone to violence, and promotion of human rights directly confronts the perpetrators. This means that human rights promotion needs to be conflict sensitive in order not to expose its promoters and target groups to negative programming consequences. The same applies to support to democratization. It aims at a more fair distribution of power, but will therefore also challenge spoilers – or those who maintain and abuse power. In other words, aside from conflict sensitivity, it is essential to integrate stakeholder or power analysis in preparing for support. Are there possible allies or agents of change? Is it possible to decrease the gains of war and increase the benefits of peace? How can we pursue dialogue with moderate spoilers and agents of change to have them change their course of action in favour of democracy and peace? These are examples of some key questions to be asked in such an analysis. This document provides some insights into the calculations of some power groups in relation to a possible peace agreement; see the section on actors and the scenario analysis.

On a programmatic level, Sweden provides support to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) and the subcomponent, the National Solidarity Programme. Based on this conflict analysis, the support to the strengthening of Afghan state structures, at all levels, is essential, in spite of sustainability and corruption issues. Important subcomponents, as discussed in relation to the drivers of peace, are issues of civil service reform, public financial management and tax revenues, anti-corruption measures, capacity building, and so forth. The emerging civil service cadre, human resources, is of fundamental essence for the capacity to deliver and for state legitimacy and should be stressed more than formal structures. However, as change will be slow and ridden with setbacks, there is a need to also work at the local level (see next section) to strengthen both the state and civil society and the linkages between civil society and the state.

The NSP provides many of these functions. It has been shown to strengthen local social cohesion, many times providing a local dispute resolution mechanism in the absence of the state, providing benefits from the state to communities, and helping meet some of the needs of communities. Consequently, Sweden should continue, through the ARTF, to support the NSP, but should also highlight its weaknesses. Some of these are related to women’s exclusion; lack of conflict sensitivity, for example, by overriding existing power structures or disregarding conflict lines; and lack of sustainability of the financial flow through the NSP leaving local structures running dry.

Civil society is still very weak, and to strengthen the civic and democratic culture, and closely related, the practice of peaceful conflict resolution, civil society is essential. NSP helps supports “traditional” civil society, and the newly opened civil society fund managed through the British Council

can help stimulate an emerging “modern” civil society, as argued in this study. However, the British Council was recently targeted by an AOG attack, and the United Kingdom is seen as a close ally to the United States, the main enemy of the AOGs. Therefore, Sida should consider the sustainability of this arrangement from a conflict-sensitivity standpoint and investigate the possibilities of making the “delivery system” of this fund more impartial. For example, the fund could be managed by Afghans. The fact that the fund will finance peacebuilding initiatives is excellent and opportunities for 1325-related support should be integrated. The fund should also mainstream conflict sensitivity into its procedure; see above.

Frequent mention of civil society as deliverers of services and watch dogs from a rights perspective should be harmonized with a wider view of civil society. Afghanistan needs proactive actors that make proposals for change and contribute to a slowly growing democratic culture. Present support to, for example, the Afghan Analysts Network and the Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit is an example of this. Sida should also consider the possibility of supporting civil society organizations that can provide an alternative to strongmen-dominated politics, that is, new actors in politics and a modern party system. Reforms to election laws to provide a financial base to sustain parties, an alternative to only private sector financing or even illicit funds, should be considered as an area of support to stress, related to Sida’s present support to elections (see below). Furthermore, given the politicization of ethnic identities in Afghanistan, cross-cutting identities, as an alternative to ethnicity, should be supported. This means supporting civil society initiatives, but also those of the state in, for example, social sectors, that transcend identity lines. This adds a peace perspective to traditional development intervention, to stimulate social cohesion and a civic “Afghan” identity.

There has been an over-reliance on elections in Afghanistan, in spite of strong conclusions from research that these, especially in a context like Afghanistan with politicized ethnicity and war, will increase the levels of conflict. Still, Sweden cannot change this practice, but should look at ways of mitigating the negative effects of elections. The support through the UNDP’s programme ELECT to the Independent Electoral Commission and Free and Fair Elections in Afghanistan could provide opportunities for this. Special election-related conflict monitoring and a civil society and/or Independent Electoral Commission with a mitigating or mediating function can help mitigate some of the direct tensions surrounding the elections. However, this does not address the overall issue of rather negative aspects of elections in the present Afghan context.

In the area of human rights, as shown by the study, there is a tremendous need to reform, build, and strengthen the justice and security sectors in order for the state to protect and fulfil its obligation regarding human rights. The initial weakness of this sector and the overemphasis on military capacity of the state, and on militarizing the police, has resulted in the opposite. In conflict terms, if the state does not even protect its citizens but is a perpetrator, this will have a direct and negative impact on state legitimacy and thus feed into the conflict dynamics. The Taliban system of swift justice, instead of slow and corrupt justice, becomes more appealing. The tide will be difficult to turn because of the war, but Sweden should consider, based on FBA’s current investigation, whether there are possibilities to support the justice sector and the civilian part of the security sector. However, at the present, most work with SSR in Afghanistan diverges from the standards of the EU, OECD-DAC, and the UN, and a realistic assessment is that Swedish support will have a minor impact if the overall orientation of the Government and key donors does not change.

Support to civil society work on human rights could provide an alternative. In addition to the watchdog function, civil society organizations could, as they do in many other countries, provide expert support and capacity building to the justice and security sectors, thus not only revealing the weaknesses, but also assisting with remedies. Communities’ own ability to resolve disputes and exercise traditional justice is also important in the absence of the state; see under peace and human security below.
Child rights are important from a rights perspective and also from a conflict perspective. As shown by research, primary and secondary education might help prevent recruitment of children. The work of UNICEF supported by Sida should look into the possibility, as has been done in Colombia or Sri Lanka, to more actively engage in the prevention of recruitment of child soldiers and their disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR, UNSCR 1625). This is also in line with the most recent UN Secretary General's report on children in Afghanistan and would help to strengthen the implementation of UNSCR 1539, 1612, and 1998 and the Action Plan responding to six grave violations of child rights committed against Afghan children in conflict.

The consultancy team proposes that peacebuilding, or peace and human security as a theme, be integrated into this sector of work (see previous arguments). Aside from the recommendation to mainstream peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity, it is recommended that Sida have pure conflict management and peacebuilding interventions in its portfolio. However, intervention in this field needs a peace and conflict baseline and continuous monitoring in order to identify appropriate initiatives and to be able, from a results-based approach, to have a relevant theory of change. Several civil society organizations do conflict analysis at the district or provincial levels or on specific topics, but the strategic picture remains vague, aside from this study and the DFID-sponsored study in 2008. The lack of continuous conflict analysis and monitoring in Afghanistan calls for possible support in this area. Furthermore, community peacebuilding, indirectly through the NSP or through direct interventions, is strongly recommended. In the absence of the state, or its abuse, communities’ resilience and ability to solve and reconcile their own or inter-community disputes, is essential. Furthermore, it will increase the communities’ capacity to negotiate with AOGs and the ANSF to keep conflict away, that is, local conflict prevention and protection. With a clearly defined gender perspective, this also helps strengthen civic culture and traditional justice, and provides support to governance efforts by providing an active traditional civil society. Possibilities for supporting non-state-driven, track two peace negotiations with a more bottom-up approach should also be consider. This can help strengthen the formal track one process.

Other areas of peace and human security, such as disarmament, demobilization, and re-integration; small arms control; and security sector reform are being undertaken in Afghanistan, but doing this during ongoing civil war and with the present approaches, that is, militarization of the security sector and trying to disarm the enemy, diverges from traditional and successful global practice of integrating a rights, democracy, and sustainability perspective. Therefore, Sida should carefully analyse any proposal before even considering support to these areas. In case of a peace agreement, Sida should consider support. Working on protection, closely related to humanitarian interventions, support to women and children is important from a rights perspective.

7.2.3. Education and Social Sector

This is an area related to peace and human security indirectly. Still, at a local level initiatives by international aid agencies might disrupt relations and do harm. With a long-term perspective the provision of social services provide legitimacy to the state and strengthen the social contract with its citizens. Therefore, conflict-sensitive support to this sector is of importance. This is especially true in the educational sector, as children and youth today are the future of Afghanistan. With the present support through UNICEF, the Swedish Committee on Afghanistan should therefore look at the possibility to mainstream civic culture and peaceful conflict resolution into school curricula. It might be a dialogue issue for Sida, while SAK could apply it themselves. Furthermore, and as raised above in relation to research findings, secondary schooling might help prevent recruitment of youth to the ANSF and the AOGs and provide a better basis for future employment or self-employment. Vocational training is another important factor in increasing the likelihood for sustainable employment and align with Sweden’s private sector development efforts in the North.

63 The CDA Collaborative Project identifies, in its project STEPS, that people might prevent conflict from spreading to their community through negotiation with the fighting parties. http://www.cdainc.com.
Another aspect that has been raised is the importance of higher education. Sida’s present focus to support primary education, from a poverty and rights perspective is well motivated. However, human resources for a modern civil society and rights-based governance where the state is able to deliver services and mitigate disputes, that is, state-building, is highly dependent on the slowly growing cadre of well-educated civil servants. In other words, in order to reduce poverty for the most vulnerable and help mitigate conflicts, higher education is essential. Sweden and Sida should therefore seriously consider supporting higher education. If a decision is taken not to invest in higher education in parallel with primary and secondary education, Sweden should engage other donors in a dialogue about this issue to assure that some funding reaches this sub-sector.

SAK has recently invested in a conflict analysis and will initiate training of staff to integrate a more conflict-sensitive approach. This will most probably also reveal peacebuilding “spin-offs” for SAK. Sida should continue to assist this excellent initiative and seek ways to also support other partners to learn from SAK’s experiences and approaches; see the section above on procedural and organizational changes.

7.2.4. Gender and Women’s Rights

Evidence from the study shows that the promotion of women’s rights in Afghanistan is seen by some as a threat to traditional values and to Afghanistan. It is not a question of “if” Sweden should help strengthen women’s rights, but “how” this can be done in a conflict-sensitive way. Several of Sida’s partners are aligning their work with moderate mullahs as one important approach, and the integration of conflict-sensitive practice could most probably, based on local conditions, find additional ways. An example that comes back is that, when women are given space for participation, the positive results of the actions seem to convince communities more effectively than simply stressing a rights perspective. Furthermore, the study has evidence that women are identified as “messengers for peace” at the local level. The exact character of this concept remains to be revealed, but it illustrates an important potential to be unleashed. Thus, practical approaches, aside from strategic, are important to help make change come about and to more actively promote women’s participation in peace and security (UNSCR 1325).

One possibility at the strategic level is to promote a national 1325 Action Plan. Nonetheless, this would have to be done by convincing key moderate male actors to promote such an approach and to make a careful conflict-sensitivity and stakeholder analysis. Another would be to stimulate and support initiatives to strengthen and protect women’s participation and influence, at the local and national levels, in dispute and conflict resolution. As described in the scenario analysis, women’s space risks decreasing in case of a strongmen-settled peace, which makes this area of support even more important. The community peacebuilding mentioned above provides one such opportunity and strengthening the capacity of the women in the High Peace Council another. Sida has already supported similar initiatives in other partner countries, for example, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Colombia. Sida, most clearly, should also continue to support initiatives for protection of women (UNSCR 1820, 1888) in relation to the conflict. The field study clearly indicates that women are suffering from increased isolation and probably more domestic violence as an indirect consequence of the war.

The violent male culture has been institutionalized in Afghanistan after so many years of armed conflict. This means males are seen as perpetrators but they are also victims being killed on the battlefield. Sida and its partners should seek ways to mainstream, especially through its support to education and job creation schemes, critical thinking to address this male culture and provide alternatives, aside from alternative opportunities to become a soldier. Possibly, a special study to address this issue would be necessary.

7.2.5. Humanitarian Assistance

In analysing drivers of peace and conflict and in the scenarios, humanitarian assistance is identified as a key component, especially for war-ridden regions and communities, to protect and save lives. This
would become especially important if the conflict escalates even further. However, because of the militarization of aid, the neutrality of humanitarian assistance and the humanitarian space are being questioned, and sometimes, as evident in this study, not respected by ISAF. Therefore, international humanitarian principles must be clearly communicated to the stakeholders and conflict sensitivity must be more consistently integrated into humanitarian operations. Finally, Sida’s humanitarian support, if true to the humanitarian principles, must continue to be directed by staff outside of the PRT. For specific recommendations, please see under driver for conflict.

7.2.6. Dialogue Issues

There are plenty of issues, from a peace and human security perspective, that need to be encouraged through political dialogue in strong relation to the development programming. Sweden should actively support the idea of peaceful conflict resolution, as inclusive as the present situation of power distribution allows for, in Afghanistan. This is close to Sweden’s traditional role in international politics and its usually active role in mediation and peacebuilding. It also provides a strategic platform to promote and protect women’s rights and UNSCR 1325. Highlighting these topics, Sweden should also propose a more continuous civilian monitoring of the conflict, informed by peace and conflict theory, so as to understand the challenges to, and opportunities for, peaceful conflict resolution and development cooperation.

The present militarization of the security sector and the creation of militias is an area where Sweden could provide an alternative voice to the short-sighted military transition politics. In order to not increase and sustain conflict and impunity, efforts need to be oriented towards justice and security sector reform that contributes to, rather than decreases, human security.

Sweden should also continue to stress the importance of national ownership and adherence to the international agreements on aid effectiveness. In practical terms, this means to increase, especially US, engagement and contribution to the ARTF and to strengthen the systems and human resources of the state. In promoting national ownership, the special considerations for fragile states agreed in the OECD-DAC should be taken into account. This is especially important when considering ways of creating incentives for key stakeholders to promote political, social, and economic change. That is, national ownership also needs to be stimulated. Sweden should also stress the risks of modernization, perceived as a threat by many, to national unity through the above mentioned area and emphasize the importance of mitigation through increased conflict sensitivity at the strategic, programme, and project levels implementing programmes through the state.

7.3. Special Programming Options at the Regional and Local Levels

As noted above, Sweden’s decision to focus on Northern Afghanistan and to co-locate its military forces with development cooperation organizations present several challenges. These, together with the lack of Sida staff in Mazar-e Sharif, would have to be addressed in order to allow for both conflict sensitivity and a more proactive approach to peacebuilding. The study provides evidence that the strategic focus on primarily Tajik and Uzbek areas and the way the aid flows have been distributed has been an issue for some of the Pashtun Shuras, thus reinforcing the conflict lines. At the same time, support to SAK to help implement Community Development Councils in conflict- ridden districts with more Pashtun presence might counteract this to some extent, but should also integrate a conscious, conflict-sensitive approach.

Aside from the recommendations below, the reader is referred to the district conflict analysis, which provides additional programming recommendations.

7.3.1. Democracy and Human Rights

In spite of the emphasis on state-building and governance at all levels, as stressed in the earlier section, the field study identified many obstacles to support for good governance at both the provincial and district levels. There is strong resistance to change from many strongmen and religious leaders. The former want to preserve power and the latter resist modernization if it seems to threaten Islam.
Therefore, and as stated before, an approach informed by **stakeholder/power analysis and a conflict analysis** is essential in order to **understand the motivations of the different actors**. If a special effort to improve governance is to be directed to a district, these types of analysis need to precede support. A focus on dialogue, by Sida or the implementing agency, with communities and governors, will help frame support in such a way that local ownership is preserved and key stakeholders engage. Furthermore, those that resist change, the so-called spoilers or moderate spoilers, must be **exposed to the possible benefits**. For example, a district governor might see the benefits of increased effectiveness of service delivery in increasing popular support, in spite of the lack of formal election processes. Still, other informal strongmen might resist and need to be analysed and included in this dialogue. In summary, the weaker the province or district and the more violent it is, the less likely it will be to find sufficient buy-in. Sida should consequently, once again, have moderate expectations. At present, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit and the UNDP have projects in the North addressing governance; Sida should consider supporting one of these programmes and, if absent, try to introduce these elements of analysis and dialogue.

Another conclusion from the study is that, in the absence of the state, it is important to **strengthen the resilience and civic culture of the traditional civil society**, that is, communities and their decision-making structures. If support is provided – for example through the NSP, the Swedish Committee on Afghanistan, or community peacebuilding – dispute resolution, traditional justice, and the social fabric will be strengthened and help contribute, bottom up, to democracy, justice, and peace.

### 7.3.2. Private Sector Development

Throughout the report some key issues mentioned in relation to drivers of conflict are the lack of state tax revenues, few income possibilities for youth, and the challenges posed by rudimentary infrastructure. Sida's support in Northern Afghanistan therefore needs to address these issues, in spite of the rather steep challenges.

A precondition for development and for providing **alternatives to becoming a soldier** is that sustainable job opportunities be created. Sida's efforts in the area of **private sector development are therefore important**. The present focus on agriculture and micro-business from a poverty perspective, that is, sustaining livelihoods, is also relevant from a conflict perspective, as recruits mainly come from these areas of endeavour. Furthermore, this focus provides an alternative to the poppy industry that feeds resources into the conflict. Thus, Sida should continue its support in this area.

The present support to **road infrastructure is important from a conflict perspective** in several ways. Obviously, the state's ability to reach remote communities is very limited, which means that already basic service delivery is restricted to communities close to district and provincial centres. In order to increase state legitimacy, citizens' access to state services and the state's reach must be improved. Furthermore, road infrastructure is important for providing access to markets and stimulating growth of the private sector. This, in its turn, can help curb poppy cultivation, which feeds into the war and provides alternatives for young males to soldiering.

Sida presently supports UNOPS in Northern Afghanistan. The working methods seem to **integrate a conflict perspective** and the conscious strengthening of communities and state structure through participatory decision making and local ownership. Also, efforts are made to renovate and restore community buildings like schools and mosques, which can have an important function in strengthening social cohesion. Consequently, this might result in different spinoff effects mentioned earlier under governance, regarding the buildup of community resilience/civic culture and local governance.


Helping Prevent Violent Conflict. 2001. OECD-DAC.


Appendix 1: Overview and Chronology of Violent Conflict in Afghanistan

This Annex is primarily directed to those not familiar with the context of Afghanistan and provides the basis for the more selective conflict analysis. It gives an overview of key characteristics of Afghanistan and its history with a special focus on conflict and peace.

1.1. Key Characteristics of Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a landlocked and mountainous country located in South-Central Asia. Afghanistan has an estimated population of 29,835,392 (CIA, 2011). The population remains disproportionately young and rural. The median age is currently 18.2 years and more than 40% of the population is between the ages of 0 and 14 (Ibid). Only 23% of the population currently lives in urban areas. The main languages spoken in Afghanistan are Pashto and Dari, but there are also about 33 other languages spoken such as Hazaragi, Turkmen, Uzbek, Balochi, Nuristani, Pashai, Brahui, and Pamiri, to name a few. There are also about 55 different ethnic groups in Afghanistan, Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras being the four largest ones. Because of its geographical location, Afghanistan has functioned as a borderland and crossroads for the Mesopotamians, the Persians, Alexander the Great, the Muslim-Arab armies, Genghis Khan, the Safawids, and the Mughals, among others. Notwithstanding the large differences, the people and languages of Afghanistan have a common foundation in history, where ideas, cultures, peoples, and religions have been influenced from every direction, creating a true social-cultural melting pot.

1.2. People of Afghanistan

The Pashtuns are the dominant ethnic group in Afghanistan, accounting for about 42% of the total population (CIA, 2011). The Pashtuns have had a strong dominance over Afghan politics and the state throughout Afghan history. The Pashtuns are mainly concentrated in the South of Afghanistan, along the Durand Line, upward west through Farah to Herat. There are also pockets of Pashtuns spread around the North as a consequence of forced and/or voluntary migration. One of the main features of being a Pashtun is to speak the Pashtun language, Pashto; Pashto has its origins in the Northeastern Iranian language branches (Vogelsang, 2002, s. 20). According to some literature, the Pashtuns are descendants of the Scythian horde, who invaded and penetrated the country from the North in the late second century BC. The Pashtuns are organized into what is known as a typical segmentary lineage organization, a structure which is based upon descent groups, where the different units, such as the nuclear family, sub-clans, clans, sub-tribes, tribes, and confederacies of tribes constitute some sort “of abstract Pyramid with the ancestor on top” (Vogelsang, 2002). In Afghanistan the Pashtuns are divided into two main tribal confederacies, the Abdalis, later known as the Durranis, in the South and Southwest, with Kandahar as its centre, and the Ghaljis in the Southeast of the country with Ghazni as a centre (Barfield, 2007). All Pashtuns are Muslims and an overwhelming part follow the Sunni Hanafi school of Islam. Pashtunwali is an egalitarian code of conduct among the Pashtuns (Rubin, 2002) that promotes self-respect, independence, justice, hospitality, love, forgiveness, revenge, and tolerance toward all (especially to strangers or guests).

The second largest ethnic group in Afghanistan is the Tajiks, who account for about 27% of the total population (CIA, 2011). They are mostly concentrated in the big cities and in the Northeast of the country, and speak a dialect of Persian called Dari (Wahab & Youngerman, 2007). The name Tajik came from the Özbek conqueror who used this name to identify the local people in contemporary Northeast Afghanistan and Tajikistan. A majority of the Tajiks are Sunni Muslims but there are significant groups of Ismaili Shiites.

The Uzbeks are the third largest ethnic group in Afghanistan (with the Hazara), accounting for about 9% of the total population (CIA, 2011). They are mostly found in the Central North part of the country surrounding Maimana (Faryab) and Kunduz. They arrived in this area with the conquest of the Özbek Shibanid Dynasty around the fifteenth century, and in another wave from the Soviet Union during the
post-Second World War era. They are mainly Sunni Muslims and speak mainly Dari and Uzbeki. They are said to descend from the Özbek Khan, who was the leader of the Golden hordes of the Mongols (Vogelsang, 2002).

The Hazaras account for about 9% of the total population (CIA, 2009). They reside for the most part in Hazarajat, which is located in Central Afghanistan. They are believed to be of Mongolian descent, soldiers who chose to remain after the conquest of Genghis Khan. The name Hazara comes from the Persian word Hazar, which means thousand. It is believed that these people used to give a thousand soldiers to the central Government, instead of taxes (Emadi, 1997, p. 364); other believe that the name comes from the size of the Mongol contingent that remained (Vogelsang, 2002, 36). During the time of the Safawids, the Hazara converted to the Shiite school of Islam, and have been viewed as outcasts ever since. The majority of the Hazaras are Imami Shiites, but there is also a group that is Ismaili.

The Kuchi are a group of nomads, estimated to number approximately 3 million (around 10% of the total population) in Afghanistan. They are more appropriately seen as a caste rather than an ethnicity; while most of them are Pashtun, there are also other ethnicities among the Kuchi, such as the Baluch. Traditionally they have lived from herding livestock, moving between Afghanistan and the Indus Valley. The political turmoil in the region has made such migrations difficult, and many have been forced to switch to a more sedentary lifestyle. The Kuchi have been identified by UNAMA as well as the UN High Commission on Refugees as one of the most vulnerable groups in Afghanistan. Fifty-four percent of the Kuchi are deemed to be extremely poor, making them the poorest group in the country.64

1.3. Forming the Afghan State and Origins to the Conflict

The Great Game, as it came to be known between the British and the Russians, was the crucial point in the making of the modern Afghanistan state and forming the borders of the country. The primary objective of the Great Game was India. The British, fearing a common border with the Russians, established Afghanistan as a buffer state between the two empires. The Russians wanted to get to India to realize the dream of Peter the Great, a warm-water port. This resulted in three Anglo-Afghan wars, the first one in 1839-42, the second one in 1878-80, and the final one in 1919 (Roberts, 2003). The second Anglo-Afghan war ended with the recognition by the British of Abdur Rahman Khan as Amir of Afghanistan. He came to be known as the “Iron Amir” for his quest of monopolizing and centralizing power.

During this time an Anglo-Russian commission (1895–96) also established the northern borders of modern day Afghanistan. The Wakhan Corridor, for example, was put under Afghan sovereignty against the wishes of the Amir (Kakar, 2006). The Amir had two strategies for creating a centralized state based on his political and military dominance. The first one was a strong standing army (Saikal & Maley, 1991). The second strategy relied upon the policy of manipulation of tribal, ethnic, and religious diversity within the population in order to defeat his opponents. This policy was successful in monopolizing violence and forming a centralized state, but it created long-lasting social fragmentation among the local and regional leaders.

The British, in a forced agreement with the Amir, established the Durand Line65 in 1893 as a border between British India (contemporary Pakistan) and Afghanistan, which has been and still is a major cause of the conflict in Afghanistan. The Durand Line basically splits the Pashtun population in half; rising from this was/is the Pashtunistan question, which concerns the independence of the Pashtuns in Pakistan and an eventual reunification with Afghanistan (Hyman, 2002). This is probably one of the main initial causes and drivers of the conflict in Afghanistan today.

65 The Durand Line is the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which stretches 2,640 kilometres. The border was established after an agreement was reached between the British Empire and Abdur Rahman Khan of Afghanistan on 12 November 1893 to demarcate the border between Afghanistan and what was then British India (now Pakistan’s North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and Baluchistan).
In 1953 Muhammad Daoud Khan became prime minister of Afghanistan, (1953–63) achieving significant economic growth, expanding the educational system, and having women of the royal court appear unveiled in the 1959 Independence ceremony. In 1954 the Pakistani Government introduced the One Unite Plan, which among other things promised to curtail Pashtun autonomy. The Afghan Government responded with flag burnings, mobilization of the army, diplomatic fighting, and border closures. In two cases (1960–61) Daoud sent army-tribal forces to intervene in internal tribal Pashtun disputes in Pakistan, resulting in the closure of the border for about 18 months, causing severe economic decline in the country and resulting in the resignation of Daoud in 1963. Daoud’s pro-Pashtunistan stand was very popular with the Pashtuns in Afghanistan, but it also, in retrospect, had two major negative effects. First, it alienated the non-Pashtun element of the Afghan population, and second, and more importantly, it brought Afghanistan closer to the Soviet Union.

In 1964 a Loya Jirga was assembled. It declared that Afghanistan would never accept the North-West Frontier Province (now Khybar-Pashtun Khwa) as an integral part of Pakistan and sanctioned any move necessary to restore the balance of power, since the Americans had started to give military and economic aid to Pakistan (Roberts, 2003). After a number of rejections from the Americans of requests for military assistance to Afghanistan, Daoud turned to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was a strong supporter of the Pashtunistan initiative and was willing to support Afghanistan against Western-backed Pakistan. Trade and development agreements were signed, and arms shipments, officer training, and the building of infrastructure and educational systems were provided. The Soviet Union had by 1979 provided Afghanistan with about $1 billion in military aid and $1.25 billion in economic aid (Wahab & Youngerman, 2007).

In July 1973, Daoud retook power, ousting the king in a virtually bloodless coup with the help of the Parcham faction of the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) and air force General Abd-Al Qadir. He proclaimed himself as the president of the Islamic Afghan Republic and gave the Parcham faction eight cabinet positions in the new Government. Daoud soon realized that his ties to the Soviets were too close, and the policy of neutrality needed to be restored. He started to re-approach the West, sending his officers to train in Egypt and India rather than the Soviet Union. In 1974 Daoud was promised a $2 billion loan by the Shah of Iran, and in 1975 at the funeral of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, he re-approached the Middle Eastern oil-rich states and Pakistan, who were willing to aid him in his anti-communist struggle. Daoud’s pro-Western tilt after 1974 brought about major changes in Afghan domestic politics and led to the 1978 Saur Revolution, killing Daoud and bringing the PDPA to power. The PDPA regime was unpopular and weak; it was filled with internal division between the two factions and between the different leaders.

The Kabul regime started to lose control of the country. Most of Nuristan fell into the hands of the Nuristani front, and Hazarajat was being controlled by Shawra. In March a rebellion took place in Herat, and in December 1979 the Soviet Union invaded the country, backing up the PDPA regime.

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66 One Unit was the title of a scheme launched by the federal Government of Pakistan to merge the four provinces of West Pakistan into one homogenous unit, as a counterbalance against the numerical domination of the ethnic Bengalis of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

67 Hezb-e Dimukratik Khalq-e Afghanistan, the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan was created by, among others, Muhammad Taraki, Babrak Karmal, and Hafizullah Amin. The party is split into two factions, the Khalq (People/Masses) faction headed by Taraki, and the Parcham (Banner) faction headed by Karmal.

68 Saur is the month when the revolution took place in accordance with the Persian calendar.

69 Taraki, Amin, and Karmal were contending for the top spot. Taraki was the first to get it; he was then replaced by Amin, who was in turn replaced by Karmal,
1.4. Outcomes of the Saur Revolution and the Production of Ethnicity as a Key Factor in the Afghan Conflict

Afghanistan might have been dominated by Pashtuns, but ethnicity was not always a very strong factor in politics. A sort of political balance had been reached between the different ethnic groups, kept intact by an authoritarian regime until the Saur revolution (Rais, 1999). The Soviet occupation helped strengthen the ethnic divisions in the country. A historical process, creating social fragmentation, stories, myths, beliefs, and suspicions among the people of Afghanistan was put into use for the purposes of divide and rule and the search for a source of legitimacy of power. The Pashtuns were the major force behind the mujahideen groups and received the majority of US and Arab aid; they thus become the primary enemy of the Soviet forces. The Soviets’ brutal pacification undid the carefully crafted national framework: “They restructured the social, political and economic layout of the country, altering the boundaries and patterns of power, authority and loyalty within and between each micro society” (Saikal, 1998, p. 115). The same perceptions of the Pashtun threat led Karmal to seek alliances with non-Pashtuns. When he realized that his regime would collapse after the withdrawal of the Soviets, he sought alliances based on ethnic affiliations; through anti-Pashtun rhetoric he sought out non-Pashtun commanders as potential allies (Ahady, 1995).

The mujahideen were not a united resistance group; they were divided among themselves. The division was not caused by ideological differences, “rather it was due to a rationalization of the deep personal ambitions for power among the mujahedeen leaders” (Tarzi, 1991, p. 481). They were also pawns in a greater regional and international game. Cross-border trade and political allegiances were becoming more important, at the cost of local trade and allegiances (Rubin, 2000). First, at the Cold War level, Afghanistan would be the US payback for Vietnam. The Afghan war was seen as a low-intensity conflict; the Americans just wanted to prevent the Soviets from taking the whole of the country and make the cost of war as high as possible.

On a regional level Afghanistan served as a proxy for the Middle Eastern rivalries, mainly between the Saudis (Sunni) and Iranians (Shiite). Saudi Arabia matched the funding by the US plus a little bit more. The Saudis’ main objectives were to be seen as the defenders of Islam against communism, to keep the Shiites at bay, and to export their brand of Wahabi Islam. They preferred to support the Pashtuns, as they were seen as more reliable and less likely to fall under Iranian influence (Saikal, 1998). Iran’s objectives were a bit broader; they wanted to strengthen the Shiite minority (the Hazaras) by funding them and then pushing them to unite under one party (Hezbe-e Wahdat). They also wanted to “establish a land corridor that would link Iran with the Persian speaking populations of Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan” (Rais, 1999, p. 7).

The most significant outside player in this Great Game was Pakistan. It has a significant Pashtun population and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) was the hub through which US and Arab aid was channeled. The Pakistanis’ representation of US and Arab interests, combined with their domestic interest, shaped the reality of the war in Afghanistan. Pakistan’s first aim was to get a pro-Pakistani Government in Afghanistan, thus undoing the close ties between India and Afghanistan (Tarzi, 1991). The US approved an increasing budget from $30 million in 1980 to $250 million in 1985, $470 million in 1986, $630 million in 1987, and $700 million in 1980 (Rubin, 2002). They also provided the mujahideen with Stinger missiles, in aid of their second aim, to undermine the Pashtunistan issue (Khan, 1998). Last, the US wanted greater influence in Central Asia. For this reason they insisted that foreign aid to the mujahideen go through the ISI, enabling them to choose whom to support. They wanted to keep the mujahideen divided, because it would make it easier to control them; their main clients were Hezb-e-Islami (Party of Islam), headed by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and later on, the Taliban.

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70 Historically, the Government has not been able to penetrate the countryside; thus, their ethnic policies in the centre have not had much meaning for the periphery.

71 As a result, some members of the Khaq faction (mostly Pashtuns) defected and staged an unsuccessful coup, resulting in the removal of Khalqi, and as such, Pashtun high-ranking officers in the military. They were replaced by non-Pashtun Parcham loyalists, who later defected to Ahmad Shah Masoud.
After the Soviet withdrawal, the divisions among the different mujahideen groups started to further intensify. In 1989 several different Hazara factions came together and formed Hezb-e Wahdat (Islamic Unity Party), headed by Abdul Ali Mazari. The Peshawar seven\(^{72}\) negotiated an interim Government, headed by Mojadidi,\(^{73}\) who would be replaced two months later by Rabbani. During this time Ahmad Shah Masoud (adherent to the Jamiat-i-Islami), unhappy with the dominance of Pashtuns in Peshawar and the exclusion of field commanders, allied himself with Dostum's Junbesh-e Milli and Hezb-e Wahdat. They formed the Ittilaf-I Shamali (commonly known as the Northern Alliance).

Pakistan’s motives and the choice of Hezb-e-Islami and the Taliban as their primary clients, if not shaped, then severely enhanced the Pashtun versus the non-Pashtun divisions. These actions created two opposing camps, the “Pashtun” camp – Pakistan backed by the Arabs and the US – versus the minority “non-Pashtun” camp – supported by Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Russia, and India (Rubin, 2002). With their combined forces, the Pashtun camp ousted President Najibullah and took control of Kabul. It became increasingly difficult to claim legitimacy in the name of jihad, because the communists had been defeated, so “the leaders of the warring factions made their supporters aware of their social and economic deprivation on the basis of their ethnic belonging in the past and present. They claimed at least that the survival of their own ethnic group was endangered through the aggressive behavior of other ethnic groups” (Schetter, 2004, p. 4). After the fall of President Najibullah’s regime a period of constant fighting took place among the mujahideen, although the foundation for this was not along ethnic lines but along interest and political power lines.

There was a constant forging and reforging of alliances. Rabbani vowed, on the one hand, to end Pashtun dominance to get non-Pashtun support, while his defence minister Masoud sent the following instructions to his officers: “Considering the progress of your work, you are instructed to authorize every department of the National Security to intensify the war between Hezb-e-Wahdat and Hezb-e-Harakat on the basis of ethnic cleansing between Hazaras and Pashtuns to the extent that its effects must incite hostilities among inhabitants of central and northern parts of Afghanistan either in the form of Shiite and Sunni differences or as hostilities between the Hazaras and Pashtuns which would be a sufficient ground for preoccupation of future military fronts” (Emadi, 2001, pp 445–446). Wahdat (Hazara) and Dostum (Uzbek) joined Hekmatyar (Pashtun) to attack Masoud (Tajik), Masoud joined Sayaf (Pashtun) to attack Wahdat; ethnicity mattered little outside political rhetoric. This chaos enabled the Taliban to rise to power and establish in 1996 the closest thing to a state since the fall of communism. They did so in accordance with history, carrying the banners of Sunni Islam and Pashtun nationalism, as their primary identity (Rashid, 2000).

Ethnicity has been an important rhetorical tool for those who seek to divide and conquer in their pursuit of power. However, if we look closer, we can see that the ethnic reality we perceive today is a product of a process carried out intensively since the Saur revolution. Outside and inside actors have played the ethnic identity card, not because there are inherent differences among the Afghan people, but rather for influence and legitimacy.

1.5. Current Political Situation

The failure of the Taliban to cooperate with the US and hand over Usama bin Laden resulted in Operation Enduring Freedom, a US invasion that ousted the Taliban regime from power in November 2001. Operation Enduring Freedom was not a humanitarian mission and the interest of the Afghan people came second to the war on terror (Maley, 2006). Such was the foundation on which the post-Taliban Afghanistan came to be. It began with a peace conference in Bonn, Germany, headed by the

\(^{72}\) Seven mujahideen groups, Hezb-e-Islami (Party of Islam) led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Jamiat-i-Islami (Islamic Society) led by Burhanuddin Rabbani, Itehad Islami (Islamic Unity) led by Abdul Rasul Sayaf, Hezb-e-lslami (Party of Islam) led by Maulavi Younas Khalis, Mahaz-i-Milli Islam (National Islamic Front) led by Pir Sayed Ahmad Gilani, Jahba-i-Nijat-Milli (Afghan National Liberation Front) led by Sibaratullah Mujadidi, and Harakat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami (Islamic Revolutionary Forces) led by Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi.

\(^{73}\) The current president Karzai was working for Mojadidi.
Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Lakhdar Brahimi, the aim of which was to "thrash out an agreement to establish a new united Afghanistan" (Martin, 2006, s. 19). It was. On the 5th of December the Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Reestablishment of Permanent Government Institutions, also known as the Bonn Agreement (BA) was reached. This agreement brought together an unrepresentative group of Afghans to agree on a power-sharing arrangement that would bring different Afghan factions into an interim administration led by Hamid Karzai (Rubin & Hamidzada, 2007).

The BA was in many ways a very hopeful agreement; it stated an end to the tragic conflict in Afghanistan and the promotion of national reconciliation, lasting peace, stability, and respect for human rights in the country as goals; it acknowledged the people's right to determine their own political future in accordance with the principles of Islam, democracy, pluralism, and social justice. For all the beautiful rhetoric and planning, the reality on the ground could not be undone. The Northern Alliance mujahideen were the strongest Afghan military organization on the ground. The BA proclaimed them heroes of jihad and champions of peace. The Northern Alliance also occupied key ministerial positions and positions in the President's office. Their dominance jeopardized the legitimacy of the Government, especially in the eyes of the Pashtuns. The search for legitimacy would be (and still is) a big challenge for the Afghan authorities.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) is also suffering from high levels of chronic corruption, which limits its credibility and legitimacy with the Afghan population. Studies have shown that corruption within GIRoA is a key reason that young men join the Taliban and other armed opposition groups (AOGs) (Landbury, 2009). The second round of presidential elections in 2009 and parliamentary elections in 2010 were filled with violence, fraud, and corruption, yet another demonstration of the challenges GIRoA is facing.

On 20 August 2009, Afghanistan held elections for the president and for 420 provincial council seats. About 40 candidates appeared on the presidential ballot. Of those, only four candidates ultimately received more than 2% of the vote: Hamid Karzai (49.67%), Abdullah Abdullah (30.59%), Ramazan Bashardosh (10.46%), and Ashraf Ghani (2.94%). The run-up to the election was plagued by violence and accusations of corruption. During the 10 days prior to the polls, there was an average of 32 attacks per day, which rose to an average of 48 per day during the last several days (CBC News, 2009). On election day itself, Afghanistan recorded the highest number of attacks and other forms of intimidation since the fall of the Taliban. In total, 31 civilians were killed, including 11 Independent Election Commission workers, as well as 18 Afghan National Police and 8 Afghan National Army personnel.

From a conflict perspective, the last presidential election and the parliamentary elections have been the primary events since the Bonn Agreement. These elections have really put a strain on a temporary and artificial political balance which was formed during the Bonn Agreement. Allegiances among the political elite in Kabul have fluctuated, and many have returned to divisive politics, especially along ethnolinguistic lines, to prompt support for the presidential election and parliamentary election.

Thus, the current political situation in Afghanistan is one where the peace and reconciliation process enabled during the Consultative Peace Jirga and the US-announced 2014 transition are taking place while the Government of Afghanistan is weak, lacks legitimacy, and is internally fragmented, and there is an increase in divisive politics.
Appendix 2: Conflict Analysis of Districts

Due to conflict sensitivity reasons, this section is omitted in the published version.
Appendix 3: Interviews and Workshops

The below list of 68 individuals shows those who have been interviewed or participated in an interactive conflict-analysis workshop. An additional 248 people, half of them women, were interviewed in the six districts in Northern Afghanistan, bringing the number of people sharing their views on peace and conflict to 316. A large number of people in Sweden and Afghanistan have also participated in various presentations of the results and contributed with ideas. They are, however, not presented below.

Due to conflict sensitivity reasons, the rest of the section is omitted in the published version.
Appendix 4: Conflict Sensitivity & Programming

Ideas on Interaction Between Programming, M&E and Do No Harm

Results Matrix/Logical Framework

Input → Activities → Outputs → Outcomes → Impact

Theory of Change

1. Activities: Make a selection, based on a DNH check-list, of the activities that might be sensitive and that need to be analysed through DNH. The selection could be made during the monthly management meetings.

2. Theory of change: In what way is the theory of change affected by the DNH analysis. This reflection can be a part of the yearly review of the DNH baseline, but also continuously as part of monitoring. Important that the project/organization is flexible enough to re-programme.

3. Assumptions and risks: Integrate the conclusions of the DNH into assumptions and risks in the results matrix/Logical Framework. Updated yearly as part of the review of the DNH Baseline or continuously as part of monitoring.

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Appendix 5: Interview Questions to Sida Staff

1. Responsibilities of the person:

2. What is the theory of change for Sida in Afghanistan – (if programme officer, also - “in your sector?”)

3. What are the key components of the portfolio/programme – (overall or sector, depending on person interviewed)?

4. In what way do you think Swedish Aid/other actors can have a negative impact on the conflict dynamics?

5. Do you apply “Do No Harm”/conflict sensitivity in the work of Sida?
Appendix 6: Interview Questions Field Study

Note: The questions used with communities are slightly different.

Questions for State, Social Sector Workers, Community Elders, NGO, Commander, Mullah interviews in Northern Afghanistan

Introduction:

✓ Please state that this interview is part of a study to understand opportunities and obstacles to peace and that their identity is protected – confidential. No immediate benefits might come to their community through this project, but by answering they will help to contribute to peace and security.

✓ Note that you shall have a "Do No Harm" approach, that is, not increase insecurity for yourself or for the person you interview or help to fuel conflict. Evaluate carefully before approaching people how you approach them, and respect if they hesitate to answer to different questions.

✓ One person should take notes and the other lead the interview/conversation.

✓ Try to meet different types of people: district governance, police, ordinary people (men and women) and, if possible, rural and city.

✓ Preferably, you should meet one person at a time, so as to create a frank conversation. The initial question can take some time, to capture things we do not know and to put the person at ease.

✓ Text in “[ ]” is meant to support and guide the interviewer.

Date:
Location: Rural ☐ City ☐
Gender: 
Occupation/position: 
Employer/organization: 

1. [Open ended] Tell us about the situation in the district/province. Given your position, what are the opportunities and challenges? [Try to follow up with questions if they just skim over something that is important for the conflict triangle – attitudes, behaviours, root causes/structures.]

2. [Open ended] How do you feel about security here in the community/district/province?

3. Is security getting better or worse?

Better ☐
Worse ☐
More and less the same ☐
Does not know ☐
Does not want to answer ☐

Comments:

4. [Open ended] Does the lack of security affect men and women differently? If so, why?

5. [Open ended] What can women do to support peace?
6. Can they be messengers for peace?

Yes ☐
No ☒
Maybe ☐
Does not know ☐
Does not want to answer ☐

7. [Open ended] In what way does the lack of security affect children and youth?

8. [Open ended] Do young people join the ANA or ANP? Why is that?

9. [Open ended] Do young people join the War Lords? Why is that?

10. [Open ended] Do young people join the Taliban/Hizb-e Islami or others? Why is that?

11. [Closed – if too sensitive, do not ask this question!] Who are more active in your community/area?
[Can choose more than one]

- Local commanders ☐
- Criminal groups ☒
- Quetta Shura Taliban ☐
- Hizb-e-Islami ☐
- Haqqani ☐
- Pro-Govern. militia/arbakai ☐
- Others ☒
- Does not know ☐
- Does not want to answer ☒
If question not asked – why? __________________________

12. [Open ended] Why do you think that opposition groups and others are active in your area?

13. [Closed – if too sensitive, do not ask this question!] If you would pick from these options, which main reasons (can be several) would it be?

- Religious motivations ☐
- Financial motivations ☒
- Fear and insecurity if they are not part of a group ☒
- To remove foreign troops ☒
- Pakistan ☐
- Feel excluded by Government ☒
- Because Government is corrupt ☒
- Local rivalries ☒
- Conflict over water ☐
- Conflict over land entitlements ☒
- Other ______________________________
- Do not know ☒
- Does not want to answer ☚
If question not asked – why? __________________________

14. Could you elaborate on your response above?
15. In your present position, do or can you and your institution have a positive effect on the conflict dynamics at the local level (province/district/community)?

16. In what way does the local dispute resolution mechanism contribute to peace and security in the (community, district, or province)?

17. Why is that?

18. How do you think security will change in the future?

Better ☐
Worse ☐
More or less the same ☐
Does not know ☐
Does not want to answer ☐


20. [Open ended] How will the withdrawal of the foreign forces (US/ISAF) and the inclusion of the Taliban in Government affect peace and security?

21. [Open ended] What could be done to promote peace and security in your community/district/province?

Comments:
## Appendix 7: Civ-Mil Synergies at the Operational Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to read the table</th>
<th>To the left are some analytical categories to classify the operational ideas and practices of each state agency. The interpretation is built on documents and interviews, but represents the consultancy team’s interpretation. In each analytical category, the item numbers are to facilitate comparison between the agencies, that is, the corresponding numbers represent the same aspects.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
<td>1. Poverty reduction (democracy, peace, human rights, economic development etc.)&lt;br&gt;2. Needs-based humanitarian assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Mentoring of Afghan Security National Forces (ANSF), so as to defeat Taliban, exercise territorial control, and provide security to Afghans&lt;br&gt;2. Force protection (as stated by CO Mazar-e-Sharif)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principles of engagement</strong></td>
<td>1. Implicit impartiality of assistance, so as to decrease security risks for beneficiaries and implementors – Do No Harm (DNH). In reality in support of the Government – one side of the conflict.&lt;br&gt;2. Humanitarian assistance in accordance with humanitarian principles, for example, neutrality.&lt;br&gt;3. Needs- and rights-based – not aligned with COIN&lt;br&gt;4. Protection of the partners and beneficiaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Party to the conflict.&lt;br&gt;2. Support humanitarian assistance as a last resort, if humanitarian access is not granted by any other means.&lt;br&gt;3. Counter Insurgent Strategy – COIN: Shape, Clear, Hold, Build, the latter function related to the COIN military strategy, not long-term development&lt;br&gt;4. Force protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods</strong></td>
<td>1 Addressing poverty, rights, and root causes of conflict&lt;br&gt;2. National ownership for reasons of effectiveness, sustainability, and protection&lt;br&gt;3. Financing other actors to implement development cooperation or humanitarian assistance&lt;br&gt;4. Assistance distributed over large geographical areas – districts and provinces&lt;br&gt;5. Avoid association with ISAF as a means of protecting beneficiaries&lt;br&gt;6. Programme support or large projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Militarily defeat or limit armed opposition groups&lt;br&gt;2. National ownership (SSR) for sustainability, but a clear Swedish role, visibility, for force protection&lt;br&gt;3. Direct mentoring and training (SSR) of ANSF (battle technique and tactics), support ANSF combat operations&lt;br&gt;4. Military operations geographically limited to areas controlled or semi-controlled by AOG&lt;br&gt;5. Development cooperation part of COIN and helping win hearts and minds as well as provide force protection – Sida not aligned, which in practice means that COIN cannot be applied by the PRT&lt;br&gt;6. Quick impact projects to rebuild destroyed infrastructure because of battle operations but also to win hearts and minds – schools, wells, roads, bridges. Rewards if they support the troops (minor funds: Sweden 50,000 EUR/Finland 350,000 EUR a year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timeline</strong></td>
<td>1. Humanitarian assistance short and medium terms (1–3 years)&lt;br&gt;2. Development cooperation medium- and long-term (3–15 years)&lt;br&gt;3. Staff 1–2 years minimum – relatively fast rotation for aid. Impact on aid effectiveness?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Combat operations 1 day or some weeks.&lt;br&gt;2. SSR short- to medium-term (1–3 years)&lt;br&gt;3. All staff 6 months – impact on SSR?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 8: Maps of Afghanistan