



DIIS REPORT  
THE CIVIL-MILITARY AGENDA



# DIIS REPORT

**AFGHANISTAN**  
ORGANIZING DANISH  
CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

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## **Executive Summary**

This report is part of a broader analysis of the Danish experience with civil-military integration and deals with Afghanistan.

The ability to change realities on the ground in far-away areas with unfamiliar cultures and languages is no easy task. The key to success in such tasks is to identify the underlying problems and to formulate forward steps commensurate with these problems. The emphasis in this analysis is on the political nature of the challenge in high-conflict areas.

The main recommendations are as follows:

- In a situation of violent conflict as in Helmand, civil and military resources should serve as means to reach the political objective of organizing the area to a degree which allows it to move on by itself with a minimum of security and some ability to improve its own situation. Close integration will be needed between civil and military means as well as between involved partner countries to ensure that scarce resources and limited available time is used to attain this objective.
- Political objectives must be realistic in time and scope to allow interventions to be successfully concluded within the given 'window of opportunity'. Focus should be to provide capacities and assistance directly to the area of intervention instead of through ineffective national programs. Emphasis should be on short- and medium-term success, without which there will not be any long-term to worry about.
- Certain types of projects, e.g. education and schools, may at best not be relevant in relation to available 'political time'. At worst it may make it difficult to reach out to conservative local leaders, who might be needed as allies. This does not preclude that education and school projects may be relevant, but underscores the need to anchor them within an overall political strategy.
- The report underlines that political stabilization is an outcome of a process between domestic political actors. The role of an external actor is instead that of providing incentives by 'changing the conditions on the ground' which might lead to such deals. An example of how changing conditions on the ground might induce local actors to become supportive of political stabilization is the case of opium. The prevalence of the opium business in Helmand gives opium barons a vested interest in maintaining insecurity, supporting the Taliban and countering public authority. This linkage needs to be broken by interdicting opium trafficking and e.g. making

it more profitable for opium barons to engage in legal economic activities, which in turn could make such actors more supportive of efforts to establish public order.

- A more integrated management of interventions will be needed to ensure that military action and civil assistance serve as means to the political objective and that interventions are not extended unnecessary in time and scope. The report recommends the establishment of a new cross-departmental unit to exercise leadership to ensure this. It is also recommended that the unit deploys its own permanent staff to the host country of the intervention, including the field of action, in contrast to present deployment of external, short-term contracted staff to the field. To enable the unit to execute multi-organizational leadership, it is proposed to give it direct reference to a ministerial sub-committee.
- There is a need to strengthen the dialogue on overall strategy and to ensure a tighter integration of civil assistance with partner countries. Officials from the proposed new organizational unit should be deployed immediately to the field of intervention and to provide a more assertive input to the dialogue with partner countries than short-term freelance staff is able to do.
- Fragile, post-conflict situations such as that found in Badakhshan in Afghanistan should be treated differently from the in-conflict failed state situation as found in Helmand. Where military and civilian activities are to be integrated in failed state situations, the two activities would benefit from being organized separately in fragile situations.

The recommendations are derived from an analysis of the situation in respectively the Helmand Province in the South and in the Badakhshan Province in the North in relation the following three research questions:

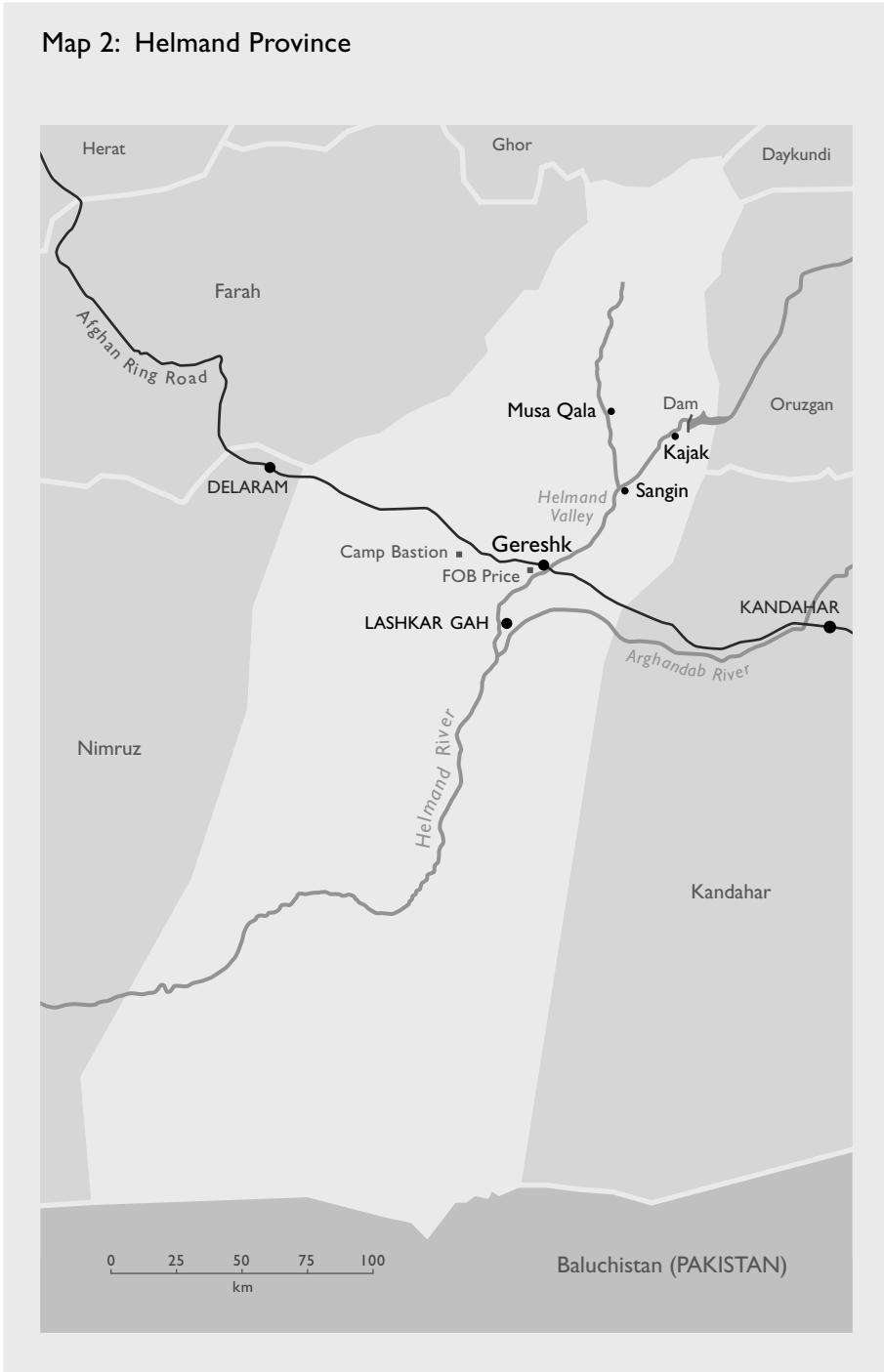
- Does the present Danish strategy and activities reflect an understanding of the intervention as having a political objective rather than a developmental and/or military objective?
- Does an organizational structure exist which allow for the implementation of a strategy-led intervention?
- Do the necessary implementing capabilities exist?

The report is written on the basis of a visit to Afghanistan, including Gereshk and Lashkar Gah in Helmand, Fayzabad in Badakhshan Province and Kabul, during five weeks in May-June 2008 and a perusal of the relevant documents and literature. The analysis is based on events and developments which took place before the cut-off date of mid-June 2008.

Map I: Afghanistan



Map 2: Helmand Province



Map 3: Badakhshan Province





## List of Abbreviations

ANA	Afghan National Army
CIMIC	Civil-Military-Coordination
CPA	Concerted Planning and Action
FOB	Forward Operating Base
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## **Preface**

This report is part of a broader analysis of Danish experience with civil-military integration and deals with Afghanistan. The report is written by project researcher Dr Søren Schmidt, on the basis of a visit to Afghanistan during five weeks from 7 May to 10 June 2008 and a perusal of the relevant documents and literature. The cut-off date for collecting information and taking account of developments was mid-June 2008.

Visits included Gereshk and Lashkar Gah in Helmand, Fayzabad and Kabul. Ph.D. candidate Peter Dahl Thruelsen, of the Royal Danish Defense College, participated for ten days in Afghanistan.

I would like to thank all those interviewed for this analysis for their willingness to share information and their thoughts with me. I would also like to thank a number of interlocutors who have provided comments on previous drafts, from which the report has benefited much. Particular thanks go to David P. Forsythe, Lars Erslev Andersen, Manni Crone, Trine Flockart, Peter Viggo Jacobsen, Pernille Hougesen, Lars Jensen, Morten Brodersen, Daniel Korski and Nicolas Veicherts.

## **I. Introduction**

The newly appointed US National Security Advisor James Jones said in March 2008: ‘Make no mistake; NATO is not winning in Afghanistan’<sup>1</sup> and at a fringe meeting at the Liberal Democrat Party conference on 15 September 2008, the respected British politician and diplomat Paddy Ashdown characterized the situation in Afghanistan as very dangerous and with very little time left to turn it around.

Against this somber background, the Danish Government asked the Danish Institute for International Studies to undertake an analysis ‘of the concrete possibilities for the further strengthening of comprehensive civilian and military action in connection with peace-support operations, primarily based on experiences from Denmark’s involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.’<sup>2</sup> This report forms part of the requested analysis and deals specifically with Afghanistan.

### **Analytical framework**

The focus of the analysis is on the objective of civilian and military activities in Afghanistan. In the Danish Afghanistan strategy from June 2008 this is stated to be ‘fighting insurgency in order to improving the security situation as a requisite for stability, economic development, reducing poverty and secure the respect of the individual person.’<sup>3</sup> However, this statement begs the question of how to fight the insurgency. The extent and persistence of violent attacks indicate that the insurgents are not just a fringe group in opposition to the broader currents of Afghan society, but indicate the existence of much broader and deeper conflicts in Afghanistan. The point of departure for this analysis is indeed that these conflicts are of a political nature and therefore need to be addressed as such, i.e. as political problems, not to be understood only as conflicts between political actors, but also as the way in which the country is governed and its economy is organized, which in turn frames how political actors relate to each other and are pitted against each other.

<sup>1</sup> Issue Brief of the Atlantic Council of the United States: Saving Afghanistan: An Appeal and Plan for Urgent Action. March 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Mulighedernes samfund. Regeringsgrundlag November 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Strategi for den danske indsats i Afghanistan 2008-2012: 2. June 2008.

If a conflict is political, it means that groups are turned against each other over issues of interest and identity.<sup>4</sup> Groups have different interests: short- and long-term, tied to production, rent-seeking or legal and illegal activities, and different distributional interests in terms of ‘who gets what, when and how’. Likewise, competing political visions of the state – sectarian, ethnic, secular, centralist, decentralized – pits actors against each other. If these interests and identities are not coordinated by a central actor – the state – the outcome is likely to be disadvantageous to all concerned. For without centralized coordination, public interest and the long-term of the population as a whole will suffer. Public security and economic development will be the most notable victims, and special short-term interests – such as those in the opium business – will trump all other interests. The most salient indication of the low level of state involvement in an area such as Helmand is the inability of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) to monopolize the use of physical coercion and thereby provide public security. The situation is further hampered by the inability of the Government to function as a framework for solving and adjudicating conflicts and to provide basic public services to the population.

When the central challenge of state-failed situations is the establishment of a functioning state, the correct yardstick for assessing Danish activities will be their contribution to establish a mechanism of centralized authority in the province concerned. The fundamental basis for the establishment of state rule is agreement among the most important political actors on governing arrangements, including its fundamental rules, principles, and institutions.<sup>5</sup> It is the claim of this report that the insurgency is an indication of the lack of consensus concerning the basic elements of political order in Helmand and that this constitutes the core problem. In this report, the term ‘political stabilization’ will be used to describe a situation where there exist a framework for solving conflicts and addressing public issues on a non-violent basis.<sup>6</sup> Political stabilization establishes political order, which will allow the state to pursue public interests as opposed to private interests by exercising a monopoly on the means of physical coercion, and with

<sup>4</sup> Anthony Cordessmann writes that the real nature of the war in Afghanistan is “a struggle for control of ideology, people, and territory -- not a fight between opposing military forces” (2007: 3).

<sup>5</sup> Ikenberry 2000: 23.

<sup>6</sup> The objective of the so-called ‘surge’ in Iraq may be characterized as political stabilization. The ‘surge’ established a relative stable political framework in Iraq within which other issues of development, structure of the state etc. may be processed on a non-violent basis. Without political stabilization these other issue could hardly have been addressed.

a capacity to solve conflicts and provide public services.<sup>7</sup> This ought not only to be understood as a seeking direct reconciliation between incumbent political protagonists<sup>8</sup> but also to provide incentives which induce political protagonists to come to a political agreement. This point has been eloquently expressed by the former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair: “The error in international policy...is to think that if you get a political agreement you can then change the reality on the ground. Whereas in fact unless you are evolving the reality on the ground in a positive way, you will never create the context in which a political agreement is possible....”<sup>9</sup>

But how can realities on the ground be changed in a positive way when there is a on-going insurgency?<sup>10</sup> This issue goes to the heart of the conundrum: how is it possible to undertake civilian reconstruction (realities on the ground) under insecurity, which itself depends on civilian reconstruction being implemented? And civilian reconstruction is, of course, seen by insurgents as a political issue, because increasing it will increase support for the government, which is why insurgents do not distinguish between targeting reconstruction workers and the military. An argument often heard against criticism that not enough civilian assistance has been provided is that this is simply not possible as long as there is not a minimum of security, making the question what can be done under the present security situation. The view of this report is that the question is not posed correctly. The right question would be to ask which actions (not least military) are necessary in order to provide civilian assistance (including economic and political development) leading to stabilization, e.g. by means of strengthening, on the one hand, the incentives for

<sup>7</sup> This understanding of stabilization as directed towards failed state situation is similar to how the British Stabilization Unit defines it: “Actions that deal with situations in which no state monopoly of force exist, where no political order dominates, and no legitimate institutions are in place to mediate conflicts peacefully between different groups. These situations characterize collapsed or failed states. However, they may also characterize regions at sub-national level where the state is strongly contested and sometimes even overruled or controlled by competing social forces and orders. In such situations, the objective of stabilization is to prevent or reduce violence, protect population and key-institutions, promote political processes and prepare for longer-term non-violent politics and development. In other words, stabilization is directed at providing the “essential preliminaries” of state building.” UK Stabilization Unit 2008

<sup>8</sup> Reconciling political protagonists does not necessarily mean reconciling with the Taliban, which might very well be irreconcilable. Several analyst (e.g. Michael O’Hanlon from the Brookings Institute) estimate that a large part of insurgents do not agree with Taliban ideology and strategy, but that they join the insurgency led by Taliban because of other grievances: tribal, personal, economic etc. Political stabilization will be advanced if part of this group are reconciled with the Kabul Government by addressing their specific grievances.

<sup>9</sup> The Guardian, p. 2, 14 November 2008.

<sup>10</sup> This whole section is inspired by comments and suggestions from Professor David P. Forsythe, Fulbright Scholar at DIIS during the fall semester of 2008.

civilian actors to engage in legal economic activities and for politicians to deliver public goods to the population and, on the other hand, opposing the drugs economy and the use of public office for private gain. Such a game-changing strategy would prioritize military activities to secure the population and its activities (including e.g. free circulation in the two major towns as well as between them), to counter intimidation from insurgents, to allow reconstruction to take place, and to secure legal economic production and exchange. Prioritizing population security would involve a much larger degree of embedded foreign presence with the Afghan military, which in the short run could increase casualties and reduce the potential for and speed of territorial gains.<sup>11</sup>

It may be added that establishing political order and a functioning state will in turn change the power and outlook of political protagonists, as well as the configuration of actors and alliances between them. The state's monopoly on the means of coercion will, for example, eradicate the political power of warlords and give more power to economic actors, while the rule of law will make it more difficult to bribe officials and therefore weaken the political power of the drug barons.

Establishing political order must necessarily be done by local actors themselves. External actors can not by themselves define who are legitimate local leaders and cannot directly foster self-government.<sup>12</sup> But external actors can change the realities on the ground so as to alter the incentives of local actors to reach an agreement. The focus on agreements between local actors as opposed to agreements between external and local actors has been well expressed by the former UN envoy to Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi:<sup>13</sup> 'You're not going to come with a solution...the solution is with them and not with you, and you have to help them produce that solution...you always have to be aware that you do not have the solution. The solution is there with the people

<sup>11</sup> This strategy is identical to that applied during the so-called 'surge' in Iraq. Cf. Freedman 2009: 'Improvements [in Iraq during the surge] were not so much the result of extra troops or of the intelligence with which they were deployed.... It had more to do with the extent to which the Iraqis turned away from the logic of civil war, notably because of a strong reaction among the Sunnis to the brutality of al Qaeda and recognition among senior Shiite figures that Muqtada al-Sadr was acquiring, through his militia, too much control over the political agenda. These developments necessitated a much more subtle approach to Iraqi politics than the established U.S. policy of handing responsibility back to the Iraqi government as soon as possible, whether or not it was able to cope.'

<sup>12</sup> Paris and Sisk 2007. Mann 2005 argues as well for the necessity of the external actor to ally with himself with strong domestic actors. According to Mann, an external actor may wield military power, which however only works on 'the margin' and only if it is associated with political power – the power to coerce groups to fall in line – which only domestic actors are in possession of.

<sup>13</sup> Lakhdar Brahimi was the special representative of the U.N. secretary general for Afghanistan from October 2001 through December 2004.

involved in the conflict and not with you.<sup>14</sup> The role of the external actor is therefore to utilize resources – military, economic, political and diplomatic – to encourage actors to forge deals which promote the public interest.<sup>15</sup>

Establishing a basic agreement on how actors undertake coordination is what state-building is all about: principles, rules and institutions for promoting the public interest. Only on this political basis may more instrumental state capacity be built. The fundamental difference between failed and fragile states is whether these foundational elements of a functioning state are in place or not.<sup>16</sup>

### Research questions

The object of external intervention has now been identified as a failed state situation. The objective of the intervention is to establish political order and the means are to incentivize local orders. This has the following consequences:

- that interventions in ‘failed state’ situations should be understood as intrinsically political operations with the objective to incentivize actors to establish political order
- that such strategy-based operations must be directed and led by a clearly identified organizational unit
- that the necessary implementing capabilities are available

The organizational elements to undertake strategy-based operations comprise:

- the ability to analyze the object of intervention,
- the ability to formulate a coherent and holistic strategy,
- finding the right balance between military and civilian activities within the intervention,
- transforming the strategy into a plan of operation,

<sup>14</sup> 5 April 2005 to Harry Kreisler in A Conversation with History, UCLA.

<sup>15</sup> An example of how an external actor may provide incentives for local actors to come to an agreement would be to provide sufficient security for and promote the production and exchange of legal crops as opposed to opium. Combined with a policy of opposing opium trafficking, this would make it more profitable for economic actors, including incumbent drug barons, to invest in legal crops, which in turn would align their business interests with the provision of public goods such as public markets, agricultural extension services etc. – which will require some degree of consensus amongst actors on how to run things – and make it less profitable to continue the present opium economy, which aligns the interests of economic actors with the lawlessness of state failure.

<sup>16</sup> If ‘state’ is defined as a mechanism for exerting centralized authority, a ‘failed state’ is thus a territory without a centralized authority.

- directing and coordinating the military and civilian contributions involved to ensure that they relate to the strategic goal,
- monitoring and benchmarking such activities in relation to the effect of such activities in the field, and
- feeding back monitoring information from field activities to the level of strategizing and planning.

All these elements should be organized in a way which leads to the strategic goal of political stabilization.

The above analytical framework suggests three research questions:

- To what extent is the intervention understood by the central actors as an intrinsically political operation with the objective of encouraging actors to achieve political stabilization?
- Is there a sufficient organizational leadership to conduct strategy-based operations within the existing organization?
- Do the necessary implementing capabilities exist in order to undertake political stabilization? The analysis will deal only briefly with the issue of implementing capabilities, reference being made to the other reports within this study for a fuller treatment of the topic.

### **Scope of the report**

While the analysis will deal with the situation in Afghanistan and the specific activities which Denmark undertakes in that country, the aim of the analysis is not to evaluate the Danish intervention in Afghanistan as such or to come up with proposals for how to improve this specific intervention. Denmark has undertaken both military and civilian activities in only two provinces in Afghanistan: Badakhshan and Helmand (see Map 1: Afghanistan), and the analysis is limited to the relationship between civilian and military activities in those two provinces and to tease out lessons in order to improve the overall instrument of combined military and civilian external intervention.

Finally, the analysis does not attempt to evaluate whether it was a good idea or not to participate in the US-led intervention in Afghanistan. The goal of the analysis is to improve the 'instrument' of intervention in high-conflict areas, not to assess the wisdom of the specific intervention.



## **Methodology**

The methodological approach is a problem-solving one: how can the coordination of external military and civilian activities be strengthened further in order to improve the likelihood of success, i.e. establishing a minimum of political order in the host country as basis for consolidating security and sustaining development?

This has been done by describing the situation in each physical location of intervention and assessing it against the present way of organizing military-civilian coordination, thus allowing the generation of recommendations on how to strengthen the coordination of military and civilian activities.

A major methodological issue is how to obtain a true empirical assessment of the situation in the field. Although the security situation restricted movements and contacts, particularly in Helmand, the research is based on visits to Afghanistan over five weeks, which also permitted some limited contact with the local population and gave a view of the situation amongst ordinary Afghans. The research is based on more than sixty interviews with both Afghans and non-Afghans.

All interviews were conducted with the understanding that the information provided would not be referenced directly. Instead, the interviewees were told that the list of persons interviewed (see Annex 1) would indicate the collective pool of sources on which information provided by interviewees was based. As a consequence, there are no specific references in this report as to who provided what information.

## **Structure of the report**

The report is divided into a descriptive part and an analytical part.

The descriptive part consists of three chapters. The first chapter provides a short description of the history and organization of Danish involvement in Afghanistan, while the second and third chapters deal respectively with Helmand province and Badakhshan province, where some basic information is provided, along with a description of the 'on-the-ground' power dynamics, and strategy of external actors and implementation of activities.

The analytical part is respectively based on the analytical framework and the above description and is structured around the three specific research questions.

The penultimate chapter provides recommendations on how to strengthen further comprehensive civilian and military action. The last chapter provides the conclusion and winds up the argument.

## 2. Denmark's Engagement in Afghanistan

This chapter provides a brief history of Denmark's overall engagement in Afghanistan and the way the country has organized the coordination of Danish civil and military activities in relation to that engagement.

### History

Immediately after the ousting of the Taliban government in late 2001, the Danish Parliament decided to support the UN-mandated peace-keeping operation in Afghanistan. This initial decision to support the UN mandated operations in Afghanistan has been renewed on several occasions and the engagement increased considerably.

Since 2003 all military operations in Afghanistan have been under NATO command and organized in the so-called International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which executes the UN mandate to provide security. The only exception to this is those forces under Operation Enduring Freedom, which is a combat operation involving coalition partners led by the United States against the remnants of al-Qaeda.

The Danish military contribution went at first to the German-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Fayzabad in the northern province of Badakhshan, where a contingency of forty soldiers served. They were later to be reduced to twenty and the deployment, finally terminated in August 2008.<sup>17</sup> From 2006 the main Danish military contribution has been in the Helmand province, where a British-led PRT was established in April 2006. The Danish contingent consisted at first of up to 360 soldiers and was subsequently increased to 750 soldiers.<sup>18</sup> 665 of these soldiers are stationed at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Price outside Gereshk at the junction between the Afghan ring road and the north-south road up the Helmand Valley between Musa Qala and the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah (see Map 2: Helmand Province). The Danish contingent forms the major part of the Danish Battle Group in which a British military contingent also takes part. The Danish Battle Group is under the overall command of the British-led Helmand Task Force, which is headquartered in Lashkar Gah.

<sup>17</sup> The *raison-d'être* of PRTs is to coordinate military and civil activities in insecure areas.

<sup>18</sup> This figure comprise military personnel deployed all over Afghanistan, including Kabul, Kandahar, Chaghcharan and Helmand.

In Badakhshan and Helmand, Denmark has contributed to civilian reconstruction with small-scale projects financed through the Comprehensive Action Facility (Concerted Planning and Action – CPA - projects or in Danish: 'samtækningsprojekter') implemented by military Civil-Military-Coordination (CIMIC) detachments to the military contingents with the advice of development advisors. The development advisors have also facilitated some civilian projects outside the CPA framework. Finally, Denmark has provided civil assistance through its part-financing of multi-donor programs.

While there is an active and growing insurgency in Helmand province, this is not the case in Badakhshan, where the limited violence is mainly perpetrated by criminal elements and takes the form of in-fighting between civilian groups. While government structures have by and large collapsed in Helmand, a minimum of government authority does exist in Badakhshan. Militias are however present in both provinces. While the situation in Helmand may be characterized as a 'failed state' situation – i.e. without a modicum of political order – the situation in Badakhshan may be characterized as a 'fragile' situation, i.e. where the basic elements of a functioning state are in place.

The overall philosophy of ISAF's previous strategy in areas with insurgencies was first to secure the area militarily, and then let civil assistance follow. However, providing security for Afghan political authorities in insurgent areas did not translate into civilian security allowing NGO's and private contractors to operate. Both the U.S. and Great Britain therefore started to revise their previous strategies and adopt one in which simultaneous civilian and military activities were integrated within an overall political strategy.

While the new U.S. approach has been to organize both types of activity within the military leadership under the label of 'counter-insurgency'<sup>19</sup>, the British approach has been to keep the two types of activity coordinated but separate within a civilian-led organizational structure and to apply the broader term 'political stabilization' to describe their strategy. Political stabilization in the British approach is understood in relation to a situation in which the insurgency is an element, but where the main problem is lack of governance, and where governance and security are seen as interdependent, not as sequential phenomena.

<sup>19</sup> I define counter-insurgency as a military term for combating a rebellion by forces aligned with the controlling government.

## **Organization**

The central organizational unit for the coordination of Danish military and civilian activities is the so-called Afghanistan Task Force, which was established in mid-2007 with the task to 'coordinate, develop and integrate the comprehensive Danish interventions in Afghanistan in order to secure the highest possible effect of the Danish contribution with respect to the objectives of the Afghanistan Compact'. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs heads the task force, whose members represent the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Defense, the Defense Command, the Ministry of Integration and the Ministry of Justice. The task force has held six meetings since it was established.<sup>20</sup> Added to this formal organization is a more informal network and cooperation between particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense, including joint missions to Afghanistan. According to interviewees, this informal cooperation has been substantial.

The remaining organizational structure consists of parallel military and civilian structures. Civilian activities are directed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where efforts are divided between the Asian Latin America Office, which has overall responsibility for Danish activities in Afghanistan, and the Humanitarian Office, which until January 2008 was responsible for CPA projects and development advisors. The Technical Development Advisory Office is involved on an ad hoc basis.

<sup>20</sup> Based on the minutes of meetings held until mid-June 2008.

### **3. Helmand**

This chapter provides a description of the situation and the challenges being faced in Helmand Province. Basic information on the province and a description of its main power dynamics is provided first.<sup>21</sup> The challenges identified are then contrasted with present ISAF strategy and its implementation. The reflections and lessons which this juxtaposition allows are subsequently fed into the analytical chapters.

#### **Basic information**

Helmand Province is approximately 1½ times the area of Denmark and has a population of roughly a million people. The area is covered by inhospitable, stony deserts except for the valley of the Helmand River, which runs through the entire province and a mountain area in the north. During the 1960s, Morrison-Knudsen, the company that built the Hoover Dam in the U.S., was hired by USAID to build a dam at Kajak with electricity generators and 500 kilometers of irrigation canals to irrigate the Helmand Valley. The project was highly successful, creating 100,000 ha of arable land out of the desert, which quickly became the fruit- and bread-basket of Afghanistan. The capital of the province, Lashkar Gah, was developed during that time as the new center for the province.

The population lives predominantly along this irrigated 'green zone' of the Helmand Valley, which in addition to the capital of the province, Lashkar Gah, includes the towns of Kajak, Musa Qala, Sangin and the commercial center of Gereshk. To the south the province borders the Pakistani province of Baluchistan, which for decades has experienced a violent insurgency by Baluch separatists. The capital of Baluchistan is Quetta, where the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, is believed to live.

The population of Helmand is fragmented into numerous tribes and clans, exacerbated by the in-migration of large numbers of people, who took up farming in the 1960s when the cultivated area was expanded. The population has little experience of central government and is culturally conservative. 70 % of the population is illiterate, and only a meager 6% of students are female.

<sup>21</sup> Most of this information is from Rashid 2008.

The Danish Battle Group is stationed at Gereshk, which has been controlled by ISAF since mid-2007. There are often violent incidents, and by August 2008 sixteen Danish soldiers had been killed in direct attacks, by roadside bombs or suicide attacks. The Danish Battle Group patrols regularly in the western part of the town, while the eastern part and the market area is patrolled less regularly because it is more dangerous.

Traffic restrictions have been imposed on the inhabitants of Gereshk related to ISAF vehicle circulation. A number of incidents have occurred where ISAF forces have shot at local residents, when they inadvertently did not stop their vehicles when ISAF vehicles passed by on the road. Some public education, garbage collection and other basic public services have been provided, but the lack of security has not allowed more comprehensive reconstruction and development to take place. Although a number of Quick Impact Projects have been implemented, the town does not give the impression that any major and comprehensive reconstruction activities have taken place. The huge market area in the western part of the town, which in the past bore witness to its economic importance, is still without activity and as an indication of the level of legal economic activity in the area, traffic flows between two major towns in the province, Gereshk and Lashkar Gah, is negligible. A recent British evaluation from 2007 notes that real progress has not been made in Gereshk with regard to reconstruction and development.<sup>22</sup> Although the American-led Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan has recently undertaken some activities in the security sector, its effects have not yet materialized. In fact, security incidents may in fact have increased because the ISAF presence has attracted Taliban assaults. GIROA line ministries<sup>23</sup> have no permanent presence in the town.

The economy of Gereshk as in the rest of the province is largely based on poppy cultivation and drug-trafficking.<sup>24</sup> When poppy is the only crop to produce cash income in an otherwise very poor area, it is of course easy for the drug barons to bribe officials and police. In short, the poppy economy permeates all public life.

<sup>22</sup> Reference to this consultancy report is not possible as it is confidential.

<sup>23</sup> Representatives from the department of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development in Lashkar Gah pay occasional visits to the town.

<sup>24</sup> The export value of poppy production in Afghanistan is assessed to constitute 1/3 of the total national economy (Ruben and Sherman 2008) and two-thirds of Afghanistan's total production of poppy is believed to be grown in the province of Helmand (*International Herald Tribune*, 26.8.08).

## Power dynamics

The first governor appointed to Helmand by President Karzai was Sher Mohammad Akhunzada, one of his political allies. The illiterate<sup>25</sup> Akhunzada was also the most infamous warlord and drug baron of the province. The political system which was adopted in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban is highly centralized, with almost all the power radiating outwards from the President and the people he nominates. In this system, the provincial governor is by far the most important political actor in the province, and the choice of Akhunzada as governor has been very negative to Helmand. The problem with such a centralized political system is that the power of the governor depends on his relationship with the president, not on his ability to provide security and other public goods to the population of his province. The Governor and his administration are accountable upwards towards the president, not downwards towards local actors.<sup>26</sup>

By 2003 most Western NGOs had fled the province in fear of both Akhunzada's gunmen and the Taliban, who had begun to reassert themselves in Helmand and other southern provinces, buoyed by the resentment of the population against the combined exploitation and repression exercised by warlords, drug barons and government officials. Positions such as chief of police were routinely auctioned off to the highest bidder, and a majority of police officers were illiterate drug addicts. The police were generally viewed as yet another predatory criminal group by the population. The rule of law did not exist, and the call for Islamic justice ('Shari'a') by the Taliban<sup>27</sup> was a factor in its increased popularity during 2003-2006. In 2005 USAID had to stop a canal-clearing project providing employment to thousands of Afghans after the Taliban killed five workers. While Britain and the US had committed a total of \$119 million to alternative livelihood programs for farmers, they were only able to spend \$4 million in 2005.

Poppy-cultivation in Helmand increased dramatically from 2001 to the present.<sup>28</sup> Farmers could mortgage their poppy crop for cash loans to dealers, who also provided

<sup>25</sup> As was his Chief Police Officer and the Head of the Department of Education.

<sup>26</sup> Another important problem is that this is a 'winner-takes-all' type of system, which does not allow political actors to hold provincial positions of power as a result of losing out at the national level. While more federal political systems tend to attenuate power conflicts, 'winner-takes-all' unitary systems tend to exacerbate them. In addition, a highly centralized system will in the long-run depend on the ability of the center to extract sufficient economic resources to finance such a system. Considering that the Afghan state has never been able to and still is not able to extract significant resources from within Afghanistan to finance its activities, a highly centralized political system may very well anyway be financially unsustainable.

<sup>27</sup> The Taliban was originally formed in response to the oppressive rule of war-lords and lack of justice during the 1990s. Its followers have been characterized by Ahmed Rashid as "a lumpen population, the product of refugee camps, militarized madrassa's, and the lack of opportunities in the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan" (Rashid 2008: 401).

<sup>28</sup> 103,000 ha of opium were cultivated in Helmand Province in 2008 – two thirds of all opium in Afghanistan. If Helmand were a country, it would be the world's biggest producer of illicit drugs (UNODC 2008).



protection, agricultural extension services, improved seeds, and even the skilled labor needed when harvesting began. As the state did not provide farmers with any of these services for legal crops, poppy quickly became the most lucrative crop, and Helmand took up the slack from reduced poppy cultivation in the north. Today poppy provides the livelihood for a wide group of warlords, traders, landowners, tenant farmers, sharecroppers and landless day laborers.

Under Akhunzada, therefore, the province continued its previous existence as a 'failed' province, where the state provided little in the way of security, infrastructure or public services. The province was characterized by crime, corruption and networks of narcotics traffickers, and the state was so enmeshed in criminal and insurgent interests that distinctions between legal and criminal structures was described in the first British plan for the province as meaningless<sup>29</sup>.

The British made their deployment to the province conditional on Akhunzada being removed as governor. Although Karzai acquiesced in this demand, he also gave Akhunzada a seat in the Senate, while keeping Akhunzada's younger brother on as deputy governor of Helmand province. In 2006, during the Taliban offensive, Karzai turned to Akhunzada again, putting him in charge of an auxiliary police force in the province, despite strong British objections.

Two weak governors, Mohammad Daoud and Asadullah Wafa served from December 2006 until March 2008, when the incumbent governor, Gulab Mangal, took over. Mangal is considered to be one of the most able administrators in Afghanistan, and his nomination coincides with the new political stabilization strategy of the PRT, which emphasizes winning over the population and giving priority to building up institutions of governance.

The following case story is based on a security incident that took place in the Gereschk area in April 2008 and illustrates the complicated networks which exist between the Taliban, militias, drug lords and officials. It also shows that Taliban is only part of the problem,<sup>30</sup> the inability to provide public governance being the larger problem.

<sup>29</sup> This description is in the report mentioned in footnote 21 attributed to the 'Joint Helmand Strategy'.

<sup>30</sup> This is also supported by the Governor of Kandahar, who claims that 80% of crimes are being committed by local militias, commanders, and the police, rather than by criminals or the Taliban (Rashid 2008: 323).

**Box 1: Power Struggle in Gereshk**

On 13 April 2008, the Taliban attacked the forces of the Afghanistan National Police outside Gereshk, including the Deputy Head of Police, Abdul Raziq, who was wounded, while four Afghanistan National Police officers were killed.

The background to this attack was an on-going power struggle over control of the area between on the one hand the Deputy Head of Police Abdul Raziq and his allies, and on the other hand Haji Khan Mohammed and his allies. Haji Khan Mohammed is the most important drug baron in the area and is believed to be behind the attack on Abdul Raziq, in which the Taliban just served as his tool.

Haji Khan Mohammed is closely connected with Major Ezmarai, who runs the Road Police, and Qari Hazrat, the local Taliban leader. Haji Khan Mohammed is also on friendly terms with Generals Muhajadin and Andiwal of the Afghanistan National Army and has good links with high officials in Kabul, whom he often visits for 'consultations'. Finally, Haji Khan Mohammed has a 'relationship' with the mayor of Gereshk. Rumors say that Haji Khan Mohammed assisted the mayor with a loan when the mayor's son was kidnapped by the Taliban in December 2007, thus enabling him to buy his son's freedom.

Abdul Raziq has recently dismissed a number of policemen, who were believed to be beholden to Haji Khan Mohammed, who at one time had been the police chief in Sangin. Abdul Raziq is active in the counter-narcotics campaign and is allied with Mullah Daoud, commander of the ASG militia, which 'guards' the outer perimeter of FOB Price, and his brother Haji Kaduz, who 'guards' the road between Lashkar Gah and Gereshk. Before becoming Deputy Head of Police, Abdul Raziq belonged to the ASG militia.

As shown in the above case story, Gereshk is still characterized by the symptoms of a 'failed state', where the state does not function as a proper public entity characterized by the separation of public and private realms,<sup>31</sup> the state not having established its monopoly over the means of coercion, prevalence of personal rule over rule of law, and justice not being implemented. As a result, legitimacy of GIRoA is low<sup>32</sup> and conflicts are predominantly resolved by resorting to violence. One result of this lack of public governance is that the citizen relies on individual or small-group physical and economic survival strategies, and is therefore not a free agent able to decide his allegiance according to ideological preference. Instead, citizens belong to economic and identity-based patron-client networks, which are relatively immune to consent-winning strategies. The lack of security and the existence of poppy economy reinforce each other and produce a low-level equilibrium in which almost everyone is worse off as compared to a situation with a functioning state, which ensures security by means of monopolizing the means of coercion and provides public goods to the population.

## **Strategy**

This section first provides an overview of how the strategy of the PRT developed over time, and then describes the specific strategy which Denmark has followed.

The strategy of the Helmand PRT has developed markedly from mid-2006, when it was established, until today. At first it was a traditional 'clear, hold, build' strategy, where the military would first pacify the area in order to allow NGOs and private contractors to start reconstruction and development. In retrospect, this approach has not been viewed by the PRT itself as successful in either reducing insecurity or promoting reconstruction and development. As a result, a new approach which views security and governance as interdependent factors has been developed.

<sup>31</sup> The functioning of the Department of Education in Lashkar Gah further supports this point. In interviews during June 2008 the department is described as de facto managed by the Deputy Chief who largely sees his own role as taking care of the interests of his tribal clan. Allowing the Department of Education or the public administration in general to cater to special group interest of course antagonizes competing clans, giving them the impression that strengthening of public administration may result in weakening their influence, which in turn may give them an interest in acting as spoilers of ISAF efforts to strengthen institutions. An ultimate recourse of action for them could e.g. be to ally themselves with Taliban efforts to close or burn down public schools.

<sup>32</sup> Cordesman notes succinctly (2007: 67) that "Legitimacy is the quality of governance perceived by local factions and individuals, not how governments are chosen".

### *Joint Helmand Plan*

When the Helmand PRT was established mid-2006, the insurgency was already strong and was gaining in strength. It was therefore natural that the emphasis should at first be on military action and not on civilian assistance.

The PRT in Lashkar Gah was set up to coordinate military and civilian activities, including between partner countries. All activities were to be directed and coordinated by the PRT and not by the individual partner countries. The Danish Battle Group was therefore also placed under the overall executive command of the British commander of Task Force Helmand.

A rather vague and general plan, termed the Joint Helmand Plan, was made in 2006, listing the different priority areas for civilian intervention, but it did not include a plan for implementation or any reflections on how civilian activities were to be integrated with the military activities. The military was supposed to clear the area and pacify it, allowing NGOs and private contractors to follow suit and start reconstruction and the capacity-building of institutions of governance. Because NGOs and private contractors were supposed to come in after the initial stabilization phase, the PRT was mainly staffed with military personnel and at first had only six civilians and a senior diplomat in Kandahar exercising a regional role. No specific provisions were made for institutional back-up in either Kabul or London.

Although the strategy was based on the idea of establishing ISAF-controlled 'ink-spots' which subsequently would merge, military operations did not result in stabilizing contiguous zones between towns allowing free circulation of goods and people. Even Lashkar Gah was not stabilized to the point where comprehensive reconstruction could take place and Gereshk even less so.<sup>33</sup> Violent incidents such as roadside bombs, suicide attacks and small arms fire continued to take place on a daily basis. Instead of less violence, which should have allowed civilian assistance to increase, violence and insecurity surged. Military resources became stretched to the point where the British decided to leave Musa Qala in October 2006 after negotiating a deal with the local Taliban leader. One Danish military commander characterized the past activist military strategy of extending control to remote areas as being often 'an ink-spot too far'.

<sup>33</sup> Free and secure circulation between the two major towns of the province is still not possible, although the distance between the two towns is only 40 km.

By the end of 2007, the British had come to the conclusion that their strategy was not likely to work and that military actions were too activist and often had a too narrow military objectives. The UK cross-departmental Stabilisation Unit was therefore asked to undertake an analysis of the situation and come up with recommendations. It was on this basis that the new Helmand Road Map<sup>34</sup> was developed and approved by the British Cabinet in the spring of 2008.<sup>35</sup>

### *The British Helmand Road Map*

The basic assumption behind the Helmand Road Map is that the insurgency is less problematic than the absence of effective government. This means that building governance takes precedence over anything else, and that military action and civilian activities are seen as means to the end of building governance, not as ends in themselves. Protecting people and/or critical institutions and contributing to the creation of the conditions necessary for sustainable development are seen as important objectives. According to the Helmand Road Map, a precondition for a specific district to become stabilized is that the population comes to perceive local and national structures to be more capable and responsive than any realistic alternatives.

The Helmand Road Map is predicated on a critique of the previous generalized consent-winning approach of PRTs civilian activities<sup>36</sup> and calls instead for:

- targeting specific groups of beneficiaries
- ensuring that activities contribute to a political settlement
- deliberate sequencing of activities
- improving management of delivery
- making sure that the logic of projects is realistic in terms of time and ambition, including that priority is given to ‘those parts of the state that are essential to delivering immediate progress in key districts’<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> A copy of the Helmand Road Map was given to the author during the field visit to Helmand. The paper is classified as ‘confidential’ and is without any indication of author or date of publication. The paper is widely circulated, why reference to the paper has been viewed as appropriate, although it can not be listed in the list of references due to incomplete information.

<sup>35</sup> This was part of a wider process of evaluating the previous strategy. Denmark played a role in this process a member of the Policy Action Group under the chairmanship of President Karzai.

<sup>36</sup> The author was unfortunately not able to acquire access to this British evaluation, which includes an assessment of the views of ordinary Afghans of these civilian activities and has been classified ‘for British eyes only’.

<sup>37</sup> Helmand Road Map, p. 2.

The Helmand Road Map proposed action in a limited, but expanding number of politically significant areas. PRT influence is to be managed by district-based PRT delivery units, thus ensuring the initiation of sustained activities which are perceived by the population as representing broader systemic changes. As a result of the Helmand Road Map, the PRT Headquarters in Lashkar Gah is now firmly led by a civilian with a higher rank than the military commander, and the integration of military and civilian planning and intelligence functions within the PRT itself.

The Helmand Road Map is to be detailed into specific plans for each of the four districts: Lashkar Gah, Gereshk, Sangin and Musa Qala. For each district, a development plan will be produced covering seven specific functional strands: politics and reconciliation, governance, rule of law<sup>38</sup>, security, economic development and reconstruction, counter-narcotics and communications.

The description of strategies will in the following focus on the specific Danish strategies with regard to activities in Helmand.

*Danish Strategy Paper no. 1: Styrkelse af engagementet i Afghanistan – fokus på Helmand*

This document was published in April 2007 and was the first official Danish analysis of the situation in Afghanistan, with a focus on Helmand as well as containing overall strategic guidelines. However, the analysis here will be confined to matters relating to Helmand province.

The analytical framework on which the document is based is described on page 20, where it says that ‘The expectation is, of course, that with the strengthened military presence the opportunities for reconstruction will be improved.’<sup>39</sup> The concept that civil assistance is premised on the existence of some degree of security is of fundamental importance in the document. Based on a sequential understanding of military action and civilian assistance, the role of the military is to produce security, while the role of civilian assistance is to produce transformational development.<sup>40 41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> I.e. justice, police and prisons.

<sup>39</sup> Udenrigsministeriet 2007: Styrkelse af engagementet i Afghanistan – fokus på Helmand. April 2007, p. 20.

<sup>40</sup> I understand the term ‘transformational development’ as a process which emphasizes changes in socio-economic structures with a view to increase incomes and reduce poverty.

<sup>41</sup> See also the figure on page 7, where Denmark’s involvement in civilian activities is deduced from the Afghanistan National Development Plan, while Denmark’s military engagement is deduced from NATO’s plan of operation, but without any arrows or indications on how the two types of activities interact. This parallel mode of military operations and civil activities is usually termed the ‘stove-pipes’ model; i.e. two parallel and un-integrated types of activity.

Governance challenges are understood as instrumental governance, i.e. improving existing technical and administrative capacities, not as establishing more foundational political institutions. In line with this analytical framework, the document concludes by recommending three types of action: 1. Increased number of CPA projects; 2. long-term reconstruction in the domains of education, water and sanitation; and 3. more resources to Helmand province via Afghan nation-wide programs.<sup>42</sup>

There is an overall reference to the framework of the PRT and to the fact that Denmark is operating as a partner to Great Britain in the province. Aside from this and the proposal to deploy a Danish advisor to PRT Headquarters, it contains no reflections on how Denmark may contribute to develop, adjust and monitor the overall PRT strategy for Helmand.<sup>43</sup>

*Danish Strategy Paper no. 2: Den Danske Indsats i Helmand 2008*

The goal of this Danish strategy paper on Helmand from December 2007 is to 'provide the strategic objectives for the long-term Danish engagement and the benchmarks the engagement seeks to reach in 2008'.<sup>44</sup>

The strategy is based on the paper discussed above and reiterates to a large degree its analytical framework. It states that 'Development assistance requires that the necessary security is provided for Danish civil advisors in Helmand',<sup>45</sup> and that until such security is provided by military means, it is recommended that the in-between period be used to initiate CPA projects and to prepare the long-term reconstruction effort in the education sector.<sup>46</sup> However, this stands in contrast to a statement on page 6, which says that the traditional way of thinking, according to which the military first secures an area and allow for development activities to follow suit, is not valid for Helmand, where inter-active and simultaneous military and civilian activities are needed.

The paper promotes civilian activities as consent-winning activities aimed to convince Afghan citizens that the government can deliver development,<sup>47</sup> and it therefore

<sup>42</sup> Udenrigsministeriet 2007: Styrkelse af engagementet i Afghanistan – fokus på Helmand. April 2007, p. 16.

<sup>43</sup> At page 17, PRT structures are mentioned as 'British structures'.

<sup>44</sup> Page 3.

<sup>45</sup> Page 4.

<sup>46</sup> Page 10.

<sup>47</sup> Page 7.

proposes to target the needs which are most in demand by the population.<sup>48</sup> The strategy is presented as a development strategy with focus on capacity-building and an eye to long-term and sustainable development, in line with the emphasis on linking national programs with local activities in the province. The situation in Gereshk is described as ‘post-conflict’,<sup>49</sup> not as ‘in-conflict’.

There are three specific civilian activities which are proposed in the document for Helmand in 2008: CPA projects, support for education, and the fight against the opium economy. While the document describes how building schools and support for education may weaken the Taliban<sup>50</sup> by mobilizing the population to defend schools against intimidation from them, there are no details on how the opium economy is to be fought. The choice of education as a priority sector is not discussed in relation to the overall PRT strategy, and there is no discussion of the potential mismatch between the need to neutralize negative short-term effects of the military presence in Helmand with the longer-term potential positive effects of education activities.

The integration of Danish activities into the overall organizational framework of the PRT is stressed several times, and it is proposed to pool the funds for CPA projects with British funds and to administer them within the framework of the PRT.

### *Danish Strategy Paper no. 3: Strategi for den danske indsats i Afghanistan 2008-2012*

While the Helmand Strategy Paper was issued in December 2007, a five-year Afghanistan Strategy Paper was published in June 2008. This deals with all Danish activities in Afghanistan, of which activities in Helmand form only a part.

The paper embraces a much more classical counter-insurgency framework than the two previous strategy papers and advocate a ‘fully integrated political, civil and military effort (as a) ... precondition for sustainable progress in the country.’<sup>51</sup> The paper states the need for ‘military and civilian activities mutually to support each other’<sup>52</sup> and

<sup>48</sup> Page 4. This is further supported by statements that the intention is to provide ‘lesser, quick-impacting activities with the objective of winning the confidence of the population and creating development beneficial to the population’ (p. 10).

<sup>49</sup> Page 6.

<sup>50</sup> Page 14.

<sup>51</sup> Page 23.

<sup>52</sup> Page 23.



suggests that 'the Taliban can not only be fought with military means.'<sup>53</sup> It also calls for a strengthening of Denmark's activities in Helmand through the shared planning and execution of military and civilian activities.<sup>54</sup>

While the paper is quite clear about overall objectives and approach to activities in Helmand, it is less clear about how these are to be translated into specific activities. The many references in the document to the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and the emphasis on linking national programs to provincial activities convey the impression that the objective of civilian activities is still being thought of in terms of transformational development. Education is recommended as a priority sector, although no explanation is given as to how this specific sector will advance the overall stated goals, or how it fits into the overall plans of the PRT. Combating the opium economy is mentioned as a priority area, although again without details on how this will be executed.

Although the importance of PRTs as centers for execution of integrated military and civilian activities in Afghanistan is mentioned,<sup>55</sup> there is no mention of the PRT Helmand Road Map, which at the time had already been adopted by the PRT and approved by the British Government. While the author obtained a copy of the plan from staff in FOB Price in May 2008 at a time when the staff was busy elaborating a district-based version of the plan, this plan was apparently not received by the ministries before mid-June 2008<sup>56</sup>, which suggests that the Danish Afghanistan strategy was not developed on basis of a full appreciation of the situation and facts on the ground and supports the previous impression of insufficient coordination between partner countries.

## **Implementation**

This section will focus on three questions: What has been provided, how much, and how?

### *What?*

Four types of Danish civilian assistance have been provided to Helmand:

<sup>53</sup> Page 12.

<sup>54</sup> Page 23.

<sup>55</sup> Page 6.

<sup>56</sup> According to an e-mail of 5 December 2008 to the author from the Danish Ministry of Defense.

- activities implemented through the multi-donor programs: the National Solidarity Program (NSP) and the Microfinance Investment Support Facility for Afghanistan (MISFA)
- support for education, implemented as sector support through the Ministry of Education
- comprehensive approach activities (CPA projects or 'samtænkningsprojekter'), and
- CIMIC (civil-military coordination) activities.

The National Solidarity Program aims to rehabilitate and develop villages through local democratically elected institutions which themselves will identify, plan and manage reconstruction in the locality. MISFA provides microcredit to low-income earners in Afghanistan in order to generate income and meet consumption needs.

Support for education comprises building and repairing schools, as well as enhancing the capacity of the Department of Education in Lashkar Gah to manage education in the province.

CPA projects include a variety of smaller physical reconstruction projects such as water towers, refurbishment of schools, gates at police outposts and tailoring facilities for poor women.

CIMIC projects are quite similar to CPA projects, the only difference being that CIMIC projects are smaller than CPA projects. Projects comprise the provision of furniture and equipment to schools, firefighting equipment, cash for work projects, and the distribution of gifts.

### *How much?*

It has not been possible to obtain any figures as to the degree of implementation of the MISFA multi-donor program in Helmand, but according to the World Bank representative in Kabul, implementation of the program has been severely impeded by the security situation in the province. At the end of 2007 the National Solidarity Program, to which Denmark contributed financially<sup>57</sup>, had reduced its activities in

<sup>57</sup> The Danish contribution to the activities of the National Solidarity Program which was directed towards Helmand amounted to 3.9 million USD (i.e. roughly 20 million DKK) in 2007 (e-mail of 5 December 2008 from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Helmand to two out of six planned districts (out of a total number of 14 districts in Helmand Province).<sup>58</sup>

The channeling of national funds to the education sector in the province has also been limited. This has been underscored by the fact that less than 10% of the funds that Denmark provide for national education is estimated actually to have been channeled to Helmand province.<sup>59</sup> The only exact figure for civilian activities which could be obtained concerns direct funded education activities in Helmand and CPA projects. The amount Denmark spent in 2007 came to app. 9 million DKK<sup>60</sup> as compared to 270 million DKK in total for Danish expenditure for civilian activities in Afghanistan.<sup>61</sup> The amount budgeted for 2008 to education activities was 6 million USD.<sup>62</sup> The amount allocated CIMIC activities implemented by the Danish Battle Group team 5 (i.e. for the first half of 2008) was 400,000 DKK.<sup>63</sup>

### *How?*

While the ultimate objective of CIMIC activities is to protect the military forces, the intention of CPA projects was to go beyond this to initiate reconstruction and prepare for development activities. The mode of implementation has been identical for CIMIC as for CPA projects: identification of projects by military CIMIC patrols, approval of projects by the military commander, and monitoring of projects by the CIMIC unit. Actual implementation of projects was largely sub-contracted to private Afghan entrepreneurs. The different limits of amounts to be used on each project were different between CPA projects (limit of 50,000 USD per project) and CIMIC projects (limit of 50,000 DKK per project), were managed by distributing projects according to amounts. Whether the purpose of the project was force protection or reconstruction, which is anyway a distinction that is very difficult to make, seemed to have made little difference.

To assist in identifying and implementing CPA activities, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs deployed externally contracted development advisors to the province. By June 2008, a succession of four different individuals had been deployed on six-month contracts. Immediately after the deployment of the Danish military to Helmand, an

<sup>58</sup> Information from advisor deployed to Helmand.

<sup>59</sup> Information based on interview.

<sup>60</sup> Information provided in an interview held on 27 May 2008 with the Danish ambassador to Afghanistan.

<sup>61</sup> From [www.afghanistan.um.dk/da/menu/InfoOmAfghanistan/Baggrundsinformation/Resultater/](http://www.afghanistan.um.dk/da/menu/InfoOmAfghanistan/Baggrundsinformation/Resultater/)

<sup>62</sup> Information provided in an interview held on 29 May 2008 with the Danish education advisor to Helmand.

<sup>63</sup> Information provided through interviews.

advisor was seconded to the PRT Headquarters in Lashkar Gah.<sup>64</sup> This person was replaced by another externally contracted advisor, whose duties also included representing the Danish embassy in the PRT management group.<sup>65</sup> While this second person terminated his contract by June 2008, a third person was deployed to the Danish Battle Group at Gereshk from 1 January 2008 to advise on the implementation of civilian activities in that area. Finally, an education advisor to assist the provincial Department of Education and stationed at PRT Headquarters in Lashkar Gah was deployed from the beginning of 2008.<sup>66</sup>

To implement CIMIC activities and assist the development advisor with managing CPA projects, a total of fourteen CIMIC military staff were planned for team 5 (January-August 2008), although only eleven were actually sent. Added to this is the tragic incident in which two CIMIC staff were killed by a suicide attacker in the spring of 2008. The remaining nine CIMIC staff enabled the Danish Battle Group to field two teams of two CIMIC staff persons each to identify, implement and monitor projects.

Deployed civilian personnel were contracted under a 6+2 regime (i.e. 6 weeks of work followed by 2 weeks of rest and recuperation), which de facto is a 5+3 regime, because at least one week is used for travelling. With such a regime, deploying one person for one job means therefore in fact only manning the job at the most 60% of the time.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>64</sup> By 14 August 2006.

<sup>65</sup> Deployed by 1 September 2007.

<sup>66</sup> Lauritzen 2008, p. 3.

<sup>67</sup> Of course, other reasons for leave, such as paternity leave or illness, potentially further reduce the presence of deployed personnel.

## 4. Badakhshan

Badakhshan is the other province in Afghanistan where Denmark has been engaged militarily, as well as with civilian reconstruction. Although as of August 2008 Denmark is no longer engaged in the province militarily, the reason for including it in the analysis is to provide comparative lessons between Badakhshan and Helmand regarding the required coordination of military and civilian activities in relation to the type of situation to be addressed. As in the previous chapter on Helmand, this chapter first provides some basic information on the province, then discusses the power dynamics on the ground, and finally addresses the strategy and implementation of the German-led PRT and the specific Danish contribution in the province.

### Basic information<sup>68</sup>

Badakhshan is one of the poorest provinces in one of the world's poorest countries and has a population of roughly one million and a territory about the size of Denmark (see Map 1). Almost all its population lives in rural areas. 80% of the population are Tajiks, and there are close ethnic ties with the neighboring state of Tajikistan, which is itself an extremely poor country that is badly governed and with a history of bloody civil war. Other ethnic groups in the province are the Kochis (Pashtu-speaking nomads), Kyrgyz and Pamiri<sup>69</sup>. Between 20 and 30% of the population were refugees during the 1980s and the 1990s, but most have returned and are resettled. Around 10% of the male population lives outside the province as economic migrants, mainly in Iran and Pakistan.

In the past the economy in Badakhshan was heavily based on poppy cultivation.<sup>70</sup> However, this has by and large stopped after a vigorous campaign by the GIRoA and the governor, although the province is still heavily engaged in the opium trade over the poorly guarded border to Tajikistan. The reduction in poppy cultivation has not been

<sup>68</sup> If not otherwise noted, basic information has been provided in interviews and in an e-mail exchange with the office for provincial planning in Badakhshan and from an undated copy of contribution from the province for the Afghanistan National Development Plan, titled: 'Provincial Development Plan, *Badakhshan Provincial Profile*'.

<sup>69</sup> Pamiri's belong to the Ismaili branch of Shia Islam in contrast to the majority of Shiites in Afghanistan who belong to the twelver branch of Shia Islam.

<sup>70</sup> According to UNODC it was the second largest opium producing province in Afghanistan in 2007 (UNODC 2008:8).

accompanied by improved economic alternatives, and the effect of the anti-cultivation efforts on public opinion regarding GIRoA is not known.<sup>71</sup> Drug addiction is a major and rising problem. The economy rests largely on low-productivity subsistence farming. Little is exported outside the province, and there is no industry.

Security is relatively good in the province, although roadside bombs, small arms attacks on patrols and mortar attacks on the PRT camp take place from time to time.<sup>72</sup> Most of these incidents are related to conflicts between local power-brokers or to crime.<sup>73</sup> During the first quarter of 2008, a warning against kidnapping was still in force. Fortunately, neither Germany nor Denmark has experienced any fatal casualties since their deployment to the province in 2004 and 2005 respectively.

Public services in the province are still not widespread, and the authorities, whether the army or the police, do not seem to have a presence in many districts and in rural areas. A German report found that ‘the state is virtually absent as a problem-solver and service-provider’ in the province.<sup>74</sup> Corruption is widespread, and even minor services such as acquiring a passport require bribes. The channeling of funds from the government in Kabul is very weak, which impedes provision of public services in the province. The police are considered by most people as a ‘militia in uniform’ that misuses its authority and is engaged in the extortion of citizens. There is only one prison in the province, which is in a very bad condition.

### **Power dynamics**

Badakhshan was one of the few provinces which were not conquered by the Taliban, although militias are still present. The dominant militia in Fayzabad is led by a former Afghan National Army (ANA) general, Nazir Muhammed, and it also serves as guards on the outer perimeter of the PRT in Fayzabad. Nazir Muhammed is associated with Burhanuddin Rabbani, who was president of Afghanistan from 1992 to 1996, a former important warlord and a leader of the Northern Alliance. Rabbani was a contender with Karzai to become president of Afghanistan in 2003 and is now a Member of Parliament and an important leader of the influential Northern

<sup>71</sup> There is a consensus in the literature that if cultivators do not see significant rewards for reducing the highly profitable poppy cultivation, this may support anti-government activities. See Rubin and Sherman 2008.

<sup>72</sup> The latest reported incident was 16 July 2008 when three rockets were fired against the PRT camp in Fayzabad.

<sup>73</sup> BMZ 2007;2:5.

<sup>74</sup> BMZ 2007;2:5.

Alliance political network in Kabul. The governor of the province for the last three years, Munshi Aboul Majeed, was the minister of Interior when Rabbani was president and, like the police chief and the ANA generals in the province, he owes his position to Rabbani. Islamist extremism has so far not been a significant problem in the area, although the radical Islamist party, Hizb Islami,<sup>75</sup> has recently established its presence in the province.<sup>76</sup>

### **Strategy**

The PRT operates on the basis of a broad strategic plan, divided into three phases termed initiation, consolidation and expansion. The end objective of the plan is described as ‘stability established’ and characterized by ‘province-wide security established.’<sup>77</sup> Stability is conceived as security and as the absence of violent incidents. According to the PRT, activities are still in the first phase of the plan.

The PRT is rather poorly staffed regarding civilian issues, and it was not possible to get a firm impression of the overall strategy of the PRT during the field visit apart from providing a kind of security guarantee in case violence erupted once again in the province. This impression is supported by the claims by NGOs in the province that ‘the civilian presence in the PRT is very small’, that the PRT operates in a sort of bubble, and that ‘the governor does not share his plans with the PRT’ indicating poor linkage between the PRT and the local Afghan authorities.

As for Danish activities, the COWI report, ‘Review of Civil-Military Activities in Afghanistan Financed by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ of July 2006 noted that CPA activities have lacked context-specific strategic guidance and direction. There was no evidence that that the situation had changed in this regard. Rather, it seems that the implicit strategy of the PRT and of Denmark has been to provide long-term transformational development assistance to the province. It is difficult to ascertain any conceptual links between civilian assistance and the military presence or in fact an overarching strategy on how to provide long-term transformational development assistance. Assistance seems not specifically targeted to issues in relation to Badakhshan as a fragile state.

<sup>75</sup> Hizb Islami is a break-away from the party run by the Taliban’s ally, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

<sup>76</sup> The Governor, who is very religious, is supposedly a member of this party.

<sup>77</sup> “Kampagneplan” as of 21 June 2008.

## Implementation

According to information provided by the PRT in Fayzabad, a total of 65 million USD was spent in 2005 in the province on reconstruction and development, 23 million in 2006 and 16 million in 2007. The most important project is the USAID project to construct a paved road from Kishim on the ring road to Fayzabad, which will be terminated this year at the cost of 120 million USD. German assistance to the province is estimated by the local GTZ representative in Fayzabad to be in the neighborhood of 10 million Euros a year.

The PRT in Fayzabad was established in 2004 with Germany as the lead nation, which deploys around 350 soldiers. German development cooperation has prioritized projects in Afghanistan with medium to long-term impact over projects with short to medium-term impact and is mainly implemented through GTZ and German NGOs. A majority of German projects in Afghanistan focus on capacity-building at the central state level. 72% of project value is allocated to projects in Kabul and central Afghanistan, as compared to 15% allocated to Badakhshan, Takhar and Kunduz provinces in the north-east.<sup>78</sup> Due to the problems involved in channeling funds from the government in Kabul to the provinces, only a very minor proportion of resources allocated to projects with the central government in Kabul reach Badakhshan. German-financed projects in the north-east of Afghanistan 'prioritizes infrastructure over capacity building, and projects targeting state institutions on provincial or district level are marginal.'<sup>79</sup> Assistance was provided to a police officers' training center in the neighboring province of Kunduz. Security has not been addressed in the context of a sector program or specifically in relation to Badakhshan. By mid-June 2008, EUPOL was still waiting for resources and plans for how to continue.

According to NGOs in Badakhshan, formal coordination and cooperation between themselves and the PRT has been minimal, although valuable informal coordination and cooperation has been provided by the incumbent Danish development advisor.

Denmark joined the PRT on 1 January 2005 with a contingent of forty soldiers, reduced to twenty in mid-February 2008. The deployment had been terminated by August 2008. Since 2005, Denmark has fielded a development advisor to the PRT, who in cooperation with the Danish CIMIC teams has initiated and implemented

<sup>78</sup> BMZ 2007;1:27.

<sup>79</sup> BMZ 2007;1:31.



CPA projects as well as some development projects outside the CPA framework and funded directly through the Danish embassy. No new CPA projects were initiated after August 2007.

Danish CPA projects have been directed towards the building and upgrading of schools and water supply systems. Denmark has also funded technical assistance to produce a provincial development plan and the building of a provincial administrative training center, as well as funding Mission East with around 25 million DKK<sup>80</sup> for water supply and hygiene education projects, and more limited amounts to the organizations Danish Assistance to Afghan Rehabilitation and Technical Training and Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees. Finally, Denmark has funded activities in Badakhshan through the National Solidarity Program.<sup>81</sup>

German and Danish assistance has been channeled through the PRT, as well as through Danish and other national NGOs in the area. CPA projects were identified on the basis of opportunities which CIMIC teams identified along their patrol routes and have not been linked to an overall plan. After identification by the military patrols, projects were suggested to the Danish military commander, upon whose approval the suggestions were passed on to the development advisor, who then also gave his opinion, as well as made suggestions for modifications and improvements. Implementation was finally carried out by the CIMIC teams and private entrepreneurs, and monitored by the development advisor. The main distinction between CPA projects and CIMIC projects was in the case of Badakhshan the amount of expenditure involved, larger projects being financed as CPA projects, while smaller projects were financed as CIMIC projects. Non-CPA civilian projects (above the 50,000 USD limit for CPA projects) were identified by the development advisor himself in consultation with the embassy. Technical expertise in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Copenhagen was involved on a case-by-case basis and if deemed necessary. Assistance from the Danish Embassy in Kabul was largely of an administrative character.

Three CIMIC soldiers were attached to the Danish military contingency between January 2005 and February 2008, and one CIMIC soldier from February 2008.

<sup>80</sup> The period for which this allocation is valid is not known.

<sup>81</sup> According to an e-mail of 16 December 2008 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark contributed 8.4 million USD to the activities in Badakhshan of the program for 2007.

While Germany operates with four months rotations, Denmark has applied six months rotations for PRT staff. Include officers and commanders in these short rotations is seen by local observers as a major problem in ensuring long-term direction of the activities of the PRT.

## **5. Interventions as Political Stabilization**

It may be recalled that the research questions concerned whether interventions were understood as political operations, whether a center providing leadership for these operations exists, and whether the necessary implementing capabilities existed to undertake such operations. This chapter analyzes the first of these three questions on the basis of the analytical framework and the evidence described in the previous chapters. The analysis deals with operations in Helmand Province and in Badakhshan Province respectively.

### **Helmand**

The initial PRT perception of the challenge in Helmand was that it was first and foremost a military challenge. The Taliban were to be defeated, after which civilian reconstruction and development would consolidate the peace that the military had established. The civilian contribution was viewed as peace stabilization rather than as a contribution to counter-insurgency or political stabilization. The British lesson was that this understanding has not been very useful in stabilizing the province.<sup>82</sup>

Reconstruction and development have not yet been undertaken to any significant degree, while the situation in the meantime has deteriorated further and augmented the difficulties in delivering reconstruction and development. While a case may be made that not enough reconstruction was carried out when the potential for this existed, the situation is now such that very little reconstruction can indeed take place due to a lack of security.

The UK has made a significant effort to evaluate its past experiences and in the Helmand Road Map has proposed a radical overhaul of its strategy and approach to the challenges involved. Indeed, the Helmand Road Map goes a long way in re-conceptualizing the strategy of the PRT as a strategy of political stabilization. This is a good starting point, although considerable challenges in detailing and implementing the new strategy remain. The strategy – as detailed in the Helmand Road Map paper – also fails to emphasize sufficiently that it is only local actors who may establish a

<sup>82</sup> This view was conveyed by the British Head of the PRT in Helmand.

coherent and viable political framework as a basis for a more peaceful and prosperous society, and that the role of external actors can only be one of providing incentives for the establishment of such a political framework.

The Danish understanding of these challenges has also developed in a positive direction over the more than two years of Danish presence in Helmand. After one year of deployment of Danish troops to the province, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued its reflections on the challenges in the province in the previously mentioned paper of April 2007.<sup>83</sup> In this paper, the thinking took the form of the traditional concept of stabilizing the area militarily first, allowing NGOs and private contractors to undertake reconstruction and development subsequently. This understanding has clearly changed, and the last strategy paper<sup>84</sup> calls for 'a fully integrated political, civil and military effort [as a] ... precondition for sustainable progress in the country' and for 'military and civilian activities to mutually support each other.'<sup>85</sup> The previous approach based on peace stabilization seems to have been replaced with an understanding of the challenge as peace enforcement with the objective of political stabilization, rather than 'long-term sustainable development,'<sup>86</sup> which is still mentioned in the Helmand strategy paper.<sup>87</sup>

However, although considerable changes have taken place at the conceptual level, there is still some way to go in translating conceptual thinking into actual content of the strategies. The present strategy is still limited to an implicit understanding of civilian projects as general consent-winning activities and does not clearly formulate an overarching military-political strategy for Danish activities.<sup>88</sup> Two particular issues may illustrate this: the emphasis on education, and the stress on national programs for channeling resources to the province.

Education seems to be chosen because it is believed to be a much demanded public good in the province. But is it a relevant sector in relation to the objective of political stabilization? Four questions that may be used to assess this are: Are the assumptions connected to this choice realistic? Is the choice of sector relevant in relation to short- and medium-term objectives? Are the expected effects relevant in relation to

<sup>83</sup> Styrkelse af engagementet i Afghanistan, April 2007.

<sup>84</sup> Strategi for den danske indsats i Afghanistan 2008-12.

<sup>85</sup> Strategi for den danske indsats i Afghanistan 2008-12, p. 23.

<sup>86</sup> Strategi for den danske indsats i Afghanistan 2008-12, p. 4.

<sup>87</sup> Den Danske Indsats i Helmand, p. 4.

<sup>88</sup> The paper deals both with Afghanistan as a whole and with Helmand in particular.

Helmand decision-makers as opposed to the general population? And is the choice of education congruent with the plans of the PRT?

In the present strategy the idea that the local population may be organized to defend schools against intimidation by the Taliban is proposed. The proposal seems to be premised on an understanding of the citizen as a free agent – an assumption which as mentioned in chapter 1 may be questioned. Is it e.g. realistic to expect local citizens to collaborate in situations where ISAF is only weakly committed militarily to an area and which is actively contested. The high numbers of schools that have been burned down in Helmand or schools which are not in use because of Taliban intimidation indicate two things. First, that much stronger and more comprehensive efforts will be needed than voluntary citizen action<sup>89</sup> and second, that the political conflict raging in Helmand is more important in explaining the lack of access to education than a lack of school capacity, books and management of schools.<sup>90</sup>

However worthwhile and necessary projects such as education may be they are also in need to have a ‘politically relevant’ timeframe, if they are to contribute to stabilizing the current situation. As education represents a longer-term contribution to development and not necessarily a contribution to ‘hot’ stabilization that is required at present in Helmand, it is not clear that improvements in the level of education in a situation such as exist in Helmand province will contribute to the immediate goal of political stabilization. This is even more so, because education may be seen as representing a potentially contentious ‘modernizing’ agenda. In fact, morally virtuous projects to put girls into schools may easily antagonize conservative community leaders whose political allegiance to GIRA is important. It is therefore not impossible that in the worst of cases foreign assistance to the education sector may be counter-productive to the objective of providing political stabilization. The choice of education as a priority sector seems to be based on a previous concepts such as transformational development, consent-winning and peace stabilization, rather than on the new understanding of activities as counter-insurgency and political stabilization.

<sup>89</sup> The high number of burned down or closed schools also suggest that what is needed is not building of more schools, but rather in the first place to make use of existing schools. As an indication of the magnitude of the problem, the head of the provincial education department estimated in October 2007 that Helmand province had 90 functioning schools, while in 2002, less than a year after the Taliban were toppled, there were 224 functioning schools all over the province. See: <http://disarmamentinsight.blogspot.com/2007/10/30-less-pupils-in-helmand-province.html>

<sup>90</sup> If the objective is to increase access to education, the means would logically be first to address the political conflict and only second increase the number of schools etc. Increasing the number of schools in a situation where schools are burned down for political reasons is not logical as an overall strategy.

One may argue that it would be immensely more interesting to know what the actual perceptions of Helmand citizens are to these issues, rather than read speculative reflections on what might or might not be problematic. Although the very few interviews the author was able to conduct with local citizens revealed overall fatigue and disillusionment with the PRT's civilian reconstruction activities in general, and although the interviewees at the same time also noted that positive developments had taken place during the last couple of months, broader and more representative studies could not be conducted due to the security situation. In this light, it is particularly unfortunate that access could not be obtained to the previously mentioned UK study on the views of local citizens with regard to civilian reconstruction.<sup>91</sup> Feed-back of the perceptions of local elites and broader segments of the population of the undertakings of external actors is of course very important in political-military operations.

As regards the question of the congruence of the choice of education as a priority sector with the PRT's plans, it is notable that the choice of this sector in the Danish Afghanistan Plan is not justified in relation to the Helmand Road Map, where education as a sector is not one of the separate strands of activities in the plan. This conveys the impression that the choice of education as a priority sector has not been made in relation to either the objective of political stabilization or the overall plans of the Helmand PRT. The justification that Denmark has experience in this sector in general and that it fits well with what Denmark is involved in at the national level seem insufficient to justify the choice of priority sectors.

The emphasis on channeling resources through national programs seems likewise to be at odds with the newly stated objective of political stabilization. National programs are rarely defined in terms of 'hot stabilization' objectives. They lack regional or district specificity, and are subject to the constraints that the lack of security in the province imposes. They are also subject to the political and administrative inability of the present Afghan state to channel resources from the capital to the provinces. For reasons of long-term development, it is certainly advisable to implement activities through national programs. But in pursuit of the short- and medium objective of political stabilization this seems hardly advisable under the present circumstances.

One possible reason for the tension that has been identified between the overall concept of the Danish strategy and its substantiation could be that the strategy

<sup>91</sup> See note 26.

attempts to reflect the demands of Danish political constituencies, instead of being a response to a practical need for a prioritized, sequential and realistic strategy based on the clear limits of available resources and tough decisions regarding prioritization. This is not, of course, an argument against the need for democratic accountability of Danish activities in areas of failed states. It is instead an argument for the necessity to explicate the need to manage the hierarchy of objectives, where objectives at a lower level must yield to objectives at a higher level. This means that the objective of short- and medium-term stabilization in failed states is more important than longer-term objectives of transformational development or improved gender equality.<sup>92</sup>

The British experience is that the expectations of their own domestic constituencies with regard to objectives of their activities in Helmand (improvement of the conditions of women, promotion of socio-economic development, fighting the Taliban etc.) are often at odds with the hard realities on the ground, where only far more humble objectives are possible. While overall political guidelines for engagement in Helmand are needed, this ought not to be confused with an actionable and realistic strategy which may be applied by the actors on the ground.

This issue is related to the wider issue of distinguishing between worthy goals of so-called liberal interventions (with the objective of improvements in human rights, women rights and democratic ideals and freedoms and political stabilization. In liberal interventions, the objective is the transfer of values, while the objective of political stabilization is to prevent increased unrest by establishing some basic form of governance system from which the host country may be able to move on.

The most salient issue in relation to the present strategy is however that it does not address the security-reconstruction conundrum described in the introduction, i.e. how to provide civilian assistance without security, which in turn depends on civilian assistance. The policy advocated in the introduction was to ask what kind of military action will be needed to allow civilian reconstruction to take place, instead of asking what kind of reconstruction can take place under existing security circumstances. This question still needs to be answered and have important consequences for the

<sup>92</sup> Or, as Thomas Hobbes (1651) wrote, the burdens of even the most oppressive government are “scarce sensible, in respect of the miseries, and horrible calamities, that accompany a Civill Warre”. The short-hand version of this statement is that “Any state is better than no state” and is similar to the oft-quoted Middle Eastern maxim of “Better sixty years of tyranny than one hour of anarchy.”

kind of military action and strategy which are to be pursued. And this tends to shift the emphasis from offensive kinetic capabilities towards techniques which protect the civilian population and economic activities, such as patrolling densely populated districts, embedding Danish soldiers with Afghan troops, protecting roads and communication infrastructure.<sup>93</sup>

The case story described in box 1 on page 26 may provide an illustration of what might be needed if a more politically guided strategy is to be pursued. The problem described in the case story is clearly the link between Taliban, the drug-baron Haji Khan Mohammed and Afghan officials. When such linkages dominate a society, its state is usually described as a narco-state where revenue from narcotics serves as 'glue' to uphold such linkages. As previously described, drugs more or less constitute the cash-economy in Helmand, while the remaining economy is subsistence economy and therefore not generating cash.

In order to establish a sound state, which represents broader interests of society, ensures security, promote economic development and rules on basis of the law and not by personal fiat, this linkage needs to be broken. A purely military approach targeting Taliban will not work as long as this network exists. Neither is it likely, that it will be possible to provide civilian assistance in the fields of education, water supply, electricity etc. as long as the Taliban and corrupt officials are empowered by their relationship with the drug-barons. As long as Taliban is not included in the coalition on which the government is based, Taliban see civilian assistance as empowering their adversary, the Karzai Government, and therefore wants to derail such assistance.

A politically guided strategy would address this situation by using military and civilian assistance to establish a situation where legal economic activities could start taking place. This could entail ensuring free traffic circulation between the towns, buying legal agricultural crops at subsidized prices, and investing in agro-processing industries while at the same time harassing the drug-trade and intimidating the drug barons. The objective of such a strategy should not necessarily be to take a person such as Haji Khan Mohammed out, but instead to try to convince him that he for economic reasons should be more interested in investing in legal economic activi-

<sup>93</sup> Providing incentives in order to change from an opium economy to a non-opium economy is an important game-changer. However, opposing opium-trafficking is similarly important and may, ultimately, involve military action against drug barons. The capability to undertake such types of action should also form part of the military capabilities to support strategies of political stabilization.



ties. Any means to convince him of this should be used, even partnering with him in investments in e.g. agro-business.<sup>94</sup>

The objective of such a strategy should not be economic, but instead to use the economic tool to influence the political environment promoting the establishment of a sound state in Helmand. As long as the interests of influential people like Haji Khan Mohammed are not aligned with state-building, this endeavor is likely to fail. The trick should be to force an alignment of his interests with the overall objective of establishing a self-sustaining political framework from which the province can move on.<sup>95</sup>

A shift of the emphasis of the military strategy may furthermore need to be combined with a much more 'Machiavellian' approach to interventions. One of the lessons of the so-called surge in Iraq<sup>96</sup> was the need to leverage external forces by aligning with domestic forces by strengthening selective tribal and socio-religious groups having an interest in countering the extremists. Conciliatory strategies towards the Taliban may indeed be more effective when they are preceded by weakening insurgents through empowerment of local forces. If strengthening of the central state is not sufficient to bring about a settlement, the host-nation state may need to be strengthened by reaching out to selective groups with independent power resources.<sup>97</sup>

## **Badakhshan**

While the challenges in Helmand require a closely integrated civil-military strategy, the situation in Badakhshan is quite the opposite. The challenge here is to stabilize the peace, not to enforce it. Furthermore, the brief description of the political forces in the province indicates that, contrary to the situation in Helmand, peace-stabilization in Badakhshan is based on an alignment with the most important political forces represented by Burhanudin Rabbani. But to consolidate this peace, the public

<sup>94</sup> Investing in agro-business would have the additional advantage of providing jobs for the un-employed. Part of the reason that Afghans join the insurgency is because the private 'security-business' is the biggest provider of jobs. The insecurity of the insurgency impedes in turn the creation of a legal economy and legal jobs. This vicious circle needs to be broken by forceful action by external actors and can not be based on a notion of sequential action, where establishing security will make it possible to create jobs. Both issues need obviously to be addressed at the same time.

<sup>95</sup> This is stylized example of what a politically guided strategy might do. The actual conditions on the ground may be quite different. The example is only given to illustrate the possible consequences of the proposed strategy.

<sup>96</sup> See note 10.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Reno 1999 for a discussion of the need to differentiate between war-lords embedded in social-religious institutions and more free-wheeling predatory war-lords.

authorities need to be strengthened enabling them to provide public services and promote economic development.

The implicit current strategy of the PRT is to provide military capability with the aim of deterring potential peace spoilers. But if the de facto mandate of the PRT is limited to providing deterrence, why is its presence in the province organized in the form of a PRT, given that the official mandate of the PRT is to coordinate military *and* civilian activities in the province? If integrated coordination is not needed and the PRT does not in fact undertake this coordination, why is its mission not changed into that of a military Quick Reaction Force, while coordination of civilian reconstruction and development is organized separate from the military?

The result of the present set-up is that there is no overall strategy or direction for externally funded activities in the province, and that three important issues in relation to consolidating peace in the province have not been addressed. The first issue is that of demobilizing the militias and integrating them into the security services. The presence of militias outside the PRT camp does not facilitate the consolidation of proper state structures, but sends instead a mixed signal to the wider population as to what the objective of the PRT presence is in Badakhshan.<sup>98</sup> It is therefore important to decide on how to end this situation. The second issue is that resources are at present directed toward longer-term development projects, while sectors of high and immediate priority such as the police and the judiciary are largely left unassisted. The third issue is the need to consolidate peace in the province. The situation in Badakhshan today clearly allows much more to be done in the field of reconstruction and development than is provided to-day and will be needed to consolidate the existing fragile stabilization.

The Danish approach to the PRT seems to have been that of a sub-contractor delivering a limited and specific military contribution, but without being or seeking to be involved in providing input to the overall analysis or dialogue regarding the objectives and strategy of the PRT in the province. Although this may be explained by the natural role of a small country like Denmark when partnering with a big country like Germany, having restrictions on what it can do and not do in Afghanistan<sup>99</sup> related to internal politics in Germany<sup>100</sup>, it seems likely that could have exerted a

<sup>98</sup> See also Dalgaard-Nielsen 2008: 118 on this point.

<sup>99</sup> Called 'caveats' in military jargon.

<sup>100</sup> I owe this particular point to Associate Professor Peter Viggo Jacobsen, Institute for Political Studies, Copenhagen University.

more assertive role in the dialogue with its German partner on strategy and on how to organize the intervention in the province.

The more general lesson from Badakhshan is, that the organization of civil-military interventions needed in a fragile state situation, where rudimentary elements of political order and state exist, is quite different from what was identified in a failed state context as found in Helmand. It is therefore not possible to rely on one model on how interventions are to be organized. Each specific intervention needs to be analyzed on its own merits, and the organization of interventions needs to be adjusted accordingly as well as when the situation improves from, for example, that of a failed state situation to a fragile state situation. The change in the mix of military and civilian activities may take place quickly, and a change of the military strategy from a more kinetic offensive strategy to a more supportive role in relation to political stabilization, needs therefore also to be managed quickly and firmly.<sup>101</sup> The existence of an organizational capability to undertake, to analyze, assess and monitor situations in these terms is therefore important.

<sup>101</sup> See Dobbins et al. 2007 for a stress on this point.

## 6. Organizational Capability

The organizational requirements to conduct interventions of political stabilization were in chapter 1 broken down into abilities to:

- analyze the object of intervention,
- formulate a coherent and holistic strategy,
- find the right balance between military and civilian activities within the intervention,
- transform the strategy into a plan of operation,
- direct and coordinate the military and civilian contributions involved to ensure that they relate to the strategic goal,
- monitor and benchmark such activities in relation to the effect of such activities in the field, and
- feed back monitoring information to the strategy and planning activities.

These elements will now be discussed in turn:

### Analyze the object of intervention

As has been discussed above, one major pitfall in interventions with the objective of political stabilization, is the reversal of means and ends, where the means of military action and civilian assistance become ends in themselves, which easily takes place when the object of intervention is not identified in sufficiently precise analytical terms. Analytical capability is also needed to distinguish between what ought to be done and what can be done. In order to succeed, interventions of political stabilization must by necessity be realistic and humble and take into account the limited window of opportunity – with regard to time and scope – which exist for external actors.<sup>102</sup> The Danish analyses which have been made in relation to the strategies and discussed above, suggest that existing analytical capability could benefit from being more exposed to actual conditions on the ground and in particular be more focused on political processes as opposed to classical development processes.<sup>103</sup> The Afghanistan strategy

<sup>102</sup> This relates also to the amount of time where political support is available in countries providing the external intervention.

<sup>103</sup> In the reports, issues of governance are often understood as instrumental governance issues – e.g. how to organize – and not as political governance issues. While instrumental governance issues are most important in fragile state situations, where some political framework exists upon which instrumental governance projects may build, the situation in failed state situations is conceptually different. Improving instrumental governance is meaningless without a political framework.

paper states e.g. that the Sharia-based application of the rule of law is the cause of the lack of legal security, where the causal relationship is the opposite. Another example is the incorrect notion of a conflict between the traditional, tribe-based periphery and the modern center as the main axis of conflict in Helmand; a notion which seem to reflect modernization theories rather than realities in Afghanistan.<sup>104</sup>

While analytic ability needs to be grounded in empirical knowledge of the present and the past, it also requires abilities to connect these facts to the 'larger picture' and the overall strategy of political stabilization. Staff with more abstract analytic capabilities should be located in Kabul or at Headquarters in Copenhagen, but they must be in permanent touch with those who collect real-time empirical data on the ground and themselves be deployed for extended periods to the field. Establishing the synergetic effects between these two levels of analytic capabilities in both directions is important.

The ability continuously to collect real-time empirical data on civilian issues is like-wise important in such mission. Foreign presence in insecure areas may easily develop into a sort of bubble caused by precautionary security measures, which may disconnect the external actor from the host-nation situation. The need deliberately to counter this inherent difficulty is therefore important. Language abilities, cooperation with host-nation service-providers, and collection of existing information on the culture, history and economy of the area of the intervention are all important elements. The lack of knowledge of a survey made by Great Britain into the perceptions of Afghans of the civilian activities of the PRT,<sup>105</sup> including the Gereshk area where Denmark operates, reveals deficiencies in this respect. Existing detailed material on the tribal and cultural history of Helmand located in the library of AREU (and part-funded by Denmark) does not seem to have been consulted either.

### **Formulate a coherent and holistic strategy**

The ministerial Afghanistan Task Force has gone a long way in facilitating a dialogue between the military establishment and the civilian ministries and the two different organizational cultures which exist in the two establishments. The task force has been

<sup>104</sup> One of the effects of the war during the 1980's were the weakening of traditional local social structures and the introduction of movements such as the Taliban being based on a trans-national Islamist ideology as well as predatory war-lords. These latter were reintroduced after 2001 and established networks with political and criminal forces in Kabul as well as with the Taliban. Rather than being a conflict between the periphery and the center, most conflicts are between different network networks spanning the center as well as the periphery. See e.g. entries by Barnett Rubin at [www.icga.blogspot.com](http://www.icga.blogspot.com).

<sup>105</sup> See note 29.

used to exchange information on activities and development trends in Afghanistan and Helmand, as well as for broad discussions on issues such as security requirements for development advisors. But strategic discussions on the basis of prepared papers and decisions of executive matters have not taken place and an important document like the new Helmand Road Map seem not to have been on the agenda of any of the meetings of the task force.

Stake-holders from the defense establishment characterize the task force as a broad forum for solving practical matters, the sharing of information and loose coordination, but not as a forum for strategizing or solving more fundamental problems of implementation. Stake-holders conveyed the impression that operations were in lack of such a forum or organizational unit. As of now, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs seem to focus more on reacting to developments on the ground, rather than shaping developments and champion a more pro-active process.<sup>106</sup>

### **Transform the strategy into a plan of operation**

The Danish strategy papers provide limited information on the means to reach the strategic objectives, and hardly reflect on how the implementation of the strategy is to be organized in practical terms. The linkage between strategy, plan of operation and implementation seem underdeveloped and in need of being strengthened.

### **Direct and coordinate the military and civilian contributions involved to ensure that they relate to the strategic goal**

The policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been to outsource the execution of civilian activities in the field to externally recruited short-term personnel or consultancy agencies,<sup>107</sup> which has had two negative consequences: a lack of integration at the strategic level of lessons learnt at the tactical level, and insufficient coordination with and integration into PRT Headquarters and in the planning processes of the PRT.<sup>108</sup> Interviewees in the field gave an impression of being isolated from decision-makers, both in Afghanistan and in Denmark. The situation, where Danish Battle Group and district PRT staff were busy developing district plans on basis of the Helmand Road

<sup>106</sup> To a question of whether the Ministry of Foreign Affairs deployed a sufficient number civilian adviser to Helmand an official from the Ministry revealed this reactive attitude by replying that they had deployed all the advisors that the military had requested and if the ministry received more requests, they would also deploy more advisers.

<sup>107</sup> Although one of the contracted short-termers was from Danish Exporters (Danmarks Eksportråd), which is administered by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he may in this context still be considered external staff.

<sup>108</sup> See also Gordon 2006: 344.

Map while a new Danish Afghanistan strategy was being finalized at Headquarters level without any reference to the Helmand Road Map, is an indication of the reverse effect of this relationship, i.e. that Headquarters is isolated from the field.

In Badakhshan, assistance from the Danish Embassy in Kabul was largely of an administrative character. A more active approach and involvement in strategic planning on the ground seem warranted to ensure better coherence between strategy and implementation.

**Monitor and benchmark such activities in relation to the effect of such activities in the field and finding the right balance between military and civilian activities**

Benchmarks are important as tools to gauge whether progress is being made in reaching strategic goals and in turn enable the organization to make adjustments, whether in plans or in inputs. Bench-marking is particularly essential for integrated missions giving actors incentives to agree on overall objectives and instruments thereby facilitating communication between the various civil and military actors. The Danish strategy paper on Helmand from December 2007 makes a first attempt to identify benchmarks and relate these to strategic objectives, although these benchmarks are quite general in nature. It is unclear what role the benchmarks play on the ground; in particular as work in the field is geared to the planning process of the PRT and not to the specific Danish benchmarks.

**Feed back monitoring information to the strategy and planning activities**

A monitoring system should ideally provide input to readjust the mission. Several interviewees mentioned e.g. that the time needed to react to the need for more development advisors in Helmand had been long, indicating that the different levels of operations in the field, in the capital of the host-country and at headquarters in Copenhagen are not sufficiently integrated. The need quickly to make use of space provided by military gains by providing civilian assistance is paramount in order to alleviate inconveniences caused by foreign military presence<sup>109</sup> and to change 'facts on the ground'. Immediate exploitation of the space provided by the military is particularly important in interventions of political stabilization, where foreign military presence quickly outstays its welcome amongst a nationalistic sensitive population.

<sup>109</sup> The imposed traffic restrictions on the inhabitants of Gereshk related to ISAF vehicle circulation is a case in point.

## 7. Implementing Capabilities

Political stabilization operations will require a number of specific implementing capabilities, such as expertise in military counter-insurgency, police-building capabilities, civilian intelligence work, reconstruction and humanitarian aid, and political diplomacy.

Most importantly, political stabilization operations will need individuals who have a hybrid political-military sensibility, political insight and competence, the ability to think and act across labels and stovepipes, and a single-minded and empathetic focus on host-nation legitimacy coupled with an improvisational, results-oriented attitude. These are high demands, and individuals with such expertise will only exist if the Danish state explicitly crafts a framework within which such experts are trained and developed. Many of these specific skills will have to be nurtured and developed by the public sector itself, as they are not developed in response to demands in the private sector. Instead of relying as at present on short-term contracted freelance staff, it would therefore be more appropriate to develop a specialized career path for staff in this field.

Such experts will need to be deployed to the field of operation. As mentioned above, there seem to have been some problems in synchronizing the Danish contribution with the British management of the PRT, as well as a lack of an assertive Danish contribution to developing the strategy and management of the PRT. Interviews<sup>110</sup> revealed mistrust and 'bad chemistry' between administrative staff in Kabul or Copenhagen (viewed by field staff as inexperienced) and the personnel in the field with experience and hardship conditions, but with short and precarious employment contracts. It is not surprising that administrative personnel without experience in stabilization activities or from Afghanistan have difficulties in asserting themselves with authority vis-à-vis the personnel on the ground, or for the latter to relay feedback information to the former. This problem has been further exacerbated by quick rotation of embassy staff.<sup>111</sup>

The thin deployment of development advisors to the field has also weakened long-term stability and the direction of activities in the field. In order to secure uninterrupted

<sup>110</sup> And impressions from a Ministry of Foreign Affairs seminar held in January 2008 on the experience of Danish civilian advisors in Afghanistan.

<sup>111</sup> The last ambassador served e.g. only 12 months as ambassador to Afghanistan.



servicing of a job, two individuals will actually be needed for every job to be filled. Although such issues may appear almost trivial, they are of great importance for the prospects of implementation on the ground in Afghanistan.

While new types of experts with combined military-political capabilities will be needed to lead political stabilization operations in the future, the military will need to strengthen its existing CIMIC capabilities to assist in reconstruction. The inability to field more than eleven CIMIC staff for team 5 in Helmand or to replace the two who were tragically killed during the deployment of team 5 indicates that there is room for improving this particular capability.

A more detailed and specific identification of implementing capabilities is beyond the scope of this report.

## **8. Recommendations**

This chapter sets out the recommendations that may be drawn from the juxtaposition of the description of the situation in the field with the above analysis of the research questions. The chapter treats first the question of what interventions in failed states are about before moving on to the issues of the organization of and capabilities for operations respectively.

### **What are interventions in failed states about?**

The analysis in this report has emphasized that the challenge in failed state situations, such as found in Helmand, is neither a military challenge nor one of promoting transformational development. The challenge is instead to help local actors organize their interactions in such a way that it promotes the public interest. Organizing interactions is an intrinsically political undertaking, which can not proceed without some agreement between political actors as a basis for political institution-building. The fact that political stabilization is largely about institution-building executed by domestic actors, should urge external actors to be realistic about the role they may play in this process as well as what might be realistically achieved.

The means at the disposal of an external actor are military action and civilian activities which can be used to incentivize actors to establish political order. The ability of an external actor to act as a game-changer by e.g. interdicting opium trafficking while at the same time offering alternative investment opportunities is one example of how short-sighted special interests may be coaxed into an alignment with longer-term social interests of the community. Instead of emphasizing fighting the Taliban after the initial kinetic offensive, focus ought to be on protecting the population from intimidation by the Taliban, thus allowing basic governance and legal economic development to be established and thus undercutting the Taliban by addressing the root causes of its support. Although such a strategy might call for military reinforcements, it is not likely that these will make a difference if the strategy is not right.

If our activities are to be applied to promote political stabilization, we will need to organize our resources differently. An often voiced argument is that Denmark will always be a junior partner in such interventions and that our role therefore will be that of sub-contractor, whether in relation to the British-led PRT in Helmand or more generally. Although it is true that Denmark will in fact always be a junior partner in

such operations, as a responsible partner we ought also to be able to assist in setting the overall course of an operation. At the operational level, the inherent difficulties in the coordination of great numbers of international donors will also necessitate Denmark taking on a more global responsibility for either specific sectors or a territorial area without recourse to detailed instruction from partners. This goes for the highest level of setting the strategy to the mesa-level of operational strategy-setting such as the PRT HQ in Helmand, or at the tactical level at FOB Price at Gereshk. The following organizational recommendations are made on this basis.

### **Organization**

Interventions in pursuit of political stabilization require strong and firm management ensuring that all military and civilian activities relate to the overall strategic goal. Although progress has been made in this regard, the analysis in section 6 reveals deficiencies in the existing organizational set-up with regard to provision of analytical input, ensuring that all activities are subsumed under the objective of political stabilization, delivery of sufficient and timely civilian assistance and efficient feedback mechanisms between Headquarters and the field as well as sufficient integration with partner country. Interventions in failed states need to be organized as fully integrated military-civilian operations to provide leadership in the difficult process of adjusting quickly from offensive kinetic action to a more protective, indirect approach emphasizing civilian reconstruction with a political objective. This will require establishing a new organizational unit to exercise leadership, accumulate experience, establish networks, and develop doctrines of know-how. As this unit should not only direct personnel within its own direct organizational remit, but also provide leadership for a multi-organizational operation – which will involve specialized services from other sectors, such as the military and police, each with their own organizational hierarchies and under separate political leadership – it is proposed that the new organizational unit be given reference to a newly established ministerial sub-committee, consisting of the ministers of foreign affairs, development, defense and justice. This should facilitate the clearing of bottlenecks and ensuring that all relevant specialized contributions are available, solving conflicts between agencies and over matters of high-level personnel questions, and ensuring that politicians sign off on overall and realistic objectives, strategies and plans for specific interventions and stay out of more detailed management.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>112</sup> While the utility of including both the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Development might be questioned on the grounds that these two ministers share the same ministerial administration, including the Prime Minister in the committee would strengthen its decision-making power, particularly in a coalition government.

Strategies and plans should ensure a flexible and adequate response to each specific intervention and not advocate a one-model-fits-all approach. It is particularly important to organize the integration of civil and military activities according to the specific challenge and to avoid the inappropriate militarization of activities, as well as insufficient civilian contributions in areas with military activities.

In providing leadership, the organization must establish a mechanism which links it to the level of implementation. This ought preferably to be done by fielding personnel to the theatre of intervention, whether at the level of the embassy in the capital or at the point of intervention, e.g. Gereshk in Helmand. The organization should develop a truly multidisciplinary approach and incorporate political, development, military and police experts with strong links to the specialized organizations in these different fields.

The unit should have personnel with practical experience from interventions of political stabilization, as well as staff with more strategic and analytical expertise. Staff should comprise expertise on socio-cultural matters and consist of individuals specialized in the field of political stabilization, as well as staff seconded from the development sector, the military and the police.

At the tactical level, unified civilian-military planning and intelligence capacities should be organized. In political stabilization intelligence civilian intelligence is particularly important. Broad knowledge of the area of intervention needs to be collected, and monitoring mechanisms need to be put in place with regard to outcomes of activities and the perceptions of the local population.

Arrangements should be made to counter the effects of short rotation periods in the field, both at the embassy and in national capitals. Rotation between the field and capitals to ensure multi-year assignments should be promoted. Longer deployments of military and civilian leaders to the field will be needed to ensure long-term direction of the operation, possibly organized as an arrangement such as exists to-day for the British in Afghanistan, where leaders rotate between the capital of the host nation and the field over longer periods.

As already described, the PRT in Helmand has taken organizational steps to correct the previous approach in order to turn it into a civilian-led process of political stabilization. The present British organizational model may in many ways serve as 'best practice', and it is recommended that this model be replicated within the Dan-

ish organization at FOB Price at Gereshk, i.e. that political stabilization should be championed by a civilian, and that overall planning as well as civilian and military intelligence be consolidated within the structure of civilian leadership.

Finally, there is a need to strengthen the dialogue on overall strategy with partner countries. Deployed officials from the proposed new organizational unit to the operational planning level and the field of implementation would improve the ability to provide a more assertive input into this dialogue with partner countries compared to short-term freelance staff. The decision taken to deploy a senior external expert to PRT Headquarters in Helmand in August 2008 is a step in the right direction.

As evidenced in the above analysis, the needs and organizational requirements of implementation will be different for each specific location and situation. While civilian and military activities ought to be separated in Badakhshan, they need to be closely integrated in Helmand. Likewise, the organization and input needed in the first military-focused phase in a conflict zone is different from the phase where overall control of an area has been gained. While the organizational matrix for interventions therefore cannot be established in general, in advance and permanently, overall organizational leadership will be needed to direct and adjust the operation.

If future interventions are to be directed on the basis of an actionable strategy encompassing military as well as civilian components, there seems no longer to be any need for the existing 'comprehensive approach' facility. This facility finances reconstruction activities through the military hierarchy and impedes therefore overall synchronization and sequencing of activities to take place.

### **Capabilities**

Most importantly, political stabilization will require individuals with hybrid political-military sensibility, with political insight and competence, the ability to think and act across labels and stovepipes, and a single-minded and empathetic focus on host-nation legitimacy, coupled with an improvisational, results-oriented attitude. This goes for the overall management of activities, as well as for the civilian and military sectors.

As suggested above, staff from the new unit should be deployed to all organizational levels, and not least to the field of operations. This raises the issue of security requirements in relation to civilian personnel.

First of all, it will be necessary to develop proper Duty of Care rules, which detail the specific conditions under which civilian personnel may operate, such as questions of hardened accommodation and office facilities, circulation in military vehicles and security detail.

Secondly, when Denmark participates in operations in high-risk areas, a relative high level of risk for civilian personnel must also be accepted. This is not a prescriptive or a normative statement and certainly not an argument for doing the utmost to protect personnel, but a factual one: the risk of not returning or being wounded in Helmand is factually higher than the risk associated with being deployed to, for example, Tanzania. In the short run, there is also a higher risk for military personnel engaged in protecting the host-nation population as opposed to fighting insurgency. Such higher short-term risk is off-set by lower longer-term risk associated with a higher probability of shorter and more successful interventions.<sup>113</sup>

The emphasis on host-nation legitimacy, appreciation of what may realistically be achieved, building capacity of host-nation partners and applying an indirect approach instead of direct execution will be crucial for military as well as civilian actors if they are to succeed in political stabilization operations. The challenge for the military will be particularly demanding, as soldiers who are trained and equipped to destroy enemies should also be able to adapt ‘well and fast enough to dissuade and co-opt them [insurgents] – or more significant, to build the capacity of local security forces to do the dissuading and destroying.’<sup>114</sup>

While the new unit will provide overall leadership and expertise in political stabilization, the military is often the only actor that will be able to provide specific capabilities in implementing civilian reconstruction in high-risk areas. In order to strengthen the military’s ability to provide such capabilities, the military reward structure – what is funded, who is promoted, what is taught in the academies and staff colleges, and how personnel are trained – ought to reflect future needs in this regard. The military should also develop specific expertise and capabilities in military counter-insurgency, including the capacity to build and strengthen host-country military and police capabilities,<sup>115</sup>

<sup>113</sup> See Sarah Sewall: *Crafting a New Counterinsurgency Doctrine*. *Foreign Service Journal*, September 2007. Sewall was security advisor to the US President Barack Obama during his election campaign.

<sup>114</sup> Gates 2009.

<sup>115</sup> To give the military such policing tasks is against present EU policies on the matter. The problem is however that the police in some regions is posted in situations in which rather robust policing capabilities are needed as opposed to more ‘Sherlock Holmes’ types of police work. A more gendarmerie – like training seems more appropriate for such postings.

increase the importance of protecting the local population and wielding force with great care. Pre-deployment training and exercises must ensure that personnel engaged in political stabilization interventions understand their specific roles, as well as the overall objectives and organization of the interventions.

In addition to building up permanent staff in the new unit to serve as a nucleus staff in interventions, a system should be developed which could call up specialized and short-term staff on demand. A political stabilization version of the existing International Humanitarian Service, where specialists with the necessary experience are contracted to provide short-term assistance at short notice, should be looked into.

For further analysis of implementing capabilities, a central distinction could be made between 'need to have' and 'nice to have'. In other words, what are the minimum implementing capabilities which Denmark ought to have to enable it to 'plug and play' with partner countries?<sup>116</sup> It has not been possible to pursue these issues further within the scope of this report.

<sup>116</sup> I owe this distinction to Peter Viggo Jacobsen.

## **9. Conclusion**

The ability to change realities on the ground in far-away areas with unfamiliar cultures and languages is no easy task. The key to success in such tasks is to identify the underlying problems and to formulate forward steps commensurate with these problems. The emphasis in this analysis has been on the political nature of the challenge in high-conflict areas.

Much further work will be needed, and the most difficult task will be to translate the conceptual understanding into concrete actions on the ground. It is fortunate that the new British approach in Helmand may serve as ‘best practice’ and much may be learned from the experience acquired in implementing this approach.

The most important recommendation of this report is the need to understand interventions in failed states situations as a political undertaking. Civilian and military activities should not ‘stove-piped’ and have their own objectives but should instead serve as means to this objective. This will require that the implementation of all activities is closely integrated. The suggestion to establish a new unit to be in overall charge of existing Danish operations is a suggestion to improve such close integration. It is also important to understand that political stabilization, where some sort of basic agreement between local actors is achieved, is necessary before longer-term development may be initiated. Political objectives must be realistic in time and scope to allow interventions to be successfully concluded within the given ‘window of opportunity’. Focus should be to provide capacities and assistance directly to the area of intervention instead of through ineffective national programs. Emphasis should be on short- and medium-term success, without which there will not be any long-term to worry about. Civil assistance should serve this goal and the military will play an important role in providing this assistance because the security situation will not allow ordinary civil service providers to operate. New capabilities will therefore need to be developed, and existing capabilities readjusted.

Although the international community is unlikely to repeat forced regime change followed by nation-building under fire – as in Afghanistan or Iraq – any time soon, it is at the same time likely that humanitarian or security threats related to failed states will be part of future international challenges. The need to bring the intervention in Afghanistan to a successful end is also important for stabilizing



security in the region, for the credibility of the international community and not least for the sake of the Afghans.

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Annex I: Interviews

Day	Organisation	Function	Name
09.04.08	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Head of Department	Sus Ulbæk
09.04.08	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Head of Section	Anna Kjær
14.04.08	Defense Command Denmark	Head of Department	Jens Hansen
17.04.08	Ministry of Defense	Head of Department	Jens Garly
17.04.08	Ministry of Defense	Head of Department	Peter Alexa
21.04.08	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Head of Department	Lone Wisborg
22.04.08	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Head of Department	Anne Birgitte Albrechtsen
22.04.08	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Head of Section	Pernille Hougesen
06.05.08	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Development Consultant	Finn Nielsen
08.05.08	ISAF-HQ	Head of Department	Chris Ameye
08.05.08	ISAF-HQ	PRT Engagement Team South	Chris Chodan
08.05.08	ISAF-HQ	Head of Department	Stearling Daramius
08.05.08	ISAF-HQ	Head of Department	Kristian Sørensen
09.05.08	DACAAR	Director	Dr. Arif Qaraeen
09.05.08	DACAAR	Head of Section Policy and Advocacy	Chrissie Hirst
09.05.08	Royal Danish Embassy	Attaché	Arne Hjersing Hansen
09.05.08	Royal Danish Embassy	Head of Section	Lene Volkersen
10.05.08	NGO	Independent Consultant	Sippi Azerbaijani
10.05.08	UNAMA	Senior Military Advisor	Sean Crane
10.05.08	Royal Danish Embassy	Ambassador	Franz-Michael Skjold Mellbin
12.05.08	Danish Battle Group	CIMIC Administration	Johannes Klemmesen

*Interviews (continued)*

Day	Organisation	Function	Name
12.05.08	Danish Battle Group	CIMIC Operations	Brian Weber
12.05.08	Danish Battle Group	CIMIC Operations	Kai Hedegaard Madsen
12.05.08	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	PRT Representative	George Güntelberg
13.05.08 & 17.5.08	Danish Battle Group	Deputy Commander	Peter Boysen
14.05.08	Danish Battle Group	CIMIC Team	Heinz Jacobsen
15.05.08		Mayor of Gereshk	Said Dur Ali Shah
16.05.08	Danish Battle Group	S2 Intelligence	Christian Nielsen
16.05.08	Danish Battle Group	Commander	Jens Lønborg
16.05.08		Chief of ASG Militia	Mullah Daud
17.05.08	UK PRT	DK PRT Representative	Kim Schultz
18.05.08	British Foreign & Commonwealth Office	Head of PRT	Michael Ryder
18.05.08	Danish Battle Group	Liaison officer	Henrik Andersen
18.05.08	Task Force Helmand	Deputy Commander	Colonel Hutton
19.05.08	Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Development Adviser (education)	Anna Lennartdotter
19.05.08	UK Department for International Development	Program Manager	Martin Dowson
19.05.08	UK Department for International Development	Deputy Head of Stabilization Unit	Tim Foy
26.05.08	World Bank	Country Manager	Mariann Sherman
27.05.08	Royal Danish Embassy	Ambassador	Franz-Michael Skjold Mellbin
29.05.08	AREU	Head of Research	Rebecca Roberts
29.05.08	EU Special Representative	Deputy	Barbara Stapleton
29.05.08	Ministry of Education, Kabul	General Director	Mr. Karka

*Interviews (continued)*

Day	Organisation	Function	Name
01.06.08	ISAF	Senior Political Advisor	Lars Jensen
02.06.08	Royal Norwegian Embassy	Lieutenant Colonel	Arne Knapskog
05.06.08	PRT Badakhshan	Military Advisor	M. Strunge
05.06.08	Badakhshan Governorate	Consultant	Mr. Sha Mohammad Tariq
05.06.08	Badakhshan Governorate	Director of the new Training Center	Haji Wadid
06.06.08	German Police		Herr Uli
07.06.08	Danish Battle Group	Head of the Danish Battalion	Michael Villumsen
29.5.08	Tribal Liaison Office	Deputy Director	Masood Karokhail
	German Defense	Head CIMIC	Herr Loss
07.06.08	Agha Khan Foundation	Programme Coordinator	Matluba
07.06.08	Agha Khan Foundation	Programme Coordinator	Andrew Yarrow
07.06.08	Adam Smith International	Programme Coordinator	Brett Sinclair
07.06.08	Agha Khan Foundation	Programme Coordinator	Ambreen Niazi
07.06.08	Badakhshan Development Forum	Programme Coordinator	C.N. Anil
07.06.08	GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit)	Programme Coordinator	Tanja Carbone
08.06.08	Badakhshan Development Forum	Consultant	Habibullah Mujidadi
07.06.08	Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Development Adviser, Fayzabad	Peter Noppenau
18.05.08	BRAC (Bangladesh NGO)	Provincial Manager for Helmand	Qudratullah Khadam
17.06.08	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Head of Section	Pernille Dueholm
18.06.08	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Head of Section, Danish Embassy, Kabul	Maria Tarp