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DIIS Working Paper no 2004/5

AFGHANISTAN

LESSONS LEARNED FROM A POST-WAR SITUATION

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Preface

The purpose of this paper is to extract lessons learned from the developments in Afghanistan since the signing of the Bonn Agreement in December 2001. Policy making is always easier in hindsight. It is important to take stock and re-evaluate the decisions made, but such an endeavour only becomes useful if one contextualises the dilemmas which were facing the policymakers at the time. The intention is not to judge individual political, military or economic decisions. The aim is instead to point to the general lessons that can be learned and which could provide an input to the planning of future international assistance in post-war contexts.¹

The lessons learned analysis will be based on a state-building perspective, which is presented in the first part of the paper. While recognising the complexity of the Afghan post-war situation, the intention is to focus on the key challenges. The remainder of the paper has been divided into three sections focusing on key facets of the state-building process: (i) security; (ii) governance; and (iii) the economic situation. Key lessons learned are highlighted in each section.

References to the UN Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations from August 2000 (often referred to as the 'Brahimi report') will be made throughout the paper.² This report provides a concise analysis of post-conflict situations and puts forward recommendations on how to improve the efficiency of future peacekeeping operations. Furthermore since the chairman of the panel, Lakhdar Brahimi, was the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) to Afghanistan from October 2001 to January 2004, it is relevant to compare these recommendations with the situation in Afghanistan.

The final revision of this Working Paper was made on 13 May 2004.

¹ The term post-war society is deliberately used to define the Afghan situation after the fall of the Taliban-regime. This is to emphasise that the country is still characterised by serious political and military tensions and that low intensity fighting frequently occurs in various parts of Afghanistan. The more traditional term, post-conflict society, is used when referring to other countries or when drawing general conclusions.

² The Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809).

About the Author

Anders Tang Friborg is Deputy Head of the Office of the Danish Representative to Afghanistan. The views expressed in the paper do not necessarily reflect the position of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The author would especially like to thank Dr. Michael Vinding, Chargé d’Affaires e.p., Office of the Danish Representative in Kabul, Ms. Susanne Ulbæk, Head of Asia Department, The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ms. Clare Lockhart, Advisor, The Afghan Ministry of Finance for their thorough comments on earlier drafts of the paper. The author would also like to thank Mr. Gorm Pedersen, DACAAR, Mr. William Byrd, The World Bank and Mr. Paul O’Brian, CARE. A draft of the paper was presented at a workshop on Afghanistan organised by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 5 March 2004.

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I. A State-Building Perspective

The key challenge in the Afghan post-war situation has been how to re-establish a sovereign and effective state structure in a country affected by more than two decades of conflict and war. Since the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan has been facing one of the most comprehensive state-building exercises in recent years. Many of the state institutions were formally in place for the Karzai government, but the capacity was limited and they were competing with various parallel command structures. The re-establishment of a state can be analysed along many different dimensions, but three overall categories have been chosen to structure this paper: (i) the authority and control over the use of force throughout the entire territory of the state; (ii) the establishment of a legitimate government with executive powers at central and local level, and an independent judicial system; and (iii) the authority to regulate the economic resources of the country.³

The chosen state-building perspective is based on two guiding principles. First, there is a need to create a rule based society as a contrast to the arbitrary rule of the gun that has dominated in Afghanistan, especially since the beginning of the 1990's. This includes the establishment of transparent and non-corrupt state institutions. Second, there is a need to empower ordinary Afghan citizens and ensure their inclusion in the political processes of the country. In this context, a legitimate government should be defined as one that represents the views of the people as they would be expressed in an environment free of coercive pressure. This state-building framework has to be weighed against two additional objectives in the post-war situation in Afghanistan – the basic stabilisation of the country and the fight against terrorism – two objectives that could potentially be achieved through deals with existing irregular militias or the

³ The current state-building process in Afghanistan is based on a strong centralised framework. A number of historic and current political factors have determined this approach, although other frameworks perhaps ought to be considered in a longer term perspective. This aspect is one of the elements discussed in a recent study by Mark Sedra and Peter Middlebrook 'Afghanistan's Problematic Path to Peace: Lessons in State Building in the Post-September 11 Era', Foreign Policy In Focus, March 2004, www.fpi.org

creation of a repressive, authoritarian regime.⁴ It is a core assumption of the paper that a state-building process based on the rule of law and the empowerment of the ordinary Afghans on a normative basis would be preferable to these alternatives and that such a process in a long term perspective would result in a stable security environment and provide the most effective guarantee against terrorist networks. The pursuit of basic stability and counter-terrorism with the wrong means could on the contrary risk undermining such a state-building process.

The chosen state-building perspective is not synonymous with the establishment of a democratic system with an emphasis on elections. However, the creation of formal democratic mechanisms can be an important means to ensure that the voice of the people will be channelled into the political process and influence the rules of society. On the other hand, if the right conditions are not created, elections could be an instrument for the existing elites to maintain power. Thus, the establishment of formal democratic institutions can be a means to secure the empowerment of ordinary people, but it is not an end goal in itself. Furthermore, various traditional participatory mechanisms exist in Afghanistan, both at local and national level, which should be utilised in order to create a more legitimate political process.⁵

It should be noted that although the three categories used to structure the paper are closely interlinked, the security related issues are first among equals. As long as the rule of the gun prevails, a comprehensive state-building process cannot take place. If a local commander possesses actual military dominance in a given area, this will give him access to various sources of economic revenue (customs, exploitation of natural resources, opium production, taxation of

⁴ The term 'irregular militias' is controversial in an Afghan context, but is used in this paper to refer to armed groups not exclusively under the formal command structures of the central government. There is a continuum with the new units of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the national police at one end and private owned militias at the other. Somewhere in between is the so-called Afghan Militia Forces (AMF). The salaries of AMF units are officially paid via the national recurrent budget, but the units are only to a varying degree under the formal command structure and most are primarily considered loyal to individual military commanders.

⁵ Even if people are able to make their own independent choice, it is worth remembering that the many Afghans on key issues are likely to differ from the mainstream political opinions in Western countries, for example on religion and the rights of women. The creation of an Islamic State of Afghanistan in the new constitution serves as an illustration. Furthermore, there can be a potential conflict between the new democratic structures and the traditional participatory processes – the latter often dominated by men enforcing a relatively conservative value codex – but in practice a workable synthesis must be reached.

farmers etc.) which in turn can be used to extend a patronage network and hire more armed men – potentially a vicious circle which must be broken.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the attempt to create a regulatory framework must be initiated at the beginning of a peace process. It may seem redundant to focus on creation and enforcement of economic and administrative rules, when a country is perceived as being on the brink of renewed civil war. However, it is a key element in a rule based society, but unless the power of the irregular military forces is reduced at an early stage, such efforts risk being undermined. While there is a tendency to focus on the many unresolved problems in Afghanistan, it is worth remembering that especially with regard to the economic reforms much have actually been achieved during the last two years.

2. The Post-War Context

The official title of the Bonn Agreement is ‘The Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions’.⁶ The title reflects the two main objectives of the agreement – to provide the interim framework for the reconstruction process and to define the end goal as the reestablishment of a permanent state structure. Thus, the Bonn process is, in essence, a state-building exercise.

Three key factors must be taken into consideration when evaluating the developments in Afghanistan the last two years: (i) the strong influence the military situation on the ground had on the proceedings at the Bonn conference; (ii) the decision to aim for an Afghan led process; and (iii) the influence of the international war on terrorism.

A) PARTIES TO THE BONN AGREEMENT

The composition of the Bonn Conference in December 2001 reflected the military situation on the ground in Afghanistan.

When the Taliban-regime was defeated in November 2001, very few Taliban soldiers were formally disarmed. Instead the military structure of the Taliban melted away with the majority of its members hiding their weapons and adjusting to the new environment. The military forces of the Northern Alliance, predominantly composed of Panjshiris, swept into Kabul as self-declared

⁶ UN document S/2001/1154.

victors.⁷ At that time none of the traditional national security institutions existed, neither the Afghan National Army (ANA) nor a unified national police force. Two months later, an UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was deployed to assist in the maintenance of security for Kabul and its surrounding areas. In the rest of the country the irregular militias continued to be the predominant armed forces.

No representatives from the defeated Taliban-regime were included at the Bonn Conference, while several of the victorious military commanders were appointed as ministers in the interim administration. Most notably, prominent Panjshiris were put in charge of key ministries – Muhammad Qassem Fahim as Vice-president and Minister of Defence, Yunus Qanooni as Minister of Interior and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The composition of the Bonn Conference, including the relatively strong presence of leaders of irregular military forces, should be viewed in light of the failed peace in 1992-96. When the communist government under president Najibullah fell in April 1992 – more than three years after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops – a power-sharing agreement (The Peshawar Accord) between the main mujaheddin parties was concluded. The agreement included a rotating presidency between the various parties, but a number of key players remained outside the process. Most notable was the alliance concluded between Hizb-i Islami (led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar) and Junbesh (led by General Abdul Rashid Dostum) on 1 January 1994, which resulted in sustained fighting over Kabul with the government of president Rabbani. The disagreement between the mujaheddin groups led to a continuation of the civil war, which worsened the anarchical conditions in the country and eventually paved the way for the rise of the Taliban movement.⁸ The failure of the peace process in the nineties is likely to have

⁷ The term '*Panjshiris*' refers to the Tajik groups from the Panjshir valley north of Kabul, which under the leadership of Ahmad Shah Massoud provided one of the strongest resistances against the Soviet occupation. The Panjshiris later constituted one of the main factions within the Northern Alliance, which with the assistance of the US military forces, ousted the Taliban regime in the fall of 2001. Massoud was killed on 9 September 2001 allegedly by Al-Qaida agents. Vice president Muhammad Qassem Fahim has been considered the military successor to Massoud.

⁸ The term '*Mujaheddin*' refers to Afghans who participated in the resistance (by Afghans regarded as a holy war – *jihad*) against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. In the early eighties seven main mujaheddin groups developed with their key bases in the border area of Pakistan. These mujaheddin groups received significant military and economic support from especially the United States.

influenced the preparations for the Bonn Conference in December 2001, where much effort was devoted to the inclusion of the real power-holders on the ground, i.e. the irregular armed militias.

However, it can be discussed to what extent a realistic assessment of the strength of these irregular militias was made in the first post-Taliban period. The limited time available in advance of the Bonn Conference made it difficult to conduct a comprehensive analysis, but from the outset more resources should have been devoted to assess the military strength of the militias, the personal objectives of the leaders (apart from maintaining power) and to devise a strategy on how to de-legitimise these leaders over time unless they cooperate with the central government – or alternatively symbolic positions could have been given to some of the old mujaheddin leaders in recognition of the jihad against the Soviet occupation. It should be noted that the local power-holders have not constituted a unified opposition to the central government after the fall of the Taliban, increasing the opportunity to play various actors out against each other.

B) AN AFGHAN LED PROCESS

Unlike most other reconstruction processes in post-conflict situations, the Afghan Interim Administration and later the Transitional Administration established by the Bonn Agreement were recognised as having full *de jure* decision-making power. In other post-conflict situations, the UN has been granted full or partial authority during a transitional phase.

The formal authority vested with the Afghan administration was from the outset converted into actual decision-making power, largely due to a number of dedicated and qualified national leaders, who were able to formulate an elaborate vision for a future Afghanistan, and the chosen approach by the United Nations (see below). It is a core assumption of the paper that such national ownership is necessary in order to create long term sustainability, however, it is not without risks to transfer all powers immediately to a fragile incoming government. The capacity of the Afghan administration varied greatly within the various sectors and on key issues the political environment was difficult. The Afghan president was from his first day in office under strong pressure from many groups, including groups backed by irregular armed forces and with substantial economic resources, who have little incentive to support a reform process wholeheartedly and who would prefer to maintain the status quo.

Elections can be used as a general illustration. If one outcome of a peace process is to be free and fair elections, an existing power structure with a strong position of irregular militias would have to be changed during the transition phase. Otherwise these groups would be able to use the elections to cement their influence. In any country that would require difficult decisions, especially on disarmament, where strong international support for a reform oriented government

would be needed – and where key decisions might even be referred to neutral international entity. In other words, a nationally led process should not necessarily mean a process left exclusively to the national stakeholders from the outset.

In the Bonn Agreement it is noted that a number of key processes should be ‘with the assistance of the United Nations’. In the Brahimi report, it is stated that UN operations since the 1990s ‘*do not deploy into post-conflict situations as much as they deploy to create such conditions. That is, they work to divert the unfinished conflict, and the personal, political or other agendas that drove it, from the military to the political arena, and to make that diversion permanent*’.⁹ The report does not specify how large such UN operations must be to achieve these goals, but notes that the mission planners must understand the political and military environment they are entering. Some of the factors listed are the number of local parties and the divergence of their goals, the strength of spoiler groups, the competition for scarce resources and the level of war-generated grievances. It seems fair to state that the post-war environment in Afghanistan on all accounts is very complex.

Later in the report the interrelationship between peace-keeping and peace-building activities is clearly highlighted: ‘When complex peace operations do go into the field, it is the task of the operation’s peacekeepers to maintain a secure local environment for peace-building, and the peacebuilders’ task to support the political, social and economic changes that create a secure environment that is self-sustaining. [...] History has taught that peacekeepers and peacebuilders are inseparable partners in complex operations: while the peacebuilders may not be able to function without the peacekeepers’ support, the peacekeepers have no exit without the peacebuilders’ work’.¹⁰

The UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) was from the outset given a strong peace-building mandate by the UN Security Council corresponding to the finding of the Brahimi

⁹ The Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, paragraph 20.

¹⁰ The Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, paragraph 28. In paragraph 13 it is stated that ‘*peace-building includes but is not limited to reintegrating former combatants into civilian society; strengthening the rule of law (for example, through training and restructuring of local police, and judicial and penal reform); improving respect for human rights through the monitoring, education and investigation of past and existing abuses; providing technical assistance to democratic development (including electoral assistance and support for free media); and promoting conflict resolution and reconciliation techniques*’.

report.¹¹ The mandate refers to the need to adopt ‘a light footprint’ as the guiding principle for the UN activities in Afghanistan, an approach strongly advocated by Mr. Brahimi as SRSG. This is in general a sound principle for an international involvement which provides an emphasis on national capacity and calls for close scrutiny of UN agencies operating in a given country. However, it can be a precarious principle to apply mechanically to all spheres of an operation. The scale and type of UN assistance must be determined based on an assessment of the Afghan capacity and the political context in each sphere.

As noted above, even a sovereign government might prefer to refer difficult political decisions to a neutral international institution when faced with an unstable security environment and strong pressure from numerous illegitimate political and military stakeholders. These could include decisions regarding the appointments of key military personnel, judges at the Supreme Court, electoral disputes or disarmament. A weak, incoming government also need for impartial information about the military and political situation on the ground. With its neutral status and the unanimous respect for Mr. Brahimi, UNAMA was from the outset in a unique position to assist the Afghan government. Results have been achieved, but the limited size of the political pillar of UNAMA has hampered its ability to make use of the entire potential. It can also be discussed if UNAMA at times has been too reluctant to influence the political processes. This partly depends on subjective assessments – and it is impossible to make counterfactual analyses – but throughout this paper it will be argued that UNAMA ought to have done more in a number of key areas such as protection of human rights, judicial reforms, preparation for the national elections, disarmament and dissemination of neutral information about the political realities in the field.

C) WAR ON TERROR – DIFFERENT END GOALS?

The main reason for the international intervention in Afghanistan in the fall of 2001 was to destroy the terrorist networks operating within the country. This was the overarching goal for the US led military intervention and it has remained the overarching goal for the coalition efforts during the last two years. With the absence of national security institutions the US military

¹¹ UN Security Council resolution no. 1401 (2002). The resolution refers to the mandate described in the report of the UN Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security of 18 March 2002 (A/56/875-S/2002/278). UN Security Council resolution no. 1536 (2004) extends the UNAMA mandate until 26 March 2005.

command assessed that the war on terrorism in Afghanistan had to be fought in close cooperation with the irregular militias, which maintained a strong presence on the ground and were familiar with the local conditions.

However, the combination of US support as part of the anti-terror campaign, continued income from customs revenues, opium production and illicit trade as well as the lack of counter measures taken by the central government or international actors, is generally perceived to have made the militias more confident and better equipped than in November 2001. Thus, the anti-terrorist activities have to some extent been somewhat inconsistent with the long term objectives of the state-building process.

This inconsistency is closely linked to one of the key questions: What is the most effective anti-terrorism strategy in a post-war situation such as Afghanistan? The increased resurgence of the Taliban and other terrorist networks in the southern and eastern part of Afghanistan makes it necessary to examine whether the current anti-terrorism strategy needs to be revised. The continued military campaigns against perceived terrorist groups – partly in cooperation with irregular forces – might be considered part of the solution, but a closer scrutiny of the potential negative effects is needed. The notion of this paper is that a broader multi-dimensional strategy should be adopted to counter the extremist groups, and this will be examined in more detail under lesson 8.

- **Lesson 1: All stakeholders must agree on common overall objectives – in Afghanistan it should be to support an Afghan led state building process**

The developments in Afghanistan during the last two years have been characterised by the pursuit of three overall objectives – the reestablishment of an effective Afghan state structure based on rule of law and public participation; general stabilisation; and the fight against terrorist networks active in Afghanistan. These three objectives ought not to be contradictory. A successful state-building process can in a long-term perspective be expected to lead to stability and provide remedy against the terrorist activities. However, the search for short term stability and the campaign against terrorist networks have in some ways worked against this state building process, especially due to the strong reliance on irregular military forces. While it might have been reasonable to include the major military power holders at the Bonn Conference, more should have been done to reduce their influence over time. In order to secure long-term sustainability the state building process must take precedence, and the short and medium term stabilisation and anti-terrorism strategies should not be in contradiction with this overall objective.

- **Lesson 2: The ‘light footprint’ of the UN has much merit, but should not be applied automatically in all spheres of operation**

The ability to take the right decisions is likely to increase with the amount of information available. In a post-war situation like Afghanistan a government cannot be expected to possess adequate information and an important role of the UN would be to provide comprehensive and neutral analyses about the military and political situation in the country. In addition, a weak incoming national administration might need to refer difficult political decisions to a neutral international institution, such as the UN. The application of the ‘light footprint’ must be adapted to the specific circumstances and allow the UN to fulfil its peace-building potential.

3. Security

The security related issues of the Afghan post-war situation should for several reasons be given the highest priority: (i) when consulted, a clear majority of ordinary Afghans ranks a stable security environment as their primary concern. After more than 20 years of conflict where the traditional decision-making structures were replaced by the arbitrary rule of the gun, most Afghans express a strong desire for a secure, rule-based society;¹² (ii) the direct targeting of aid workers leads to delays or suspensions of development activities, irrespective of whether the attacks arise from general lawlessness or from re-emerging extremist groups; and (iii) the presence of irregular military forces have influenced the political calculations made by key Afghan decision makers and international actors. In short, it will not be possible to secure comprehensive political and economic reforms, unless the security problems are adequately addressed.

As noted above, the inclusion of the de-facto power holders in the new government structure immediately after the fall of the Taliban was deemed a political necessity. The key question is rather how to counter and reduce the influence of these irregular forces after the signing of the peace agreement? This includes consideration regarding the scale of international peacekeeping and alternative peacekeeping methods (lesson 4 and 5); the need to invest in national security

¹² The report ‘Speaking Out: Afghan Opinions on Rights and Responsibilities’ prepared by The Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium (a group of 12 Afghan and international NGOs) provides a detailed account of the opinions of ordinary Afghans. The report, which was published in November 2003, is based on interviews of 1479 persons from eight locations across the country.

institutions, such as the national army and police (lesson 6); and the need for early preparation of a national disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process (lesson 7). It is furthermore linked to the development of an alternative strategy to counter terrorism (lesson 8) and the attitude of neighbouring countries (lesson 9).

- **Lesson 3: A stable security environment is a prerequisite for the creation of democratic processes, improvement of the human rights situation and economic development**

Since spring 2003 the security situation in especially the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan has deteriorated considerably (the Northern provinces have continuously been characterised by a significant degree of lawlessness and inter-factional fighting). This is largely due to the re-emergence of Taliban groups in the Pashtun dominated areas. The strongest presence of these groups can be found in the regions bordering Pakistan, but to an increasing extent also in provinces close to Kabul, including Logar, Ghazni and Laghman. Some of the most serious incidents have been the killing of an ICRC delegate in Uruzgan province in March 2003, the killing of four local staff from the Danish NGO DACAAR in Ghazni province in September 2003 and the killing of an international UNHCR staff member also in Ghazni in November 2003. These attacks, along with several other incidents, have led to significant reduction of development activities in the southern and eastern parts of the country. Both the UN and NGOs have scaled down the number of international staff in the affected areas and also local employees are under severe security restrictions.

Given that most of the affected areas are among the poorest regions in Afghanistan, still seriously affected by the extended drought period, the reduction of development activities in these areas enhances a vicious circle and threatens to divide the country in two – a poor and unstable South and more prosperous North.

The unstable security environment – both the Taliban re-emergence and the continued influence of irregular militias – also affects the political developments in Afghanistan. The current human rights situation can serve as an illustration. Serious violations of human rights still occur on a daily basis in Afghanistan, many of them committed by military commanders and their militias. However, with no neutral national army or police force to counter the influence of the militias and with a weak judicial system, it becomes virtually impossible to address these violations. The victims and witnesses do not dare to step forward given the fact that almost no protection can be guaranteed, especially outside the main cities. These security concerns apply both to the current human rights violations as well as to the transitional justice process aimed at past violations.

The political milestones of the Bonn Agreement, the Emergency Loya Jirga (June 2002), the Constitutional Loya Jirga (December 2003) and the preparations for the national elections, have also been affected by the security environment. Regarding elections it has proven difficult to get access to large parts of the country, which will affect both the registration of electorates and the election itself. The new democratic movements furthermore encounter a large degree of harassment, ranging from bureaucratic procedures to direct threats, making it difficult for them to campaign, especially outside the main cities. The dominant groups are the better organised mujaheddin movements, of which some constitute a dangerous blend between political objectives and military resources. Furthermore, the influence of the militias is likely to affect the voting patterns, even with a secret ballot system.

Further, it should be noted that a continuously unstable security environment has major financial implications. Most notably is the cost of maintaining the coalition forces and the ISAF contingent in Afghanistan. It is roughly estimated that the total annual cost of the US coalition activities is approximately USD 11–15 billion, which should be compared to the multi-annual Tokyo pledges totalling USD 4.5 billion. It should furthermore be factored in that the cost of the development process is affected by the level of insecurity. From the outset development agencies have had to spend considerable amounts on security guards, close protection teams, insurance and sophisticated communications equipment. The deterioration of the security situation has resulted in a significant increase in these costs.

- **Lesson 4: The international peace keeping presence must be comprehensive enough to secure independence from irregular militias**

The current number of international soldiers in Afghanistan is roughly estimated to be slightly above 20,000. However, only the approximately 6,500 soldiers currently belonging to ISAF should be seen as a peace keeping force, but its area of operation has so far mainly been

limited to Kabul and its surrounding areas.¹³ The remaining approximately 15,000 soldiers from the international coalition have focused on counter-terrorism activities aimed at Taliban and Al-Qaida groups – an objective for which it is very difficult to specify definite success criteria.¹⁴

The number of international soldiers in Afghanistan is relatively small compared to other post-conflict situations and in peace keeping terms basically non-existent in the provinces. The number of peace keeping soldiers in selected post-conflict situations has been: Cambodia (UNTAC): 16,000 soldiers and 3,500 civilian police officers; Bosnia (IFOR): 60,000 soldiers; Kosovo (KFOR): 44,000 soldiers; East Timor (UNMISSET): 5,000 soldiers and 1,250 civilian police officers. As stated, the corresponding number in ISAF is approximately 6,500. It should be noted that Afghanistan in geographic size is slightly larger than France (and one and a half time larger than Iraq), and that the existing infrastructure makes transportation within the country very difficult.

The strong position of the irregular militias outside Kabul has influenced the political decisions both at the central level and in the provinces. In numerous situations, the Afghan government has decided not to remove military or administrative officials, with stronger links to military commanders than to the central authorities, due to the perceived risk of an armed confrontation. This is not to say that one should not aim for a political process incorporating a wide range of actors, but the international peace keeping presence should be of such a magnitude, which would make it possible to repudiate pressure from the militant groups and limit their independent sources of income. The decision to aim for an inclusive political process should be one of choice, not of dictate.

¹³ The original mandate of ISAF originates from Security Council resolution no. 1386 of 20 December 2001. ISAF formally has a peace enforcing mandate under Chapter VII of the UN charter, but it has so far focused on the peace keeping activities. A geographical expansion of the mandate was approved by the Security Council in resolution no. 1510 of 13 October 2003, which allows ISAF to be deployed in other parts of the country. However, the implementation of the mandate depends on the decisions taken within NATO, which holds the command of ISAF. In January 2004 NATO took over the command of the German PRT in Kunduz.

¹⁴ It is difficult to give a precise estimate of the size of the coalition forces. During spring 2004 the coalition forces are believed to have been increased from approx. 10,000 to approx. 15,000 soldiers.

It must be emphasised that it is not possible to preserve the status quo. It is noted in the Brahimi report that *'would-be spoilers – groups (including signatories) who renege on their commitments or otherwise seek to undermine a peace accord by violence – have the greatest incentive to defect from peace accords when they have an independent source of income that pays soldiers, buys guns, enriches faction leaders and may even have been the motive for war. Recent history indicates that, where such income streams from the export of illicit narcotics, gemstones or other high-value commodities cannot be pinched off, peace is unsustainable'*.¹⁵

This is an observation that applies to the Afghan context, where especially the drug economy is of concern. It is roughly estimated that three quarters of the world's opium supply is coming from Afghanistan and that the opium exports generate more than USD 2.5 billion. It should be noted that the opium production still comes from a relatively limited part of the Afghan farm land, but significant areas of land in all parts of country are currently being diverted to opium poppy production, as this is deemed profitable.¹⁶ The overall strategy must be to enhance the disincentives for these potential spoilers to continue the illegitimate path, especially through increased enforcement capacity, while providing them with incentives to engage fully in the state building process.

The deployment of ISAF has been a relative success in terms of creating a secure environment in Kabul. It is always difficult to make counterfactual analysis of what would have happened had ISAF not been established, but for the last two years the situation in the capital has been more stable than most experts would have expected. The well-armed ISAF soldiers have been seen as a credible force by the Afghans. Through its visible patrols in the city, ISAF has sent an important signal of stability to the population in Kabul.

However, even with the presence of ISAF in Kabul the fulfilment of the security related goals included in the Bonn Agreement has been slow. Annex I of the agreement states that all military units should be withdrawn from Kabul, but there are indications that the number of

¹⁵ The Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, paragraph 21-22.

¹⁶ United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNDCP) publishes regular reports on the drug situation in Afghanistan. A succinct overview can also be found in annex II of the IMF country report no. 03/299 (September 2003). For the often heavily indebted Afghan farmer the cash-earnings from poppies provide a strong incentive. The poppy crop is furthermore relatively weather resistant, allows for a second planting season, is easy to store, transport and sell, and is currently the only crop for which the farmers in Afghanistan can easily obtain credits, although at high rates. However, most of the income from opium goes to traders and traffickers. A strategy focusing only on the eradication of poppy fields risks driving the price of opium up and increase the incentives for poppy cultivation.

irregular armed forces in the city increased during the first two years after Bonn. Furthermore the disarmament of the heavy military equipment in Kabul was not initiated before January 2004. It should also be noted that the ratio between support personnel and patrolling soldiers in ISAF is approximately four to one. In a situation where it has proved difficult to mobilise additional troop contribution for peace-keeping in Afghanistan, calculations based on this ratio would make it all but impossible to expand ISAF to the major cities around the country.

- **Lesson 5: The concept of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) is innovative, but should not be seen as a silver bullet in the current Afghan context**

In November 2002, the coalition forces, in particular the Americans, launched the concept of PRTs. The plan was to deploy small groups of coalition soldiers (between 70-100 soldiers) in the major provincial cities to assist with security stabilisation and provide reconstruction assistance. The initial proposal was not clearly defined, and evoked strong objections from a wide range of humanitarian and development actors, because of the focus on reconstruction activities.¹⁷

One of the major accomplishments of both the American and British PRTs has been the deployment of soldiers to the provinces without the extensive direct force protection and support personnel attached to the ISAF contingent in Kabul. Instead the main force protection comes from the ability to call in air support from the coalition if needed – an element with a significant deterrent effect. In a political context, where a large scale increase of ISAF soldiers seems unlikely, the establishment of PRT units throughout the country has by many been seen as an alternative way to address the security concerns. The PRT concept must still be considered work in progress, but it has been used by the NATO planners as the template for the expansion of ISAF beyond Kabul in accordance with Security Council resolution no. 1510.¹⁸

¹⁷ During the first half of 2003, American led PRTs were established in Gardez, Bamyan and Kunduz. A British led PRT was established in Mazar-i Sharif in northern Afghanistan during summer 2003. New Zealand has later taken over the PRT in Bamyan, and Germany has taken over the PRT in Kunduz under ISAF command. The American coalition forces plan to expand the number of coalition PRTs to 15 by June 2004. NATO has publicly stated that five PRT units should be under ISAF command before the NATO summit in Istanbul on 28-29 June 2004, but at the time of writing (mid May) only the German PRT in Kunduz is under ISAF.

¹⁸ It should be noted that the security environment in early 2004 is quite different from the environment in early 2002. The PRTs deployed especially in the southern and eastern part of Afghanistan face a more difficult and hostile environment in particular due the increased terrorist activities. Had a lighter peace-keeping approach, such as the PRTs, been adopted in early 2002, the deployment of even a relatively small number of foreign troops in the provinces could potentially have had a significant stabilizing effect. In future post-war situations it seems worth considering if quick deployment of small peace-keeping units might preempt larger and more difficult peace-keeping initiatives later in the process.

The American led PRT's have so far maintained a strong focus on the so-called 'hearts and minds' activities, including building of schools and clinics (although the best 'hearts and minds' operations would seem to be enhanced security in an area, the key priority for most Afghans). The mandate of the British led PRT in Mazar seems more closely linked to the comparative advantages of such military units and has a stronger emphasis on security aspects. The military teams of the British PRT are not involved in reconstruction activities, but help to create an enabling security environment that allows DFID and USAID representatives to operate in the north.

The experience of the British PRT has shown that even a small military contingent of 70-100 persons can help improve the security situation.¹⁹ The PRTs can provide the extra eyes in the provinces and districts, which the light footprint to some extent has deprived UNAMA, and can assist the disarmament process, the roll-out of police training and in ANA deployment in the provinces. When negotiating with local commanders it has proved an advantage for UNAMA to be supported by military personnel, who can also carry out follow-up patrols. The PRT in Mazar has furthermore been able to assist in defusing a number of potential inter-factional disputes, which could have erupted into armed fighting. The success can partly be contributed to the constant deployed in the field with a high degree of visibility, including visibility out in the provinces through permanent presence in the respective provincial capitals, and an emphasis on continuous interact with the local population. The friendly relations established through this interaction are an important part of the force protection. Another important element of the force protection is the ability to call in air support from the coalition if needed – an element with a significant deterrent effect.

It should, however, be kept in mind that the British PRT is located in an area where the threat to internationals is considered relatively low. The factional leaders of the North are primarily engaged in their own internal disputes and know that direct attacks on internationals will lead to serious retaliations from the coalition forces. In other parts of Afghanistan, where the main threat comes from extremist groups, the role of these small military units becomes more difficult to define. To this should be added the difficulties of operating in an environment where the coalition forces are conducting anti-terror activities.

¹⁹ Denmark has since November 2003 had six soldiers attached to the British PRT in Mazar. The Danish soldiers are responsible for the PRT sub-office in Samangan province.

The PRT-concept has been criticised for blurring the lines between military and humanitarian actors, potentially increasing the security risk for the latter, and for duplicating the efforts of civilian organisations already providing schools, health clinics and water supplies. The criticism, especially voiced by the NGO-community, should be taken seriously. There is a need for a continuous dialogue between the various actors to improve the concept, which is likely to be used in future post-war situations.²⁰

It should be noted that the military and the humanitarian organisations approach the issue of blurring lines from different perspectives. Most humanitarian actors claim that the construction of schools and clinics by the PRTs, their use of white cars and civilian clothes etc. threaten the humanitarian space and risk endangering the lives of assistance workers. In other words, there is still a distinction that needs to be maintained. The blurring of lines would furthermore make it difficult for the humanitarian organisations to continue to provide relief assistance should the security situation in Afghanistan deteriorate to a point where other organisations withdrew.

The coalition forces, on the other hand, work on the assumption that the extremist groups operating in Afghanistan regard all internationals as one entity, irrespective of whether they belong to the military or the humanitarian organisations. This lack of distinction is not related to the blurring of lines, but rather to the overall goal of the extremist groups to reduce or block the foreign assistance to Afghanistan – and attacks on international relief workers are seen as an element in this strategy.

The PRT concept should not be regarded as the silver bullet, which solves all security related problems in a post-war situation such as Afghanistan. There has been a tendency in Kabul during the last year to allocate a wide range of tasks to these small military units, largely due to the fact that they have been the only international peacekeeping presence at provincial

²⁰ The Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) – the main NGO coordination forum in Afghanistan – has issued a number of policy briefs dealing with the PRT issue (the latest on 24 July 2003). These briefs contain general recommendations on the overall PRT concept, emphasizing the need for a security focus, and specific suggestions on how to avoid blurring lines. However, it should be noted that some NGOs working in Afghanistan have refused even to engage in a dialogue on the PRT issue, a position which seems irresponsible if these organizations feel that the blurring of lines endanger their staff.

level. It is necessary to maintain a realistic assessment of the PRT potential. It is also necessary to consider whether the PRT units should become involved in activities, which would threaten the good relations with some of the local leaders. This could include activities targeting the opium producers or supporting the custom collection of the central government, which would be crucial for the Afghan state-building process, but a possible involvement of the PRT units is likely to create a more hostile environment in the areas of deployment.

- **Lesson 6: Large-scale investments in national security institutions are necessary**

While a credible international peacekeeping force is needed immediately after a peace settlement in order to provide security, extensive investments in building national security institutions, i.e. the national army and police are needed to secure long-term stability. In Afghanistan, these processes had to start from scratch after the fall of the Taliban-regime, and given the strong ethnic affiliations of the existing irregular militias and police forces (in reality often the same entities), the building of true national institutions has been a difficult challenge. The recruitment mechanisms for the new army and police must be given high priority and the training of the new recruits must aim at creating a real national identity.

The US, the UK and Germany have provided significant contributions in this field during the last two years. Some of the initial experiences with deployment of national army or police forces around the country have been positive. In many places the reception by the local population has been enthusiastic with the newly trained units being seen a symbol of national unity. The rapid deployment of police officers to curb recent clashes between factions in northern cities such as Maimana in Faryab province and Mazar-i Sharif in Balkh province has been an important factor in creating a more stable security environment.

A large part of the new army graduates has been used in the fighting against terrorist networks in collaboration with the international coalition forces. While the Afghan soldiers might provide a valuable support in this endeavour, these operations are mainly taking place in remote mountainous areas far away from the public eye. Given the new army's potential as a national symbol, it is likely to have a positive effect on the Afghan public opinion, if the army to a larger extent were used by the central government to remove unpopular local military commanders.

It should be noted that one of the main concerns related to the creation of the new national army has been the dropout rate. Some of the main reasons cited have been the lack of ethnic

balance (especially among the officers), the limited salary payments and the deployment directly into the difficult operations against the terrorist networks.

- **Lesson 7: The preparations for a national disarmament process should be initiated immediately after the beginning of the peace process**

In addition to the deployment of an international military presence and the recreation of national security institutions, the initiation of a national disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process (DDR-process) constitutes the third pillar in a comprehensive security approach in a post-conflict situation. It is noted in the Brahimi report that *'the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants – key to immediate post-conflict stability and reduced likelihood of conflict recurrence – is an area in which peacebuilding makes a direct contribution to public security and law and order. But the basic objective of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration is not met unless all three elements of the programme are implemented'*.²¹

The DDR-process in Afghanistan has been closely linked to a number of required political and administrative reforms, especially the reform of the Ministry of Defence, which has been dominated by one ethnic faction. However, even if the political prerequisites are slow to materialise, the preparations for the DDR-process should be started immediately, including estimation of the number of combatants to be disarmed and the identification of future alternative employment opportunities. It is illustrative that the most reliable assessments of the military strength of Northern Alliance groups, even provided by the top commanders themselves, estimated the number of core combatants to have been below 10,000 at the time of the fall of the Taliban regime. During the Interim Administration it was, however, decided to create the Afghan Militia Force (AMF) consisting of 100,000 armed men allegedly taken from existing militias. The salary payments for this force, which is separate from the new ANA, are paid via the national recurrent budget. Most experts consider this inflation of numbers fictional and the figure of 100,000 determined by political considerations, but the decision in effect facilitated a strengthening of the militias. At the international donor conference on Afghanistan in Berlin on 1 April, the Afghan government promised to reduce AMF by 40% by end June 2004. This reduction is one of the key prerequisites for holding free and fair elections by September 2004, but the progress has so far been slow.

²¹ The Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, paragraph 42.

A number of surveys made prior to the DDR-process have indicated that a significant part of the combatants would like to be disarmed and transferred to a civilian profession. However, with the power of the irregular militias largely intact and given the few alternative employment opportunities, the many of the combatants have decided to stay with the militias. ss

- **Lesson 8: A multi-dimensional strategy is needed to counter the re-emergence of extremist groups, such as the Taliban**

The re-emergence of extremist groups specifically targeting pro-government actors, foreign soldiers as well as local and international aid workers, is a complex phenomenon. During 2003, these groups began to move around in the main Pashtun areas in the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan with increasing freedom and visibility. The most disturbing fact in connection with the re-emergence is that a significant part of the local population – if not actively supporting the groups – at least accepts their presence.

This re-emergence must be seen as a symptom of a more wide-spread dissatisfaction within the Pashtun population and not only as a small esoteric minority of religious fanatics. There is difficult to make a clear distinction between the new armed groups and the most conservative elements of Pashtun population living on either side of the Afghan-Pakistani border. The strong sense of alienation and marginalisation felt by many Pashtuns vis-à-vis the political process after the fall of the Taliban regime creates a fertile environment for the extremist groups to operate.

The report presented in May 2003 by the Extreme Fundamentalism and Terrorism Group (EFTG) in Brussels emphasises the need for a comprehensive approach in the fight against terrorism, where 'hard' security measures must be combined with measures aimed at reducing the attraction of terrorist organisations. It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the campaigns carried out by the international coalition against perceived terrorist networks in Afghanistan – very little information is available outside the military command structure – but these campaigns seem to be perceived rather negatively by large parts of the Pashtun population. Many locals thus apparently consider these campaigns to be conducted in a confrontational manner, including many who initially welcomed the coalition's removal of the Taliban regime.

For most of the modern history of Afghanistan the Pashtun population has dominated the political system. All Afghan monarchs have been Pashtun. Following the entry of the Northern Alliance into Kabul, most Pashtuns have perceived the political process as being

dominated by non-Pashtun groups, especially the Panjshiris. This might be regarded as a misperception, given that the President and several key ministers are Pashtuns, but it is nevertheless a perception, which continues to be wide-spread.²²

The dissatisfaction of the Pashtun population has furthermore been fuelled by limited visible results of the reconstruction efforts, the hardship following several years of severe drought (which has not yet been fully broken in the South) and dissatisfaction with the coalition's anti-terror campaigns. Add to this the strong influence of religious leaders on the often uneducated and conservative population and the close connections with the Pashtun groups holding the political power in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan in Pakistan.

In other words, an effective strategy towards these extremist religious groups has to address the root causes, and not only the symptoms in the form of re-emerged Taliban soldiers. Such a multifaceted strategy could include:

- 1 *Strengthened outreach of the central government:* The government must convince the Afghan population that it is their government. So far the ministers have only to a limited extent been willing to travel around the country to explain the reform agenda and the objectives of the government, partly due to a heavy workload in Kabul for the reform minded ministers. To many Afghans, President Karzai has become a symbol of weakness staying in Kabul under close protection of foreign bodyguards. If free and fair elections can be organised this could help strengthen the ties between politicians and population.
- 2 *Decisive action by the government:* Many Afghans express disappointment with the government for having done little to remove corrupt and incompetent national or provincial leaders, often associated with irregular armed militias. Removal of even a limited number of key profiles

²² During the Constitutional Grand Assembly (*Loya Jirga*), which approved the new Afghan constitution on January 4, 2004, the Pashtun delegates were able to establish an unexpectedly strong unity, which effectively constituted a majority at the Loya Jirga. Some of the most contentious issues during the negotiations split the delegates along ethnic lines, and even though the final text was agreed with consensus, many of the minority delegates expressed concerns about a re-emerging Pashtun domination of the political sphere. It is difficult to assess the validity of these concerns, but it highlights the need to make reconciliation one of the key national priorities.

with a bad reputation is by many advisers considered likely to have a significant positive effect on public opinion.

- 3 *Provincial governance programmes:* In conjunction with the replacement of corrupt and incompetent governors, a nation-wide governance programme must be implemented. The government has developed a large scale Afghan Stabilisation Programme (ASP) which among other elements includes rehabilitation of administrative structures, training of public servants, and deployment of ANA and police units. The programme has already received significant donor funding from US, UK and Canada, but the implementation of the programme is only slowly beginning.
- 4 *Increased cooperation with tribes and moderate religious leaders:* The government must strengthen its ties with the traditional institutions of society, especially the tribal leaders and moderate religious leaders, who continue to have large influence on public opinion among ordinary Afghans. This could in a reconciliatory spirit include a dialogue with former Taliban officials, excluding the former top officials, as occasionally suggested by president Karzai.
- 5 *Secure development activities in the South:* Targeted implementation of development activities in the southern and eastern parts of the country. Currently a vicious circle is developing where the increased insecurity in these areas makes it more difficult to carry out development activities. The deployment of international peacekeepers in the provinces will need to be part of the remedy.
- 6 *Reassessment of the coalition anti-terror strategy:* The coalition strategy must keep the use of force, including house searches and arbitrary arrests, to a minimum.

- **Lesson 9: The relations with neighbouring countries must be transformed from negative interference to positive cooperation**

Much of the conflict in Afghanistan has been caused or enhanced by outside interference (unfortunately a factor which leads many Afghans to blame foreign interference for all problems). The negative influence from actors – possibly both inside and outside governmental structures – in neighbouring countries seems to continue. The principal problem remains the refuge and support given to extremist groups opposing the Karzai-

government in the border region of Pakistan, including the re-emerged Taliban groups, an issue over which Afghanistan has made several official complaints to Pakistan.²³

However, the issue of support to extremist groups operating from within Pakistan cannot be viewed in isolation. There is a need to enhance the pressure on the Pakistani government to address the problem, but it must be seen as an element in the ongoing rivalry between India and Pakistan (although the Afghan-Pakistani problems also are closely linked to the controversial Durand line from 1893 which has never been recognised by Afghanistan as the formal border between the two countries). Many Pakistanis perceive India as being very active in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban-regime, a perception partly fuelled by the historically close ties between the Northern Alliance and India.²⁴ The quarrel between India and Pakistan has to a large extent by proxy been transferred to Afghanistan. The scope of this paper does not allow for a comprehensive analysis of the problem, but the issue must be addressed in a regional context. The EU and the US should be able to have a significant influence in this respect, establishing a concerted pressure on the governments of neighbouring countries.

The potential economic gains from regional trade, especially between Pakistan and Afghanistan, provide an incentive for closer cooperation. Pakistan should be Afghanistan's main trading partner, but the strained relations between the two countries initially hampered the cooperation. However, first at technical level and later at higher political level the contacts have improved and the recent visit to Kabul by the Pakistani Prime Minister, Jamali, in January 2004 was an important symbol of what is hopefully a more fruitful neighbourly relationship. Furthermore, Afghanistan's potential as a transit country should not be underestimated, especially since the main seaport for most of Central Asia currently remains the Baltic city Riga.

²³ At the time of publication of this paper, the Pakistani government has conducted a number of military operations into the Federal Administrated Tribal Areas in search of terrorist elements, but it remains too early to assess the effect.

²⁴ It should be noted that India has managed to broaden the contacts in Afghanistan beyond the traditional allies from the Northern Alliance. The Indians have during the last two years conducted an effective diplomatic campaign and cultivated the trade links, also to key Pashtun groups.

4. Governance

In addition to the monopoly over the legitimate use of force, the internal sovereignty of a state is related to the legislative power, the control over the executive branches, the existence of an independent and fair judiciary, public legitimacy and the control over internal revenue and international development assistance (the economic issues will be addressed in section 5). The good governance dimensions – efficiency, effectiveness, equity and accountability – are key parameters on which a government will be judged by its population. It is assumed in this paper that Afghanistan is no different and that the Afghans can be expected to measure the performance of the government along these dimensions.²⁵

In many news reportages from Afghanistan it is often noted that president Karzai is little more than mayor of Kabul. Although a catchy phrase, this constitutes a crude simplification. A complex power struggle is being fought and many key stakeholders perceive it as a zero-sum game, where their power is likely to be reduced, if the influence of the central government increases. Thus, it is important to analyse what assets – in addition to the military aspects discussed in the previous section – a newly appointed central government in a post-war society possesses and what can be done to enhance its strength.

From the outset the administration under president Karzai possessed a number of key assets: (i) formal legislative monopoly; (ii) control over a national administrative system, although with a limited capacity; (iii) strong domestic support from a significant number of key Afghan stakeholders, but even more importantly from a vast majority of ordinary Afghans tired from decades of fighting, and (iv) strong support from the international community.

The main point is not only that rules matter and will have an increasing influence over time if the power of the irregular military forces is curbed. It is also essential to note that the Afghan population expects the government to exert its power and will judge the performance of the

²⁵ During the Constitutional Loya Jirga the delegates had a few days to raise general issues of concern while the constitutional draft was being revised. Many of the statements emphasized the need for a more effective and transparent government, essentially highlighting these good governance dimensions efficiency, effectiveness, equity and accountability. However, these sentiments have so far not been utilised effectively by an organised reform movement.

government accordingly. The implementation of administrative and judicial reforms must be given high priority (lesson 10, 11, 12 and 13). Another key aspect is that the opinion of ordinary Afghans (and the strengthening of civil society) does matter, especially in light of the up-coming election and the increased re-emergence of extremist groups (lesson 14 and 15).

- **Lesson 10: The laws and regulations will increasingly yield power**

In a society where people with guns still possess large influence it can initially seem redundant to focus attention on budget rules, clarification of the administrative responsibilities between centre and provinces, appointment of provincial and district officials through a merit-based system etc. However, even though the situation will not be changed over night, the re-establishment of formalised hierarchical structures linking central and local authorities will gradually be an important factor in the reform process. It should ideally be seen as a two-pronged approach, where the influence of the illegitimate military forces is reduced, while the legitimate power structures under the authority of the government are strengthened systematically.

This process is closely linked to the flow of funds. It must be assumed that most Afghans in the current economic situation need to remain loyal to the person or institution paying their salaries. If the new province and district officials appointed by the central government will have influence on fund allocations, this is likely to increase the authority of the formal governance structure. The outreach of the central government can furthermore be strengthened through improvements of the physical and human resources of the local administrative structures.²⁶

- **Lesson 11: The appointment of qualified leaders at province and district level is needed**

The reestablishment of good governance practices is crucial for the stabilisation of Afghanistan. A key element is the appointment of qualified leaders at central, province and district level – ministers (the current cabinet includes a mix of technocrats and political

²⁶ The report 'Subnational Administration in Afghanistan: Assessment and Recommendations for Action' prepared by the World Bank and the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) in March 2004 presents a comprehensive view of the administrative capacity at local level outside Kabul. Although numerous problems need to be solved the analysis shows that a significant capacity remains available in the provinces and districts.

figures), governors, police chiefs, heads of ministerial departments – through a merit based system. The continued presence of corrupt and inefficient state officials will undermine the support for the central government and reduce the speed of the reconstruction process. However, it is important that the new appointees are given the necessary political and material support to exert their influence. This can be in form of refurbished buildings, communication equipment, authority over some development funds, training of staff, deployment of trained police officers etc. It will be a gradual process, but it is important to initiate the reforms so the formal structures can be strengthened as quickly as possible.

It is also a matter of perception. The more president Karzai and the central government include the military commanders and the non-reformist political actors – and shower them with attention and prominence – the more clout these people will possess in the eyes of the Afghan population. In order to enhance the state-building process, the formal hierarchical system must continuously be given preference, including an active promotion of the new leaders, and thereby gain influence over time.

A constraint in Afghanistan has been the ability to identify new qualified leaders. A number of persons have been selected from the vibrant NGO community that existed during the years of conflict, but a more systematic process should be put in place. The UN offices and PRTs, both at central and provincial level, should be able to assist in such identification and screening, given their knowledge about the situation on the ground. Major public events, such as the Constitutional Loya Jirga, can also provide valuable indications about leadership potential.

- **Lesson 12: Reform of the judicial sector must be a key priority**

Reform of the judicial sector and the reestablishment of rule of law should be a key priority in any post-conflict society.²⁷ It is not merely a technical challenge, but rather a deeply political and multi-sectoral undertaking. In the Afghan context, reforms of the judicial sector have formally been highlighted as one of the key priorities, but in practical terms progress has been limited. The issue was not given the prominence it required at the Bonn Conference and

²⁷ The report 'Assistance to Justice and the Rule of Law in Afghanistan' published by The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in Geneva in February 2004 provides a good overview of the challenges within the sector. The report can be found on www.hdcentre.org

the Bonn Agreement does not outline an overall strategy or milestones for the judicial reforms. The judiciary is, however, one of the three pillars within a state structure and as the influence of the military powers diminishes, the importance of the judicial system will increase.

The adoption of the new Constitution in January 2004 highlighted this importance of the judiciary and especially the Supreme Court. Most observers seem to agree that the actual text of the Constitution is better than could have been expected, especially regarding human rights, minority concessions and democratic procedures. On the other hand article 3 of the Constitution states that no law must be contradictory to ‘the beliefs and provisions of the sacred religion of Islam’. Much has been left to the interpretation of the Constitution and almost as an early warning, the conservative Supreme Court tried to use article 3 to re-impose a ban on female singers on television only a week after the completion of the constitutional Loya Jirga.

The reforms of the judicial sector are a multifaceted challenge including the prosecution, the legal profession, the courts, the correction system and the human rights institutions. There has been a need for an overall strategic plan for the sector since the initiation of the Afghan peace process, but such a plan has been slow to emerge. As other sectors Afghan ownership of the process has been the key mantra, but the institutions involved have either had limited capacity or staffed by religious hardliners. It has been and continues to be a difficult environment for any lead donor or UN agency, but that said the international input could have been stronger, especially during the first year after the Bonn conference.

In the Brahimi report it is stated that UN operations need to include an *‘adequately resourced team approach to upholding the rule of law and respect for human rights, through judicial, penal, human rights and policing experts working together in a coordinated and collegial manner’*²⁸. UNAMA has been given a strong mandate on these issues by the Security Council, but the mission has been thinly staffed within these sectors, both in Kabul and in the field. In addition, a number of key positions have been vacant for an extended period, such as the position as senior rule of law adviser and senior human rights adviser.

²⁸ The Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, paragraph 40.

- **Lesson 13: The development of an intermediate human rights strategy is necessary in an unstable security environment**

The development of a comprehensive human rights strategy is one of the key elements of the rule of law reforms and closely linked to the security situation. In a situation where the irregular military forces continue to dominate in the provinces, transitional justice issues and on-going human rights violations become very difficult to address, especially because of the inability to protect victims and witnesses.

The human rights debate in Afghanistan the first year after the fall of the Taliban was dominated by two groups – the ‘Peace before justice’ group versus the ‘Peace and justice’ group. This was not a very constructive or nuanced debate. The lack of a stable security environment will necessarily restrict the scope of the human rights strategy, but an intermediate strategy can and should be developed during the interim period before the security situation improves and national human rights and judicial institutions are established. The mere presence and monitoring of international human rights officers is an important first step which can have a significant deterrent effect. As noted above, the UN system has only had a limited number of human rights and protection officers in the provinces. The intermediate strategy should be seen as complementary to the establishment of local human rights institutions, such as the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. The Afghan institutions are the centrepiece of any long-term strategy, but in a difficult political and military post-war environment the UN needs to play a critical intermediate role.

- **Lesson 14: The strong civil society traditions in Afghanistan have been neglected**

The top-down approach with appointment of new leaders must be supplemented by a bottom-up approach, where the ordinary Afghans become familiar with participatory and transparent decision-making processes, and thereby increased accountability at local level. However, one of the most striking features of the political process since the signing of the Bonn Agreement has been the limited focus on public opinion and the political resources of the Afghan population. Most attention has been centred on the political processes in Kabul and in other main Afghan cities, with little focus on nurturing a broad public movement in support of the reform agenda. The result is that the large majority of Afghan citizens (probably close to 90%), who are tired of armed conflicts and basically want real change and stability, has never become a significant factor in the political sphere.

Afghanistan is a country with strong traditions of local participation and community cooperation. Through village councils, shuras, Loya Jirgas and councils of elders, people have

been able to influence their own lives. Many of these community structures may have been dominated by conservative values and the women have had limited influence, but notions such as fairness, consensus-seeking and anti-corruption are deep-rooted principles in traditional Afghan participatory processes. During the decades of armed conflict, the militias were, however, to a large extent able to dominate or by-pass these community structures.

The Afghans should not be regarded as a population of weak-minded individuals with limited personal resources. Many Afghans – both men and women – have a clear notion of what they want and what they can accept. Such resources at grass-root level must, however, be nurtured and civil society representatives be included in the political process.

Instead of aiming at creating a sense of inclusion during the transition, a number of political processes have almost made a mockery of the public participation. An illustrative example was the elections preceding the Emergency Loya Jirga in June 2002, which was considered the most democratic process in Afghanistan ever by most observers, and a clear majority of delegates genuinely supported president Karzai and his reform agenda. However, the last minute inclusion of military commanders and compromised politicians – contrary to the ELJ regulations – constituted a major setback for many Afghans, especially since most of these individuals were seated at the front row as dignitaries. Furthermore no permanent advisory body of delegates was established in Kabul after the ELJ, although this could have been a first step towards a more inclusive political process. As a consequence one of the strongest support groups for president Karzai was never utilised and have slowly lost strength.

Another example has been the consultative process related to the drafting of the constitution. A process was organised where members of the constitutional commission travelled to the provinces and where a large number of questionnaires were distributed. In principle a sound process, which could have sparked a true public interest in the constitutional process, but the actual implementation and follow-up have almost had a counter-productive effect. Since the draft was not published in advance, rumours quickly circulated that it was a pro forma process with a final document already prepared. Secondly, no feedback was given to the public based on the consultations and the questionnaires (more than 100,000 questionnaires were submitted to the constitutional commission). In this way the public was invited to participate in the process, but without giving the population any indication that the input was taken seriously.

It is worth remembering the basic axiom that democratic processes are more than the adoption of a constitution or holding of elections. For a democracy to be real and effective

the population must feel that they are a part of the process. Afghans have little experience with formal elections, but most have a clear sense when decisions are made without their participation.

- **Lesson 15: The civil society traditions can be enhanced through the development process**

The strengthening of civil society structures at local level can be assisted through the development process if the programmes are designed in the right way. A traditional mechanism has been to support civil society organisations and local NGOs directly, but there is a need to think in broader terms. Many of the local organisations receiving support are centred on one person or a small group with a limited membership base or outreach.

An alternative strategy is to incorporate participatory methods into the development programmes. In Afghanistan a number of NGOs, including DACAAR, have established village councils as part of their activities, but the initiatives have been piece-meal, of varying quality and only implemented in selected areas.²⁹

A more systematic approach has been adopted by the Afghan government under the National Solidarity Programme (NSP). Through NSP block grants are disbursed directly to villages based on project proposals formulated by democratically elected development councils. The NSP includes direct transfer of funds to the Afghan population (and thereby securing fast and tangible development results), but the participatory element is what makes it distinctive. The process allocates responsibilities to the citizens themselves, and thereby facilitates the strengthening of the social capital in Afghanistan.

Through facilitation by international and local NGOs the villagers are sensitised about the programme objectives, including the establishment of development councils for both men and women through secret ballots. The initial feedback from the facilitating partners indicates that the democratic procedures established via NSP correspond well with the values and traditions in Afghan villages, especially the notion of fairness and participation, although there have been issues with regard to the inclusion of women. If the civic education process

²⁹ It should be noted that DACAAR has received positive evaluations for the establishment of village councils under the Integrated Rural Development Programme.

at village level is carried out in a thorough manner, it appears that most Afghans will see the mechanisms as corresponding with Afghan traditions rather than a Western concept imposed by donors.

5. Economic Recovery

A key element of the state-building process is for the central government to control sufficient economic resources, including incoming donor assistance and domestic revenues, and to possess the capacity to facilitate economic activities. Compared to reconstruction processes in other post-conflict countries, the process in Afghanistan has been characterised by a high degree of local ownership. The UN or the International Financial Institutions have played a more prominent role in most other post-conflict situations, but the Afghan government has from the outset been determined to exert its influence and has led the Consultative Group process since its launch in January 2003. An important contributing factor has been the attitude of the World Bank, which at the highest policy level from the beginning of the reconstruction process has supported the Afghan led approach.

The economic reform process has been driven by a small number of visionary ministers and civil servants. They have, however, been able to implement an impressive range of reforms including the establishment of a comprehensive budget process, introduction of strict fiduciary standards and accountability measures, new banking laws, a currency reform and enhanced collection of domestic revenue. Much still needs to be done, but the results achieved so far should be recognised.

Although all stakeholders officially buy into the Afghan led development process, some discrepancy can be found in practice. This is partly due to a standard approach by some donors and UN agencies, which does not seem adjusted to a post-war situation with a sovereign government, but also partly due to the weak capacity of the Afghan administration. In order to avoid unnecessary delays in the implementation of development activities, the government and donors must agree on a realistic assessment of the administrative capacity, including an assessment of the need for technical assistance both at central and local level. This requires a forthright discussion between the government and the development partners, but during the first year after Bonn such a discussion was complicated by the government's struggle to get all donors and UN agencies to accept an Afghan led process. In that context it was difficult for the government to speak openly about existing administrative shortcomings.

The economic aspects of the state building exercise are linked to the amount of resources available to the reconstruction process in Afghanistan (lesson 16 and 17), the mechanisms through which these resources are channelled (lesson 18 and 19) and the role of NGOs (lesson 20).

- **Lesson 16: The development assistance per capita in Afghanistan is considered lower than in other post-conflict situations**

It has proved difficult to obtain overall figures for the level of development assistance to other post-conflict situations, such the Balkans, Cambodia and East Timor. However, even without the exact numbers there seems to be widespread consensus the level of development assistance per capita to Afghanistan has been low, especially compared to the Balkan reconstruction process.

A more direct comparison can be made between Afghanistan and Iraq. The multi-annual pledges for Afghanistan made by donors at the conference in Tokyo in January 2002 – both humanitarian and development pledges – amounted to USD 4.5 billion. For the reconstruction of Iraq, the UN and the World Bank made a joint needs assessment for 2004-2007 amounting to USD 56 billion.³⁰ This was presented to donors at the pledging conference in Madrid in October 2003 where commitments amounting to USD 33 billion were made with approximately two thirds in grant contributions. The needs are undoubtedly great in Iraq, but of a very different nature than in Afghanistan. Any needs assessment for a post-conflict country must be based on a realistic analysis of the existing human capital and physical resources as well as the future prospects for domestic income generation.³¹

Afghanistan is not included in the UNDP Human Development Report due to unavailable information. However, a number of partial estimates have been included: life expectancy at

³⁰ The United Nations/World Bank Joint Iraq Needs Assessment, October 2003

³¹ At the international donor conference in Berlin on 31 March – 1 April 2004, donors made pledges amounting to USD 8.1 billion over three years. Afghanistan could then potentially provide a chance to test the World Bank recommendation from other post-conflict situations that the main bulk of donor support should come after a few years even the local absorption capacity has been increased.

birth: 43.1 years; adult literacy rate: 36%; infant mortality rate: 165 per 1000 live births; undernourished people: 70% of total population.³²

In addition to the level of international donor assistance, the issue of predictability of fund flows is of vital importance. It is impossible to plan a long-term reconstruction process if the flow of funds makes large unexpected fluctuations from one year to another. Investments in infrastructure, power and water management have to be based on multi-annual forecasts.

- **Lesson 17: The original needs assessment for Afghanistan underestimated the cost of the reconstruction process**

The World Bank, UNDP, IDB and ADB jointly produced the first needs assessment for Afghanistan in November 2001 after the fall of the Taliban regime. Any preliminary needs assessment will be based on a number of rough assumptions and on limited data collection. The assessment presented in advance of the Tokyo pledging conference described three scenarios estimating that either USD 6, 9 or 12 billion would be needed for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The Afghan government has subsequently questioned some of the key assumptions used as a basis for the assessment.

- a) *The final development state for Afghanistan:* The final cost estimate of a need assessment will depend on the society defined as the end goal for the process. In broad terms it makes a difference whether one aims for the development level of Afghanistan 1970 or an Afghanistan as it may have developed without more than twenty years of armed conflict. The Afghan government has argued for the latter option and pointed out that the original needs assessment was weak on elements such as higher education, railways or a modern level of telecommunication. The government has emphasised that such elements are needed in order to make Afghanistan a country attractive for foreign investments, a key factor for the long-term recovery process.
- b) *Overestimation of existing human capital and infrastructure:* The original needs assessment was based on assumptions about the existing human capital and infrastructure in Afghanistan, which today appear to have been too optimistic. The technical skills of the Afghan workforce are at a low level and a significant part of the workforce has been involved in opium production or

³² UNDP Human Development Report 2003

remained with the armed militias. In addition the country lacks the most basic infrastructure, especially a functional administrative system, telecommunication and roads.

- c) *Increased security related costs:* The increased security risk related to activities in the provinces, especially in the southern and eastern parts of the country, has led to additional financial costs. Partly because more funds have had to be allocated to direct investments in security – both the establishment of national Afghan institutions and the deployment of international military personnel – and partly due to increased expenses for development activities. An illustrative example is the Kabul-Kandahar road where the enhanced security measures are partly to blame for the tenfold increase of the budget.

During fall 2003 the Afghan government together with its development partners decided to update the original needs assessment. The final document ‘Securing Afghanistan’s Future: Accomplishments and the strategic path forward’ has been published in March 2004.³³ This comprehensive analysis completed by a wide range of Afghan and international experts estimates that Afghanistan over the next twelve years would need approximately USD 27,6 billion to secure a development that can counter the drug economy.

- **Lesson 18: The national budget can be used to enhance the reform process**

The entire development budget for Afghanistan and more than half of the recurrent costs are funded by donors. Based on experience from other developing countries it would not have been surprising if donors had decided to allocate the funds with marginal involvement of the government, especially in light of the limited capacity of the Afghan administration.

However, the Afghan government was able to exert its influence at an early stage of the reconstruction process. In April 2002 the government presented the National Development Framework (NDF), which outlined the main national priorities for the reconstruction and the

³³ ‘Securing Afghanistan’s Future: Accomplishments and the strategic path forward’ by the Afghan Government and various international partners (ADB, IMF, UNAMA, UNDP and WB). It can be downloaded from www.af/recosting

overall guidelines for the implementation of programmes.³⁴ In the fall of 2002, the NDF was followed by the first budget exercise, which resulted in the National Development Budget for Afghanistan (NDB). This process was from the outset led by the government, with the Minister of Finance as the main driving force.

The first budget exercise was imperfect in many ways. The limited administrative capacity and inadequate data made it difficult to produce a detailed account of the financial situation, and the first NDB was a pledging rather than a planning tool. However, the first budget exercise did establish some important principles: (i) the concept of a budget process was introduced. It was a collective learning experience for the Afghan cabinet where all ministers had to agree to the fund allocations; (ii) within each sector the ministries had to make priorities between the various development needs; and (iii) donors were requested only to fund projects or programmes included or reflected in the NDB.

While the main importance of the first budget exercise was to familiarise the cabinet and the donors with the budget process, the later budget exercises have increasingly been a tool to enforce budget discipline. It suddenly matters whether ministries are able to present credible projects and are able to persuade the rest of the cabinet that their priorities have to be included in the NDB. The budget has therefore increasingly become a real policy instrument for the government.

The financing of the recurrent budget has also been used to enhance the reform process. The starting point was a situation where no data was available on the number of state employees. This enabled the ministries to demand reimbursement for salary payments without any guarantees that the funds had actually reached the beneficiaries. Gradually more conditions have been attached to the salary payments, currently to a point where salaries are only reimbursed if the ministries submit name lists of their employees to the Ministry of Finance. The control mechanisms will be even greater once it is technically possible to individualise the payment system through electronic transfers.

³⁴ A key element of the National Development Framework was the creation of a number of national programmes with country-wide coverage. In a post-war situation characterised by ethnic and political tensions such programmes led by the government has been a unifying factor as they provide an objective framework by which resources can be allocated in a fair and transparent manner, whereas individual projects run a greater risk of being perceived as biased.

- **Lesson 19: Development assistance should be given in ways supporting the state-building process**

Afghanistan is a country in dire need of all possible development assistance. However, the assistance can be implemented through various mechanisms, some of which will provide a stronger support for the national governmental system and thereby are more likely to lead towards a long-term sustainable solution. Some of the key principles are:

- a) *Transfer of funds through the national financial mechanisms:* Real government ownership over the development process cannot be achieved without government control over substantial economic resources. The use of the national budget as a progressive policy tool can only be achieved if the budget process in reality can influence the flow of development assistance. In other post-conflict situations the clear majority funds have been channelled through programmes implemented directly by donors or through UN administered programmes.

One option has been direct budget support. In a fragile post-war society like Afghanistan this may appear to be a high-risk strategy both in terms of securing actual implementation of programmes and due to the lack of accountability and anti-corruption mechanisms. However, the Afghan government has from the outset focused on the establishment of reliable control and transparency systems and has deliberately during an initial transition phase relied heavily on foreign auditing and procurement firms with international credibility. Such targeted measures seem necessary in order to convince donors to provide funds directly through the national system.

For those donors who have been unable to give direct budget support, but on the other hand have not wished to rely entirely on individual projects, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) has provided a good alternative. The trust fund is administered by the World Bank and operates with three windows: (i) financing of recurrent costs; (ii) financing of activities included in the NDB; and (iii) financing of contracts for Afghan expatriates who are willing to return temporarily. Due to the urgent need to cover the recurrent costs, payments from the ARTF has so far primarily been used for this purpose. However, the pooling of donor funds must be recommended for several reasons. First, it reduces the administrative burdens on the Afghan government, which does not have to deal bilaterally with a wide range of donors. Second, it is likely to improve the quality of the programmes to be funded through the ARTF, since a number of design criteria have to be fulfilled in accordance with World Bank regulations. Third, the ARTF has provided an instrument to coordinate donor conditions to the government especially related to public sector reforms. In certain cases,

such conditions from the international donor community have facilitated government approval of key economic reforms.

For those donors that are unable to finance directly through the budget or ARTF, a minimum requirement must be to reflect all activities in the national budget. This will at least provide a complete overview of the development activities in the country. The UN system will for some donors serve as an alternative funding mechanism and is likely to mobilise additional funding through the coordinated appeals, but also these appeals must be closely coordinated with the national budget process, in order to avoid that the UN, instead of the government, make the final decision on whether a project should be included in an appeal.³⁵

In a government led process regular reviews (possibly annually) of UN agencies should be a mandatory, standard exercise. The reviews should be carried out in a cooperative manner, where the government and the UN agencies can discuss the achieved results and future strategies and work plans. This would create an incentive for UN agencies to maintain a lean and efficient organisation and enhance result oriented programming. Such a review mechanism must be considered natural, given that it is the government which will be held accountable by the Afghan population for the results achieved through the UN implemented activities.

- b) *Technical assistance to the government*: The strategy of financing and implementation through the governmental system only becomes a realistic option if the administrative system has the capacity to assume ownership both centrally and in the provinces and districts. There is an inherent dilemma between the need to provide immediate tangible results for the local population and the need to build on the government structures to enhance long-term sustainability. The initial partnerships between the government and the international

³⁵ A thorough analysis of the UN assistance to the reconstruction process in Afghanistan is beyond the scope of this paper, but ought to be studied more carefully. The assistance since the fall of the Taliban-regime has been characterized by strong individual UN agencies implementing their own projects, while UNAMA has had no formal coordinating mandate. No overall vision or strategy was developed in order to secure that the UN assistance became an integrated part of the overall government development framework. An alternative approach could have been to develop a number of UN programmes in cooperation with the government into which the various UN agencies could provide input in a comprehensive manner. In an Afghan led development process, the UN could play an important role in supporting the reestablishment of institutional structures both centrally and in the provinces.

community were in many cases based on exceedingly optimistic assessments of the governmental capacity.

There has been a growing realisation, both within the government and among donors, that more targeted technical assistance is needed during the interim phases, including secondment of permanent advisers. It has been quite apparent that the ministries which have accepted foreign advisers have been at the forefront of the reform process and have been able to present more comprehensive programmes to donors. However, a key requirement for the technical assistance must be the transfer of capacity to the host Afghan institutions. There must be a clear strategy for the training of counterparts and phasing out of the technical assistance, including the possibility for the government to refuse or dismiss technical advisers, who do not perform in accordance with their high salaries. Another key element would be to establish better procedures for transparent and merit based recruitment for government positions.

In a situation, where the UN is not tasked with the overall coordination responsibility, it should assume a more strategic role vis-à-vis the government on development issues. One key element should be establishment of government support teams, which can enhance the implementation capacity and provide assistance regarding coordinating mechanisms, including secondment of technical experts within the ministerial systems. This is a less visible role for UN agencies than implementing own programmes, and if implemented donors should appreciate and reward such a police change.

- c) *Support for private sector activities:* One of the key elements to create long-term sustainability in Afghanistan will be through increased private sector activity. The investments in private sector can only be attracted if the necessary legal framework is established and the bureaucratic red tape reduced. It also requires large investments in infrastructure and training of a qualified workforce. The Afghan government included many of these elements in the original National Development Framework and some of the ideas have been implemented. However, further targeted technical assistance is needed within this area which could be forthcoming with the increased American assistance to Afghanistan that includes private sector development as key priority.
- d) *Support the visibility of the government:* In a country where the central government is trying to re-establish its influence nationwide, it becomes imperative to show the Afghan population that its government is responsible for the economic development. It should not be the flags or logos of the various donors, UN agencies or NGOs, which can be seen at each development

project. The international actors ought to get the necessary attention and recognition at international donor meetings, while the government should be in focus within Afghanistan. The implementation of key government initiatives, such as the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) and the National Emergency Employment Programme (NEEP), has a huge impact on the standing of the central government around the country.

- **Lesson 20: NGOs must increasingly adapt to a government led system**

The dilemmas inherent in the civil-military cooperation, accentuated by the establishment of the PRTs, have been addressed above. However, NGOs working in Afghanistan are faced with other difficult issues. Most of the NGOs, which have been present in the country for many years, are used to a large degree of independence given the historic absence of an effective government structure. The independence peaked during the Taliban regime where the cooperation with official institutions was reduced to the absolute minimum.

With the establishment of an Afghan government after the fall of the Taliban regime the pendulum has been swinging back and most donors support the recreation of stronger central authorities. This development has gathered more momentum over time and two years after the Bonn Agreement a closer cooperation between the government and NGOs should be expected. However, it is necessary to distinguish between the various types of NGOs:

- a) *Humanitarian NGOs*: This label is often in broad terms applied to numerous NGOs, but should in reality be restricted to those NGOs dealing specifically with delivery of humanitarian emergency assistance to the most vulnerable groups in society. These NGOs need to be able to work in a country irrespective of the nature of the government, and should rightly be protective of their humanitarian space, i.e. independence from government structures and military actors. However, more than two years after the Taliban regime and with the drought broken in most of Afghanistan, the core humanitarian needs are reduced and most of the vulnerable people in the country should be included in more comprehensive social programmes provided by the government and donors in cooperation.
- b) *Human rights NGOs*: A number of NGOs are working specifically with the promotion of human rights, good governance and the development of independent media. These NGOs should also be granted a large degree of independence from the government system.
- c) *Developmental NGOs*: The largest part of the current NGO activities falls within the categories of the Afghan National Development Budget. The building of schools and clinics and the

drilling of wheels are among the activities which should be performed in close cooperation with the government authorities.

There is no clear cut division between these categories and the issue is further complicated by the fact that many NGOs cover a wide range of activities. However, for most NGOs there is a need to work closer with the government authorities.

That said donors also have a responsibility to smoothen the transition and make sure that the often innovative NGO approaches can be maintained within a government system. The NGOs should be encouraged to seek funding through the national programmes, such as NSP, but it is necessary to maintain a realistic assessment of the fund flows. The initiation of government programmes or activities funded via the government budget are often slow due to the limited administrative capacity, and some NGOs have been caught between the termination of their traditional direct donor funding and the potential funds through government systems. The first objective should be to have all development activities implemented by NGOs coordinated under the government leadership, while the complete transformation to full government funding will be slower to materialise. There should furthermore on all sides be a realistic assessment of the government capacity to monitor and supervise activities in order to prevent that bureaucratic procedures, especially at field level, delays the implementation unnecessarily.

- **Lesson 21: Peace building is a long-term process**

In a country like Afghanistan, where the state-building process has been initiated from a low starting point and where the national capacity is weak, donors should be prepared for a long-term commitment. This includes a willingness to provide the necessary economic assistance over an extended period, also after the CNN effect has disappeared. The counter-factual costs of not providing such assistance should be factored into this equation, especially given the likely internal and regional instability which would be the result of a failed state-building process and the continued military presence, which would then be necessary in the country. As stated by the former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt 'building peace is a far more fragile, complex, costly and drawn-out process than fighting a war'.³⁶

³⁶ 'Analysis: State-building lessons' by Carl Bildt, BBC World Service On-line, 19 January 2004.s