



LUND UNIVERSITY  
School of Economics and Management

# Swedish aid in Afghanistan

## What did 20 years of Aid result in?

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This paper will examine the role the three most prominent Swedish actors of Försvarsmakten, SIDA and SCA had. This will be done by conducting a case study and examining the data that exists regarding the impact of the projects undertaken. This data takes the form of reports and evaluations discussing their respective involvement and contains information regarding the issues they faced. The data also contains a breakdown of the nature of the projects, such as if they were broad and done in all four regions or just focused on smaller districts within the four provinces. The results of the case study shows some interesting findings, especially how both SIDA and the SCA were overall successful though there are some questions about how sustainable SIDA's actions in Afghanistan actually are. The study finds that Försvarsmakten did not accomplish much of anything and it can in part be blamed on the scale of their projects which were just centered on smaller districts in Afghanistan. In concluding remarks this study suggests further studies both of the Swedish role in the nation but also a broader examination of the other PRTs in a more holistic perspective.

EKH18

Bachelor's Thesis (15 credits ECTS)

May 2024

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Examiner: Helene Castenbrandt

Word Count: 12498 (Excluding abstract and Acknowledgements)

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## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to extend a big thank you to my supervisor, Kathryn Gary. The feedback I have received from you has been invaluable and have been a major help in formulating my thesis the way I wanted it to go. In a similar vein, I want to thank my teachers Igor Martens and Benjamin Chatterton for an amazing course leading up to the thesis writing. Without your help this would have been a daunting and stressful task but you helped in making it feel more manageable. I would also like to thank my dear friends Maja and Martin, who have put up with all my ramblings about my paper and been there for me throughout the entire process, being supportive and encouraging me along the way. Finally, I want to thank my father Hans-Olof Olsson for always being available to juggle ideas back and forth and give me a new perspective on the subject matter.

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# 1. Introduction

In 2006 Sweden took responsibility for what is known as a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), which were dedicated international efforts from the international community to develop Afghanistan. The PRT which Sweden was in charge of was located in the northern regions of Afghanistan, in a city called Mazar-e Sharif in Balkh province (SOU, 2017b). Within this team there are a multitude of different actors, but in this thesis the focus will only be on three of these actors. These three actors are Försvarsmakten, The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (henceforth, SIDA) and finally the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA). These three actors were the most important ones present in a Swedish context with both SIDA and Försvarsmakten being part of the Swedish state. SCA on the other hand is a prominent NGO in Afghanistan, which has been active in the country since the early 1980s (SCA, n.d). The large-scale Swedish efforts continued until 2014 when the PRT was dismantled and handed over to the Afghan government, with only the SCA having a significant role post-2014 (SCA,n.d).

## 1.1 Background Problematization

Afghanistan is a nation of a troubled and complicated history. Ever since the mid 19th century the country has had powerful empires such as the British and Russian Empires circling its borders and trying to control Afghanistan (Emadi, 2012, pp. xiii). The country has also been the target of Western invasions in recent times, with the Soviet invasion in the late 70s and the US led invasion in the early 21st century. On top of these invasions the nation has also fallen far behind in terms of development, the nation is often considered as one of the most underdeveloped countries in the world (Emadi, 2010, pp. 1., World Bank, n.d).

With the US invasion there was also a push by the US and the Western Coalition to rebuild and ‘develop’ the country to help it out of the grips of poverty. This development started at the earliest in 2002 when the US initiated the first efforts to develop the country (ISW, n.d). This first initiative came to be known as *Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cells* (ISW, n.d). As stated by the ISW (n.d), these cells were small teams of between five to ten individuals with the responsibility to evaluate small scale projects and humanitarian needs in the areas where

coalition forces were stationed. At the end of 2002 these small teams had evolved to include more personnel from various parts of the US government and security forces and they were then renamed to Provincial Reconstruction Teams or just simply PRTs (ISW, n.d). These PRTs would in 2003 begin to be transferred to other nations, with the one that is the focus of this paper first being transferred to the British and later to Sweden (ISW, n.d., SOU, 2017b).

This first handover was as a result of a worsening security situation in the Northern and Western areas of Afghanistan, similarly this was the case in the area around the capital of Kabul (Bogland & Bedford, 2005). Sweden had early expressed an interest in leading a PRT, but at the time of the initial transfers it was not considered feasible for Sweden to start and run one on their own (Bogland & Bedford, 2005). As a result of this, it was accepted that Britain would have the responsibility to set up the reconstruction team in Mazar-e Sharif but that Sweden would supply personnel as stated by Bogland and Bedford (2015). In 2005 there was another push to expand the PRT system to cover more of Afghanistan and as stated by Bogland and Bedford (2015) Britain then decided to hand over the base in Mazar-e Sharif to Sweden. This was so that Britain themselves could focus on their other PRT in Kandahar, located in the Western regions of Afghanistan. This handover process was finished in 2006 and from then Sweden was in charge of PRT Mazar-e Sharif (Bogland & Bedford, 2015., SOU, 2017a).

Originally the team in Mazar-e Sharif was only responsible for two provinces, with these being Samangan and Sar-e Pul, with both the city of Mazar-e Sharif and the provinces located in the northern part of Afghanistan (Pain & Johannessen, 2015). This all changed in 2010, when the responsibility of the team was expanded to include the provinces of Balkh and Jowzjan on top of the previously mentioned provinces (Pain & Johannessen, 2015). This meant that the team over time had a large footprint in Afghanistan, being responsible for four provinces including the second biggest city in all of Afghanistan (SOU, 2017a). The Swedish base and team was primarily located in Mazar-e Sharif, in the Northern province of Balkh, but they also had smaller regional offices in the other three provinces (SOU, 2017b).

As the nation of Afghanistan is very poor and underdeveloped it is important to understand what can be done to reverse the situation in Afghanistan. Focusing on how the main Swedish actors of

Försvarsmakten, SIDA and the SCA worked towards improving the situation in the provinces is important for the global community. This is as focusing on the Swedish actors is due to in part the Swedish role globally, the nation is ranked as one of the largest donors in the world based solely on the amount spent and in the year of 2022 spent almost 1% of their GNI on Official Development Assistance (Donor Tracker, n.d, OECD, n.d). As Sweden represents one of the largest donors in the world, understanding and examining the role the actors played in improving the situation in the provinces assigned to Sweden is very important. By understanding actors, it can help dictate and understand how development in the future should or should not be conducted. Not only can the case represent Sweden but it is also relevant for donors across the globe as it can highlight the impact of aid on a broader scale.

## 1.2 Aim of Study

The aim of the study is to examine how the Swedish actors assigned to the Provincial Reconstruction Team in the Northern part of Afghanistan approached reconstruction and development of the Afghan nation. The aim of the study is to examine the Swedish actors involved in the development effort and how their different approaches can explain their respective results.

To accomplish the aims of this study the following questions will be posed:

*What differences were there between the aid projects undertaken by main Swedish actors in Mazar-e Sharif during the occupation of Afghanistan?*

*Can the differences between the aid projects explain their results?*

*Did the goals of the actors lead to actual aid being delivered?*

The aim of these questions is to first and foremost get a better and clearer picture of the Swedish involvement in Afghanistan by examining the three actors of Försvarsmakten, SIDA and SCA. This will be accomplished by examining what kind of projects the actors undertook, if there was a difference between the projects locations, or if there was anything else which influenced the approach the actors undertook. Secondly, to explain the results of the actors' interventions, differences will be examined to better understand if their approaches can help explain the success

of their interventions. As a part of examining the results it will also discuss the sustainability of the interventions, as development interventions sometimes act in a way where they do not accomplish much following the withdrawal of actors and this will be a key aspect of the question.

### 1.3 Relevance

The importance in examining the Swedish effort in Afghanistan is to better understand what sort of development projects (road construction, bridge building, expanding of school and education systems for example) are undertaken in conflict zones and unstable areas. If it would turn out that the projects undertaken were not sustainable or did not benefit the people of Afghanistan it would set a solid foundation for further research to be conducted. But it is also important to map the accomplishments and failures of the projects to better understand them and if they were done in a beneficial way. In turn by examining the Swedish case it can show how the broader impact of development in Afghanistan by the Western Coalition and PRTs took form. As hinted at earlier, the examination of the Swedish case has the goal to better understand the development trends in Afghanistans. But also be able to highlight the positive and negative aspects of the approach taken and see if they benefited the people or not.

Focusing on Afghanistan is important as it represents a very clear case of aid in conflict zones. By shedding a light on this the goal is to better understand how to utilize aid in conflict zones and seeing what it accomplishes in hot spots around the world. This is something that can be further used in future and present day conflicts that are raging across the world to initiate a debate on how to create sustainable frameworks and strategies to deliver and utilize aid in conflict zones..

But not only does the case showcase how aid can be utilized in conflict zones and unstable regions it also acts as a good way for actors to understand how development in a nation is shaped. As different actors choose to approach development differently, this is also likely to affect the results and success of their projects. Thus, by understanding how the actors in Afghanistan tackled development and how or if it could be seen as a successful example of



development in conflict zones can potentially reverberate more globally. This is specially the case with the present era where there are multiple destructive conflicts across the globe and many more parts which could be considered unstable.

Not only is aid important in conflict zones, but it is also important across the developing world. Aid is not unchallenged, and there are issues with it. When accounting in the past 50 years, very few countries have managed to develop even with the support of aid (Moyo, 2009). As stated by Moyo (2009, pp, 40), many of the countries in Sub-saharan Africa that have received aid have not managed to develop, in some cases the countries have even recessed in the past 50 years even with aid. Thus even though this paper in particular is situated on the Afghan case, it has the possibility of reverberating more broadly across the world as many developing countries share similarities with the case. A prominent similarity is the dependency on aid with many countries in Africa being heavily reliant on aid just like the case of Afghanistan (Goldsmith, 2001)

As alluded to earlier, Sweden is also a major donor for international aid. This means that the case of Sweden's involvement in Afghanistan is important from a Swedish perspective as well simply because of the amount Sweden contributes to aid globally. Thus the impact of aid can reverberate to more nations and projects where Sweden is involved.

## 2. Context

To understand the importance of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Mazar-e Sharif it is important to first of all explain and show how the geographical territory of Afghanistan is not as ethnically homogenous as nations in the Global North. Instead the nation is a patchwork of many ethnic groups with their own languages and history. As alluded to in the introduction there will also be a more in depth explanation of what Provincial Reconstruction Teams are, how they function and what they did in Afghanistan. This focus will be a bit more broad but I will also tie this into the team in Mazar-e Sharif.

## 2.1 History of Afghanistan

Following the expulsion of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s there followed a civil war within the Mujahideen movement (Congressional Research Services, 2021). From this civil war within the Mujahideen, the Taliban would emerge as a Pashtun, which is the name of the dominant ethnic group in the country, led movement made up of primarily Sunni Muslims (Congressional Research Services, 2021). During the civil war, the northern region of Balkh was a hotspot between the Northern Alliance (who was made up of a coalition of non-pashtun ethnic groups) and the Taliban. During the civil war the city of Mazar-e Sharif swapped hands multiple times and there was extensive violation of human rights committed by both sides, but the city would eventually be captured and controlled by the Taliban (SOU, 2017a). A similar situation as to that during the civil war would unfold following the US invasion where the Northern Alliance early on occupied the city and executed hundreds if not thousands of Taliban fighters that had been captured (SOU, 2017a).

As stated by Derblom et.al (2009) the Northern Alliance, which was in part made up of Tajiks, Uzbek, Turkmen and Hazaras and other smaller ethnic groups have a particularly strong presence in the northern part of Afghanistan. In comparison the Pashtun minority in the north has been seen as particularly vulnerable by both military and civilian Swedish personnel (Derblom et.al, 2009). Even though they have been considered vulnerable in the Northern Alliance dominated territory, the non-pashtun communities have often perceived that aid tended to flow into the Pashtun dominated South and East (Derblom et.al, 2009). But not only has there been ethnic divides, there has also been a religious divide. As stated by Derblom et.al (2009) the South dominated by the Pashtun ethnic group has had a more orthodox view of Islam in comparison to the Northern regions of the country which has amplified the internal strife in Afghanistan. This has also made it a lot harder to make sure that the ethnic divide can be bridged as in the past, the religious unity acted as a bridge between the various ethnic groups (Derblom et.al, 2009).

To summarize, Afghanistan is a fractured country ethnically with the dominating ethnic group being the Pashtun and make up the brunt of the Taliban movement. Opposite the Pashtun there is a coalition known as the Northern Alliance made up of various smaller ethnicities, such as

Tajiks, Uzbek, Turkmen and Hazaras. These two groups also lack any unity in their faith, as even though they are both muslim the Taliban is more Orthodox

## 2.2 The Swedish Actors In Afghanistan

To understand Sweden's broader involvement in Afghanistan this segment will examine the three Swedish actors that will be examined and describe what they are and how they relate to the Swedish Case. The reason why these three actors were chosen and is the focus is because they are three of the biggest Swedish actors, Försvarsmakten and SIDA are both government organizations that answer to the Swedish state and the SCA has a long history of working in Afghanistan. As a result of this, the actors had the largest influence on the Swedish efforts in Afghanistan.

### 2.2.1 Försvarsmakten and their role in Afghanistan

Försvarsmakten, or the Swedish Armed Forces, first came to be involved in Afghanistan in 2001/2002 as stated by Försvarsmakten (2021). During the first year of involvement Försvarsmakten had a very limited presence as their involvement was in the form of one intelligence unit and special forces personnel (Försvarsmakten, 2021). This changed when in 2003 the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was expanded to include all of Afghanistan, which saw Sweden aid Great Britain who at the time led the efforts in Mazar-e Sharif (Försvarsmakten, 2021). But in 2006 the responsibility of Mazar-e Sharif and the provinces under the responsibility of the team there moved over to Försvarsmakten (Försvarsmakten, 2021). The base that was established in Mazar-e Sharif came to be known as Camp Northern Lights and acted as both the military base but also the base for the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (Försvarsmakten, 2021). Försvarsmaktens first involvement in peacekeeping was in the Suez Canal (1956) and Kongo (1961) (Försvarsmakten, 2016).

### 2.2.2 SIDA in Afghanistan

SIDA's involvement in Afghanistan is unlike Försvarsmakten and SCA harder to follow, what is for sure is that SIDA for a long time was funding the work by the SCA and other NGOs (SCA, n.d., SOU, 2017a). But the first clear involvement of SIDA in Afghanistan is from 2007, when the organization was tasked by the UN to conduct the Rural Infrastructure Improvement Programme, or simply just the RAIP (Pain & Johannessen, 2015. Pp. 6). What the project exactly entices will be explained more in detail in segment 5, but the shorthand is that the RAIP was focused on improving roads, bridges and the maintenance of these (Pain & Johannessen, 2015. Pp. 10). What is important to note is that similarly to Försvarsmakten, SIDA is Sweden's official aid agency and is affiliated with Utrikesdepartementet, the Swedish Foreign Affairs Office (SIDA, n.d). As a result of SIDA being the main development assistance organization they have before their involvement in Afghanistan long been present in Africa (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, n.d). SIDA in the past has often worked in the Swedish Embassies in countries that received Swedish development, notably in South Africa where the organization also helped the South African anti-apartheid movement (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, n.d).

### 2.2.3 Swedish Committee for Afghanistan

The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) differs from the previously mentioned actors as unlike the other two actors. This difference is found in the organization's history, as SCA has been active in Afghanistan since the Soviet invasion (SCA. n.d). At first SCA was only focused on humanitarian aid as they delivered medicine to four small clinics in Afghanistan (SCA. n.d). but in 1984 the organization started what can be considered developmental work as they opened a primary school (SCA. n.d). After this the SCA expanded its involvement to also focus on rural development and in 1992 they also started to focus on individuals with disabilities (SCA. n.d). SCA was only active in Afghanistan, but they had been active in Afghanistan for almost 20 years by the time that the US led invasion was initiated. This also means that the experiences and expertise of SCA starting with the US invasion differs significantly compared to the two other actors. With the difference of taking the form of pre-existing networks in Afghanistan and a better understanding for the people of Afghanistan's situation as they already have a presence in

the country. By already having a presence in the country, the SCA already has trust from the people and an established presence in the country.

The key information regarding actors is to understand that Försvarsmakten and SIDA are both state organizations. Both of these organizations have conducted projects that lend themselves to the situation in Afghanistan even if their experience in the country is limited before they enter the scene. In comparison to the two other actors, SCA is well established in the country having been active for 20 years before the start of the conflict. All of the actors have focused on different aspects of development in the nation based on what is their specialty and have slightly different approaches to how they aim to help the people. SIDA and the SCA have been more focused on traditional development aspects such as healthcare, education and infrastructure while Försvarsmakten was focused on peacekeeping.

### 2.3 Provincial Reconstruction Teams Mazar-e Sharif

To understand what Provincial Reconstruction Team Mazar-e Sharif is and what they did, it is important to begin with the first incentive aimed at helping the people of Afghanistan and improve their situation and this were the Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cells in early 2002 (ISW, n.d). These cells were made up of between five and ten Army Civil Affairs Officers and had the responsibility to evaluate the humanitarian needs and conduct small scale reconstruction efforts in the areas around the small outposts in Afghanistan built to conduct the reconstruction efforts (ISW, n.d). But already within a year of the cells inception their scale started to expand and it saw both dedicated security personnel and US government officials be involved in the cells and with that the name was changed to what came to be known as the Provincial Reconstruction Teams or simply just PRT (ISW, n.d).

Albeit they at first were controlled solely by the the US the scale and ambition quickly grew larger and as a result of this the responsibility of each team was handed over to the other coalition nations and in the case of Mazar-e Sharif, this was to the British in 2003 (ISW, n.d). This first wave of handover was as a result of the expansion of the international coalition's efforts in Afghanistan, as originally the focus was just in the area near Kabul but with time came to the

entirety of the country (Bogland & Bedford, 2005). The PRTs were, as hinted to earlier, rolled out in phases with the first phase in 2001/2002 being centered in and around Kabul, second phase in 2003 the Western and Northern region and the final wave in 2006 being the Southern and Eastern regions of the country (SOU, 2017a).

In 2006 the team in Mazar-e Sharif was yet again transferred to a new nation, this was to Sweden (SOU, 2017b). This was due to Britain shifting their focus to their other PRT located in the Western region of Afghanistan, in the city of Kandahar as stated by Bogland and Bedford (2005). When Sweden first took the responsibility over the PRT Mazar-e Sharif, there were only two provinces under their responsibility, these being Samangnan and Sar-e Pul (Pain & Johannessen, 2015).

But in 2010 the Swedish team in Mazar-e Sharif became responsible for four separate provinces in the north of Afghanistan, this was the provinces of Balkh (where Mazar-e Sharif is located), Jowzjan, Samangan and Sar-e Pul (SOU, 2017b). The four provinces have a combined population count of 2.6 million and the province of Balkh is the largest of these with a population of 1.3 million and Mazar-e Sharif is the third largest city in all of Afghanistan (SOU, 2017a). The PRT in Mazar-e Sharif was unique in comparison to the 27 other PRTs that existed in Afghanistan as it was the only one responsible for four provinces according to the SOU (2017a). These four provinces were made up of predominantly minority ethnicities which make up the so-called Northern Alliance, these being notably Tajiks, Uzbek, Turkmen and Hazaras (Derblom, et.al 2009). The four regions struggle with poverty and most of the regions are rural according to Kristiansson (2016).

Sweden's efforts in Mazar-e Sharif can be summarized as six points, poverty reduction, security and stability, social and economic development, a democratic society, empowerment of women and finally to show that Sweden is a trusted partner in international endeavors (SOU, 2017b). All but the latest of these goals are of relevance to this paper as the final one has little impact in a development perspective and is more related to Swedish politics and ambitions. The team in Mazar-e Sharif was stationed on the military base known as 'Camp Northern Lights' but there were three other smaller offices in the provinces of Jowzjan, Samangan and Sar-e Pul (SOU,

2017b). Sweden would continue to lead the reconstruction and developmental efforts in the four previously mentioned provinces from their base in Mazar-e Sharif until 2014 when the Swedish team left Afghanistan (SOU, 2017a).

### 2.3.1 Military Aspect in Mazar-e Sharif

The military aspect of the work by the team in Mazar-e Sharif was mainly focused on security but as Sweden was responsible for four separate provinces the operations and work differed between the provinces. At first work the armed forces undertook was to provide security and stabilize the provinces, but over time the amount of combat engagements increased and saw the military to instead undertake counter insurgency operations but later the military scaled back its active engagement and instead focused on helping to train the Afghan Security to deal with problems themselves and this took the shape of advisers and trainers (SOU, 2017b). At first the military was active in the entirety of the four regions but as time moved on the strategy changed to focus on the more vulnerable districts in the provinces which led to a reduction in presence as the Military focused on specific population centers and what the Military referred to as “problematic areas” according to the SOU (2017a).

Due to issues with the regional governor, named Atta, in the province of Balkh the Swedish Military often got involved in developmental questions according to SOU (2017a). Albeit the intention of the Swedish team was to promote security and stability to enable international and Afghan actors to conduct developmental and reconstruction efforts on their own (SOU, 2017a). SOU (2017a) continues to note that the military's role in developmental and reconstruction projects was diminished and reduced in 2010 when the Swedish government introduced a civilian representative. The civilian representative had the responsibility of handling the development and reconstruction efforts in the Swedish team (SOU, 2017a). The role of the civilian representative increased in 2012 when the Swedish Military stepped back and instead a civilian led team took charge over Mazar-e Sharif under a Transition Support Team (TST) with the intention to hand over more responsibility to the Afghan security forces and government (SOU, 2017a). Eventually all military related involvement from Sweden started to slow down in 2012, as the first provincial bases and offices were handed over to the Afghan government and

by the end of 2014 the entire Swedish military had withdrawn from the country in line with the broader goal set out by the Western Coalition (SOU, 2017a). By the end of 2014 the international effort had ended and most militaries had withdrawn from the nation leaving small amounts of personnel to help train the Afghan Security Forces who took over the responsibility of the then former PRT bases (SOU, 2017a).

### 2.3.2 Civilian and Developmental Aspect in Mazar-e Sharif

Not only was the military active under the PRT in Mazar-e Sharif there were also substantial civilian aspects with two noticeable actors being the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (henceforth just SIDA) and the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (or simply SCA). It is important to note that there are some differences between the two, as SCA was active in Afghanistan before the US led invasion as their roots can be traced back to the Soviet Invasion and the organization has since 1982 conducted humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan (SCA, n.d). In comparison SIDA is a government agency that works not only in Afghanistan but across the globe. As a result of these differences the two have different approaches and projects that they do undertake (more on this in section 5.3). To better understand what the civilian aspect of the involvement of Sweden looked like it is important to break down the following section into two parts, one focused on the state led interventions from SIDA and one on SCA. The goal of this is to better highlight the differences between NGOs and State led interventions in Afghanistan as the projects and capabilities differed between the two.

SIDA first entered the scene in Afghanistan and the team in Mazar-e Sharif in 2007 when under contract from the United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS) they were contracted to lead the Rural Access Improvement Program (RAIP) in three phases (Pain & Johannessen, 2015). This project was focused on all four of the provinces Sweden was active in but during the first phase it was only focused on the provinces of Samangan and Sar-e Pul (Pain & Johannessen, 2015). RAIP had the goal of improving the road infrastructure and building more bridges but it also contained a very important component of maintenance throughout the years, see segment 5.3 for a breakdown of this (Pain & Johannessen, 2015). The RAIP was structured around three phases, but as mentioned before the first phase was only focused on two provinces but after the



first phases ending in 2010 this was later broadened to include the four provinces (Pain & Johannessen, 2015). RAIP Phase two saw a broadening of the initial project, which was a first only focused on major infrastructure projects in the form of highways and bridges (Pain & Johannessen, 2015). This broadening was to include the communities around the highways and bridges, this took the form of a support program meant to conduct small scale improvements such as access to water and improved roads in the villages (Pain & Johannessen, 2015). The third phase was almost identical to the second phase but with an addition of a focus on women's empowerment too (Pain & Johannessen, 2015). Overall the goal of the rural access improvement programme was focused on poverty reduction, creating employment opportunities for the rural population, building and maintaining infrastructure (Pain & Johannessen, 2015).

Unlike SIDA the Swedish Comitée for Afghanistan has been active since appearing in the 1980s as a response to the Soviet invasion (SCA, n.d). As a result of the SCAs long presence in Afghanistan the projects and ideas of the organization differ from those of SIDA as they have more experience and connection in the country. SCAs primary focus was on the areas they themselves state were their areas of expertise, these being education, healthcare and individuals with disabilities (Kristiansson, 2016). As a result of SCAs areas of expertise they quickly received the responsibility to direct and manage the Basic Health Package Services (or simply just BPHS) in the regions of Sar-e Pul and Samangan amongst others (Kristiansson, 2016). The BPHS was a collective name for the broader improvement of basic healthcare in the nation, this was done by improving/building clinics, local health workers and sanitation (SCA, 2014). As the conflict in the nation was driven by the US, SCA refused to accept American aid which caused friction with the US government and organizations (Kristiansson, 2016).

While SCA was a main driver of BPHS, they were also tasked by SIDA to run educational programs, healthcare, mother and child focused care and a focus on education for midwives (Kristiansson, 2016). Within the educational programs there was a large focus on schools for nomads and girls, while also educating teachers on a local level and existing teachers to a higher level in cooperation with Swedish universities (Kristiansson, 2016). Outside of the direct project involvement in the above mentioned areas, SCA also acted in a supporting role to Afghani civil society, this was with organizations such as Human Rights in Afghanistan and also the Afghan

Midwives Society according to Kristiansson (2016). On request by SIDA, there was also an initiative in the Northern Provinces of Balkh, Samanagan and Sar-e Pul called the Northern Development Project which was focused on improving education during the years of 2008-2010 (Kristiansson, 2016). Following the conclusion of the project SCA was also tasked with focusing on their other areas of expertise within the broader health care sector but also midwives which was a significant focus area during the entire period and those with disabilities as stated by Kristiansson (2016).

During the time period of 2007-2015 SCA has always had the intention and focus on the rural population, the poor, women and children with an emphasis on girls and people with disabilities (Kristiansson, 2016). This is in comparison to the approach taken by SIDA and their own projects which has been focused on a bigger scale with reduced focus on groups and instead a community approach. The reason that SCA was very focused on these groups was in part because they were under the impression that the poor and marginalized communities were all too likely to slip between the cracks in the broader project and thus focus should be put into making sure this did not occur (Kristiansson, 2016).

It should be noted that SCA has been involved with SIDA, but they have also been working in cooperation with the Swedish armed forces and foreign department, NATO and the EU council (Kristiansson, 2016). Though they were most frequently working with SIDA in one regard or another and frequently in contact with each other either in Kabul (where both had offices) or in Stockholm as stated by Kristiansson (2016).

To summarize this segment, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were efforts by the US and Western Coalition to develop the country. In turn, Sweden was responsible for one of these in the city of Mazar-e Sharif located in the northern province of Balkh. The Swedish actors can be divided into civilian and military focused with Försvarsmakten being mainly focused on security while SIDA and SCA were focused on the civilian aspect. In turn SIDA was more focused on infrastructure while SCA focused on the people of Afghanistan.

### 3. Aid, a contested subject

Aid is an important part of development in the present day and is used across the globe to elevate food insecurity and to on a broader scale to develop nations. This aid can take many forms, such as alleviating poverty, improving access to clean water and rebuilding nations devastated by natural and man made catastrophes. Yet, even if aid is used commonly across the world it is still a contested subject with some even stating that aid is not working (Moyo, 2009., Colier, 2008)

#### 3.1 Does aid work?

Aid is a subject that is heavily debated, according to some authors aid is the best way moving forward and is the best that can be done from the global north to help the global south to prosperity. There are competing ideas within the field of foreign aid, some authors argue that aid does not work with a notable example of this being William Easterly (2001, pp 39). The aid controversy is very well depicted and was already a topic of discussion around the Millennium Development Goals in the early 2000s (Ramalingam, 2013, pp. 55). Aid effectiveness is a big question in development and has been for a long time, and already from its inception there was early critique towards models used to promote development (Easterly, 2001, pp. 28). Nonetheless aid is and has for the past 24 years been of major focus for the UN with their Millennium Development Goals which ran from 2000-2015 and the following Sustainable Development Goals which are set to run from 2015-2030 (UN, n.d). With Afghanistan having received much aid, combined with the critique towards aid on a broader level but also in conflict zones this presents an important starting and focus point for this research paper. When examining the role of aid in conflict zones there are arguments saying aid can be good especially when done on a small scale and targeted approaches can be beneficial (Troland, et.al, 2013). Opposite this it is argued that aid in conflict zones not only can be useless but it can have a negative impact of making conflicts worse (Troland et al. 2013., Nielsen et al. 2011., Sollenberg, 2012). It is argued that aid in conflict zones promotes violence as a scramble for rents as a result of poor governance (Sollenberg, 2012). The lack of good governance is very commonly echoed throughout development related literature and not just in a conflict context, with Paul Collier (2008, pp. 152) even stating that it is one of the main traps for developing countries.

This ambiguity regarding the result of aid is an important step in understanding development and will be highlighted in the analysis and discussion, with the aim of shining a light on the Swedish aid that was distributed in Afghanistan and whether or not it contributed to a positive development in the country. But it will also in extension discuss if aid works in general or is it a dead end approach that we need to rethink.

## 4. Previous Research

### 4.1 What are the main points brought up?

Most of the previous research which is of relevance to this paper has been centered around either the international efforts or the US led interventions. The reason that there has been little done on Sweden's role is likely due to the language barrier. As will be shown further in this segment, many of the sources are in Swedish and at best there is a short summary that is available in English. Thus, from an international perspective and a broader research perspective, focusing on international efforts is significantly easier for researchers. Thus, much of the covered literature will be focused on the international efforts to supplement the available Swedish focused literature. This is as even if the research has been focused on the international effort, Sweden was still a part of this and there can be lessons learnt nonetheless.

A big talking point within the literature is that of aid in Afghanistan, something which is talked about in the research paper from ATR consulting (2018) which was done on behalf of Oxfam and SCA. But this is not the only other article covering the subject as there are a multitude of papers focused on the specific case of aid in Afghanistan. There are a great deal of papers containing this subject but they all share some similarities. A common thread is that aid in the country is very fragmented, with every donor conducting developmental projects independently and with a lack of clear coordination (ATR, 2018., Sopko, 2019., Davids et.al, 2011., SOU, 2017a., Johansson, 2016.)

Within this previous literature there are some examples that are very important to highlight. One of these very important focuses which shows fragmentation can be read in Davids et.al (2011). In

the paper, the authors are primarily interested in the PRTs from three nations; UK, US and Germany. Albeit neither of these three countries are the focus of this paper the authors show how even though these three PRTs had the same intention of improving the situation their focus differed greatly (Davids et.al, 2011). As Davids et.al (2011) states, depending on which nation was responsible for the PRT it affected the type of intervention they would undertake. Germany for example is stated to have focused primarily on infrastructure and natural resources while the UK was focused on agriculture and rural development (Davids et.al). This is a very clear example of the fragmented and uncoordinated nature of the aid efforts in Afghanistan but it is not the only one. Sopko (2019) instead is focused on how the different practices of donors and aid agencies increased the corruption in Afghanistan. Though in the case of Sopko (2019) this is aimed more so towards the US and not the international community but it is still applicable in the broader trend. The evaluation from SOU (2017a) does not outright speak of how fragmented aid is but as the report is reliant on reports from the bigger Swedish actors to even be able to discuss Sweden's involvement it shows the fractured nature of aid and aid oversight in the country.

When focusing on the Swedish cases more specifically, as albeit the international aspects and perspectives are very important, they can't include all that makes Sweden unique. This Swedish uniqueness is the challenges and differences that sets Sweden apart from the other PRTs led by other nations. One of the common talking points is the friction between NGOs and the State/Military in the Swedish PRT (Lackenbauer, 2016., Johansson, 2016., Kristiansson, 2016., SOU, 2017a.). In the spirit of transparency, the first three sources are all affiliated with SCA while the SOU is from the Swedish government. But nonetheless these sources all discuss the friction and problems with working with the bigger international organizations. SOU (2017a) in their report named the UNDP as one organization which at times was hard to coordinate with from the Swedish side and they perceived the relationship with UNDP to be inefficient and poorly. On the other hand, the three SCA affiliated sources are more critical and a bit harsher in their phrasing. Lackenbauer (2016) for example states that the civil-military cooperation can from the aid organizations perspective both be a positive and a negative. The positive aspect is that the armed forces can often make hard to reach parts of a country easier to get to and enables a larger quantity of aid to be delivered as the military has more resources to facilitate the transportation of said aid (Lackenbauer, 2016).

Opposite this, they can also hinder the ability for aid organizations by combining the civilian aspects with the militaries in the goal of progressing the military goals (Lackenbauer, 2016). In the Afghan case Lackenbauer (2016) points towards how the military used civilian organizations, such as NGOs, to create a positive impression of the ruling Northern Alliance government in Afghanistan. This was accomplished by targeting the local population with developmental measures to get them to move away from the Taliban sphere as a way to conduct counter insurgency according to Lackenbauer (2016). Kristiansson (2016) is even more harsh in his wording and states that the pressure from Försvarsmakten and SIDA to collaborate with the armed forces was quite extensive. This is further elaborated on by the author saying that SCA refused to work with the military efforts in any way, this was even to the point they refused money from the PRT in Mazar-e Sharif to distance themselves completely from the military (Kristiansson, 2021). The reason they were so keen to distance themselves from anything related to the military is because they were under the impression it would inhibit their work by making people less likely to want to interact with the “invaders” according to Kristiansson (2016).

None of the literature focused on Sweden even speaks of how the differences in approaches affected the results or what the impact had. At most the sources relating to the results of Sweden's interventions, such as the overarching report by SOU (2017a) are only focused on Sweden's goals and if these were accomplished. This shows when reading the report as on page 187 in SOU 2017:16 it is stated that Sweden did not manage to accomplish any of the goals it had set out to achieve. Furthermore it is broken down into which segments can be considered a failure, but the overarching segments in Chapter 11 (which starts at page 187) is only focused on the goals. There is very little attention given to the actors responsible and how their approaches can be to blame for the failures and successes.

## 4.2 The contribution of this study to the broader discussion

Based on the points raised in the previous literature segment just above, there are some gaps that can be filled in this study. There is very little discussion about how different approaches to development relate to differences in success. Instead, most of the focus is given on how

fragmented the aid and broader development was in Afghanistan. Not only can this study add to the literature regarding how the Swedish led development efforts helped improve the situation in the regions they were active in and if. This study can also add to the broader literature within the field of development by attempting to better understand what makes a project likely to succeed. Also if projects focused on a larger scale are better for development or if small scale projects are better in a development context.

Thus this study aims to add to the previous literature by better understanding how Swedens' choices in conducting development projects had an effect on the well being of the Afghan people. It also aims to be able to put a light on the issues with the different actors' approaches, and the overarching mindset Sweden had when entering the conflict. Finally, the study also hope to add to the broader development literature centered around aid.

## 5. Methods and Data

This section will explain and justify why I chose the methodology. Following this there will be a larger segment focused on the data, both the availability and sourcing of the data and ending with some of the shortcomings with the data.

### 5.1 Methodology

The method used will be that of a case study, this will be examination of the Swedish led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Mazar-e Sharif. The team in Mazar-e Sharif was responsible for both security but also developmental projects such as road construction, bridge construction and clearing the roads during winter but more on this in segment 5.2. By examining the case of PRT Mazar-e Sharif and the Swedish led interventions the aim of the study is to be able to understand the broader nature of interventions in Afghanistan. That stated, there were a total of 26 PRTs active at once in Afghanistan led by a multitude of nations which all had their own process of accomplishing the broader goals set by the UN. Although this is the case the examination of Sweden's participation and contributions will nonetheless showcase what interventions were successful and what issues existed on the ground. As the nation is not

homogenous neither ethnically or religiously, the issues have likely been present to various degrees in all regions of Afghanistan.

One of the important steps when conducting a case study is to set out a specific case with clearly defined borders and understand the context of the case, or as stated in Robson and McCartan (2016. Pp. 150-151) in some cases it might be better to view it as a site as cases occur in specific social and physical settings. The reasons why a case study is used is due to the nature of the situation in Afghanistan, the nation is a unique example of a military intervention with a significant developmental aspect being a core part of its stated goals. Afghanistan is suitable under all the conditions put forth by Robson and McCartan (2016. Pp. 176), Afghanistan presents itself as a very good and suitable observation to undertake a case study on as there is a well documented history of both the pre-conditions but also the active time of the case (2006-2014). Simultaneously the case can present itself as a great generalization for the future of development in other nations that are currently in a conflict state, which has been the case recently with as seen in Ukraine, the Middle East and Myanmar to name a few. The examination of Afghanistan will also represent a broader view on aid globally. As the country received large amounts of aid for a long period of time it presents a good opportunity to examine what aid accomplishes and what it looks like in a real world situation.

## 5.2 Data use and sourcing

The data used will all be focused on the period of 2007-2014/2015 as this is the time when the Swedish team in Mazar-e Sharif was active After this cutoff date Sweden left the base and the base was then handed over to the Afghan government.

## 5.3 Data

For the data on PRT MeS the sources used will primarily be Swedish, but there will be some english language sources too from Försvarshögskolan to supplement the data. The data that will be used will be from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). This will also be supplemented with reports and evaluations from the Swedish Committee For



Afghanistan (SCA), the Swedish Armed Forces and their associated organizations. The aim of this is to give an understanding from multiple Swedish actors involved in PRT MeS and give a holistic view of the situation by including the Armed forces and SIDAs view of the PRT. This data consists of reports from both SIDA, Totalförsvarets Forskningsinstitut (FOI) and SCA covering their respective activities from the period of 2007-2015 when the PRT was under Swedish Control.

Regarding the availability of the reports, all but the report from SIDA are publicly available with the report from SIDA having been accessed with the help from the SIDA archive services.

### 5.3.1 Data from SIDA

The data source for SIDAs involvement is a final report about the role they played in the *Provincial Reconstruction Team Mazar-e Sharif* (Pain & Johannessen, 2015, pp. 5). The report in question is 120 pages long and the third and final part of a three part series. The content of this particular report is centered around the Rural Access Infrastructure Projects (RAIP). This was SIDAs primary work from 2007-2014. It contains a comprehensive breakdown of the RAIP and puts the RAIP in a contextual framework, evaluates the project and even contains recommendations for the future. The report was commissioned with the goal of better understanding SIDAs role in Afghanistan shortly after their withdrawal and evaluating SIDAs actions during the time of the PRT (Pain & Johannessen, 2015, pp. 5)

Moving on from a short overview of the report, the data from SIDA consists of a breakdown of costs per phase of the RAIP, see table 5.3.1 (Pain & Johannessen, 2015, pp. 6). The bigger project also includes the cost of the small-scale infrastructure project on a village level called the RSIF (Pain & Johannessen, 2015, pp. 6). Included in the RSIF is a segment dedicated to female empowerment in the region but this was only a minor part s (see the segment after table 2 for a further breakdown regarding this).

Table 5.3.1, SIDA Expenses for RAIP (M. SEK 2015 and 2015 US\$)

	RAIP I	RAIP II	RAIP III
Project Period	Dec. 2007-Dec. 2010	Feb. 2010-Dec. 2013	April. 2013-Dec2015
Budget (M. SEK 2015)	44,000,000	177,945,427	199,000,000
Budget (2015 US\$)	6,818,002	26,551,975	30,000,000

Source: Pain, A., Johannessen, B. 2015:12 Evaluation of Sida's Support to the Rural Access Improvement Programme (Phase I-III) in Afghanistan. Final Report. Table 2 pp. 9.

As we can see in Table 1, the first phase saw significantly less funding in comparison to the other two phases. It is also worth noting that the third phase lasted the shortest amount of time and as stated in the SIDA Evaluation (2015) this segment also included the RSIF which could explain why the shortest period was the one with the highest cost.

Table 5.3.2, SIDA RAIP activities.

Activity	RAIP I-II	RAIP III (Secondary Road)	RAIP III (Tertiary Road)
Road Construction/Rehabilitation	431 km	79 km	78 km
Bridge Construction	26	N/A	N/A
Periodic Road Maintenance	65 km	160 km	N/A
Routine Road Maintenance	492 km	1059 km	236 km
Snow Clearing	119 km	N/A	N/A

Source: SIDA 2015:12 Evaluation of Sida's Support to the Rural Access Improvement Programme (Phase I-III) in Afghanistan. Final Report. Table 3 pp. 10

As can be seen in table 2, the large contribution from SIDA in Mazar-e Sharif was focused on infrastructure, with the focus being roadwork and bridge construction. But albeit the most of the attention was aimed at infrastructure there is also the case of the RSIF. The RSIF consisted of

50km of village roads, 10 water supply schemes, 30 water wells and hand pumps and 5 water supply (Pain & Johannessen, 2015. Pp. 10). SIDA's project was focused broadly in the four provinces but with Jawzjan having less roads constructed but more RSIF and Gender programs in comparison with the other states (Pain & Johannessen, 2015, pp. 115).

### 5.3.2 Data from Försvarsmakten

The basis for the data on Försvarsmaktens activities in Afghanistan is a report called *Sverige i Afghanistan 2002-2014* (SOU, 2017a). Unlike the other two sources used for data, the data regarding försvarsmakten is not from Försvarsmakten itself, instead it is from Statens Offentliga Utredningar (SOU). This is a publication where committees or investigators publish the results of their findings and often act as a basis for new laws and regulations in Sweden (SOU, n.d). The report from the SOU covers nearly everything relating to Sweden in Afghanistan and is primarily focused on state actors of SIDA and Försvarsmakten and the broader goals of the Swedish involvement. This report was composed under order from the Swedish Government with the intention of evaluating all of Sweden's involvement in Afghanistan (SOU, 2017a). Contained within it, there are segments relating to Military, Aid organizations and broader international involvement. There is a lot of data relating to Försvarsmakten, which is done very in depth to the point it even contains the amount of personnel involved. This exists in the form of a table on page 64 called 'Tabell 5.1 Styrkebidrag till ISAF 2002–2014'. And even though it is of some relevance, said table will not be included in this particular paper as the focus is on primarily the aid and development aspect.

Unlike SIDA, Försvarsmakten did little in what can be seen as developmental work and instead the focus of the armed forces was aimed at security. Even then there are some data portraying when there were firefights with the Swedish forces, see table 3. These were forces that worked towards improving the security in the provinces. Instead of the developmental work Försvarsmakten were focused on counter-insurgency, training and advising the Afghan security services (Regeringen, 2017. Pp. 75).

Försvarsmakten started out by being broadly focused in all of the Provinces assigned to Sweden, but their involvement shifted 2008-2009 to only focus on certain districts within the provinces (SOU, 2017a.). Two of the districts that were of particular focus were Chimtal and Char Bolak, situated just West of the city of Mazar-e Sharif in the Balkh Province (SOU, 2017a.). There was also the border region between the provinces of Sar-e Pul, Jowzjan and Faryab with the districts of Qush Tepa and Darzab being the primary focus (SOU, 2017a.).

Table 5.3.3, Enemy contact, KIA and Wounded PRT MeS

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Enemy Contact	7	32	71	54	23	0
Killed In Action	3	1	4	1	0	0
Wounded	4	10	11	8	2	0

Source: SOU 2017:16 pp. 75 tabell 5.2

### 5.3.3 Data from SCA

The data from SCA comes from their own report called *Om de Svenska och Internationella insatserna i Afghanistan 2001-2014 - Ett SAK perspektiv* (Kristiansson, 2016). The summary of this would be, the report is about Sweden and the international involvement in Afghanistan from a SCA perspective. The contents of this is centered around how SCA perceived the interactions with agencies in both Sweden and Afghanistan, but also how SCA worked in the country. There is also a segment dedicated to what SCA could contribute with.

Moving on to what the actual data is centered around, the data from SCA covers their activities. As can be seen from Table 5.3.4 there is a list over what they did in the country, but importantly there is also a breakdown of the costs involved. Most of SCAs activities were the same over the years with only small differences the first years but later they stayed the same. Not every project was done in every province, with the NDP only being done in the provinces Samangan, Sar-e Pul and Balkh (Kristiansson, 2016). Similarly, the BHPS was only active in two of the Swedish

administered provinces, with these being Sar-e Pul and Samangan according to Kristansson (2016). As can be understood from Table 5.3.4 the SCA was focused on a set amount of sectors such as education, healthcare, social development and infrastructure. But even then the organization conducted multiple projects within these broader categories.

Table 5.3.4, SCA Activities and Budget 2007-2014

Activity	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS)								
Mother and Child healthcare								
HIV/AIDS								
Program for the handicapped.								
Schools/Education.								
Twin Schools.								
National Solidarity Program (NSP).								
Unit for social involvement and ownership.								
Unit for Gender questions and Human Rights								
Civil Society.								
Infrastructure Development.								
Northern Development Project (NDP)								
<b>Budget M.SEK:</b>	198	163	159	200	203	273	283	270

Source: SCA, *Om de svenska och internationella insatserna i Afghanistan 2001- 2014 – ett SAK-perspektiv, 2016, pp. 19-22 Tabell. SAKs budget och verksamhet åren 2001-2014.*

#### 5.4 Shortcomings and issues with the data.

One of the primary issues with the data at hand is that it is primarily government related sources and there can be a bias towards portraying the activities from both SIDA and the Swedish Army in a favorable light. Not only that but it can also be hard to ascertain the spread of the projects,

especially in the case of SIDA where the data is more lumped together and it is not completely clear what was done in each of the provinces.

## 6. Swedish Actors in Mazar-e Sharif, what was different?

Based on the data there are some interesting and valuable lessons that can be learned. Primarily we can see that all three actors approached the situation differently. Both in terms of geography, level of scale (if it was targeted at individuals or groups for example) and the type of project undertaken.

Försvarmakten had what is best described as focused regions, regions that were considered to be particularly conflict heavy districts in Afghanistan (SOU, 2017a). On the other hand, SIDA approached the situation in Afghanistan differently as unlike Försvarmakten their focus was on a large-scale project spanning across the entirety of the four regions Sweden was responsible for (Pain & Johannessen, 2015). Even if this project was not done equally in the four provinces, with Jowzjan seeing less of the benefits of the project in comparison to the other three regions (Pain & Johannessen, 2015). Nonetheless as stated in the report (Pain & Johannessen, 2015), SIDA was still focused on bigger projects spread out across the provinces, not targeted efforts centered around small districts considered the most ‘problematic’. Finally there is the SCA, there are some similarities with how SIDA approached the development in a geographical sense as the SCA was not always conducting projects across all four regions equally with a notable example being the Basic Health Package Services, which only involved two of the provinces under Swedish responsibility (Kristiansson, 2016). But there are also projects that, based on the report from Kristiansson from 2016, were done in all four provinces.

When putting the three actors' geographical differences this close together there are some very stark differences, specifically with Försvarmakten which decided to prioritize certain districts over the broader province. Of course the reasons for this are not as simple as just a decision, there are indications that Försvarmakten did not have the personnel for broader projects (SOU, 2017a). Something that is noticeable when examining the report from SOU called 2017:16 as on page 64 there is a table showcasing how much personnel Försvarmakten had present.

Interestingly the number never reaches 1000 of active personnel with the number peaking in 2010 at just 770 personnel according to the data. Even still is that the provinces Sweden had the responsibility over had a population of 2.6 million individuals with Mazar-e Sharif, the city which acted as the base for all activities in the region, had a population of up to 700 000 (SOU, 2017a). This low number of Swedish personnel is not the entire picture, as it is also stated in the report that the US had some personnel in the region and the region being a stronghold of the Northern Alliance. But even when taking this into consideration, it is mesmerizing how Sweden expected to accomplish the goal of enforcing security in four provinces with a total area of 56000 square kilometers with so few personnel (SOU, 2017a).

Moving on to focus on the projects in question there are also notable differences in what kind of projects undertaken. The most straightforward of these being Försvarmakten, they were focused on security and this was in the shape of counter insurgency and keeping the people safe (SOU 2017a). F During the duration of Försvarsmaktens involvement their focus was on making sure that aid organizations could conduct their work and making sure the Afghan People could live in relative peace (Försvarsmakten, 2021). This follows in line with Försvarsmaktens previous experiences, the organization has since 1956 been involved in peacekeeping efforts around the globe, such as Bosnia (Försvarsmakten, n.d).

SIDA was also primarily focused on one task, that was the big and broad project Rural Access Infrastructure Projects or known simply as the RAIP (Pain & Johannessen, 2015). Within this project there is also a component focused on the villages next to the larger infrastructure buildings which was the primary focus of the RAIP, according to Pain and Johannessen (2015). Thus the project from SIDA was primarily focused on infrastructure, specifically roads, bridges and maintenance of said infrastructure. But there was a secondary part of the project that focused on the villages near the bigger RAIP (Pain & Johannessen, 2015). This secondary project involved improving the roads of the villages, building water wells and employing villagers to help with the improvements. Within this smaller project, there is also a component that is aimed at women in particular with the goal of reshaping the gender rules and norms in the country according to Pain and Johannessen (2015, pp. 7).

Finally there is the SCA, unlike the two other two actors their focus was split on multiple projects (see table 5.3.4 for a complete breakdown), this also means their measures were not specifically focused on one area instead it was more 'holistic' and trying to incorporate multiple aspects of society (Kristiansson, 2016). This has been the experience and approach the organization has had since their very inception, which is very good as they are continuing to focus on what is their area of expertise.

There are some very good questions that can be asked towards both SIDA and SCA, had SCA not been better off focusing on just a few fields and investing heavily into these instead of spreading out and trying to do many projects all at once. Similarly, had SIDA focused more on the people of Afghanistan not been better as the people are very poor and the country is very underdeveloped. That said, infrastructure is a key component of development and one can not happen without the other. Without roads people can not move around to trade, get help from larger cities or villages for example. So these infrastructure focused interventions are important for the future of all people, when transferring this to the global west where would have been without rail networks and roads?

To end this segment, the final difference that will be highlighted between actors is the issue of scale. In the context of this paper, the issue of scale corresponds to the project size more specifically if it focused on the individuals, the communities or the nation. The one interesting case in this, is Försvarsmakten. Specifically, Försvarsmakten blurs the line more so than the other two actors as the promotion of security is something that does not fit into a model where it only affects one of the levels of scale. Peace can benefit the individuals by creating a safe environment for them to conduct business, move around and for the younger ones to go to school. Communities are instead benefited by being able to invest more into themselves, as if there is security and stability communities do not have to fear that their investments will be destroyed. Moving on to a nation scale (or regional), stability helps promote outside investments and Foreign Direct Investments. Bluntly put, nations are unlikely to invest if there is a chance that the investment will be destroyed. Thus, if a nation can maintain peace and stability more people should in theory invest into the nation benefiting everyone under the assumption that the country is not corrupt. SIDA was instead focused on a community level, their interventions are



targeted at helping people move from one place to another, facilitating trade with a smaller component also focused on individual villages. Thus SIDA is very focused on communities, there are some benefits to the regions they were active in but overall it is benefiting communities the most. SCA is very clearly targeting the individual, all but two of their projects are focused on the individual level with the two outliers being Northern Development and Infrastructure development.

## 6.1 What implications can the different approaches have for future involvement?

In section 6, the differences between the actors were discussed and pointed out but what does actually tell us and what can we learn from these differences between actors?

First and foremost, we can see that there is a lack of standardization of approach with each of the actors choosing to conduct projects very different from each other. Both in terms of what projects were conducted, the geographical location and level of scale. The lack of standardization is not inherently bad as it does prevent an overlap of activities but simultaneously a more standardized approach could be beneficial to be able to invest more heavily into specific sectors. Furthermore, each of the actors specifically focused on the sectors that they considered to be their specialities which does counteract the arguments for standardization. As SIDA would likely not have been able to accomplish much in a security enforcement role.

There are some very valuable lessons that deserve to be highlighted too, especially how SIDA and the SCA worked with the people of Afghanistan. In the case of SIDA we have a project (RAIP) that at first was not focused on the communities near the larger roads but changed to include these communities. This is how development should be undertaken, not just conducting projects that benefit the communities or nation at large but also care about the smaller ones along the road. By in part helping the villages improve their infrastructure, such as building wells and improving their roads, and also employing the villagers for the larger project there is a better effort done at improving their situation. At once you are improving the village but you are also making sure that villagers can receive a monetary income and learn useful knowledge that they

can use in the future. Similarly, SCA worked a lot on improving the situation for the regular people of Afghanistan and we see a big push from them in the healthcare and education sectors. These are not uncommon sectors to focus on, but what sets SCA out is their refusal to accept any financial help from US organizations and their refusal to be involved and coordinate with the military. By refusing, SCA paints a picture where they are not there as invaders but instead to help and that should be the focus wherever aid organizations go, to make sure to be objective.

Finally there is the question of the amount of personnel Försvarsmakten had, as mentioned previously there were at most 770 people stationed in the country. There were also US and Northern Alliance affiliated personnel in the region but the number of these is not stated. Either way, the Swedish contingent was very small for the size of the territory which they were assigned to, a territory of 2.6 million people and 56000 square kilometers.

## 7. What were the results of the projects in Afghanistan?

The projects in Afghanistan had mixed results and depending on the source they will report the results differently. The report from SOU (2017a, pp. 119) states that the Swedish efforts were a failure, as the goals set out for Sweden's involvement were not even realistic. The report also gives a scolding towards Försvarsmakten saying what they did did not succeed in their goals of peace promotion and by the time they withdrew the levels of conflict had actually gotten worse (SOU, 2017a, pp. 188). In turn, Försvarsmakten themselves paint a more positive picture and states that they managed to accomplish their goals and aid the people of Afghanistan and make sure aid organizations could conduct their work (Försvarsmakten, 2021). At most this is an overly positive picture as the sustainability of Försvarsmaktens efforts are most definitely non-existent.

As in the long term, it is very clear that this positive picture does not match the real world as the nation quickly collapsed in 2021/22 and the Taliban returned. This is a very clear indication that Försvarsmaktens efforts did not succeed in the long run, of course there are other factors but nonetheless the efforts did not succeed. This was due to a lack of sustainability, as when Försvarsmakten left there was no ability for the measures to be continued. Even if

försvarsmakten trained the Afghan security forces once the Swedish contingent left there was no way for the efforts to be maintained.

In terms of SIDA and SCA the efforts were more successful. SIDA's efforts were focused primarily on infrastructure which is less likely to degrade over time even without them present. That said, there is the issue of maintenance but as local hires were a part of the project a transfer of knowledge is likely to have happened even if it is not entirely clear in the report from Pain and Johannessen (2015). Within the report it is even noted that the data they had at hand was not entirely clear on how well the capabilities for the locals to maintain the roads following SIDA's withdrawal were. This does add a potential issue of SIDA's project over time becoming a failure, as the more it is used the more worn the road will become yet no one can maintain it. Finally there is the SCA who likely had the most successful results of the three, with indications that their efforts were the most successful and also that the goals they had were the most realistic (Kristiansson, 2016., SOU, 2017a). One of the reasons that SCA has been the most successful is in part their longstanding presence which has created what they themselves refer to as 'goodwill' (Bengtsson, 2016, pp. 17). This is also echoed by the SOU (2017a), which states that the SCAs focus on Healthcare, Education and rural development has been super important to promote growth in the country. The sustainability of these efforts are on the other hand a bit of an unknown, there has been some degradation in recent years since the Taliban took over again with the bans on female participation in education (Ahmadi & Sultan, 2023). As a result of this, the SCAs efforts have been undermined since a big part of their focus was on promoting female participation in education and broader society. Furthermore on the broader success in Afghanistan, in a report from ATR Consulting (2018) by request of Oxfam and SCA their conflicting reports on aid effectiveness. It stated that in some regards the situation has improved in the country yet in others it has even deteriorated (ATR Consulting, 2018).

## 7.1 What lessons can be drawn from the results?

Part of the results can be attributed to their approaches, it is unlikely that the SCA would have been as successful if they had not been focused on just a few subjects. Similarly Försvarsmakten

focus on just a few districts leaves much territory open which could be the cause for the security not improving as it only led to the Taliban and their allies to avoid the districts. This is potentially strengthened by the fact that Table 5.3.3 shows how combat encounters drastically decreased towards the end of Försvarsmaktens involvement. SIDA on that hand is done on a 'good scale', combining a broader region focus with an adjacency focus is the best of both worlds. At once SIDA helped create the infrastructure that can be used for future projects and locals while also not leaving the communities by the bigger road. Overall bar Försvarsmakten, the scale was in part responsible for the success of the efforts. In the case of Försvarsmakten the scale was in part due to the lack of personnel which makes it hard to say it was the scale in particular that was to blame for the failure. In the case of försvarsmakten there is also the broader view of Afghanistan's security that has to be considered, for example instability in the regions bordering Sweden might have a spill over. There is also the possibility of an internal reshuffling of the Taliban, where when their situation became hard to maintain they moved to other regions. All of these 'what ifs' add to the complexity of evaluating and trying to figure out just what was the cause for Försvarsmaktens failure, though it does represent an interesting area for further studies.

There are some broader lessons that are important, one of these is to supply adequate personnel for the task at hand. If we want to conduct development in conflict zones we (as the outsiders) need to commit to doing it properly and not half-heartedly. A part of this is also that there has to be a conscious thought if the capability to do the action we wish to do well, if we do it half-hearted we won't accomplish anything long lasting. Finally, we need to understand the people we are there to help and we need to create unity to move away from the 'outsider' to someone that is well liked and has the goodwill of the people. If we do not accomplish this, what can we really accomplish?

## 8. Conclusion

To conclude the paper, the Swedish led efforts in Afghanistan had mixed results. Both the SCA and SIDAs projects can be considered as successful while Försvarsmaktens efforts were a failure. The reason why SIDA and the SCA were successful is likely due to a combination of the scale they focused on, what project/s they undertook and in the case of SCA their long presence

in the country. Furthermore, there are some important avenues of research that should be studied especially what went wrong in terms of the military aspect in Afghanistan but also to evaluate more of the PRTs success based on the same framework as shown in this paper. Examining actors, not as individual actors but as a whole, is key to evaluate efforts focused on development. If we only focus on one actor we miss out on the broader perspective and as shown in this essay, few actors are truly independent and instead many actors are connected to some degree with each other.

With that said, there are some tragic developments that have happened in the past four years. First and foremost is the Taliban reconquest of Afghanistan following the complete withdrawal of American forces which rapidly led to a collapse of the nation. Secondly, as of March 15th 2024 the SCA has been thrown out of Afghanistan (SCA, n.d). The impact this is likely to have on Afghan development is quite significant, as the SCA (n.d) states in 2023 alone 2.5 million people received help from SCA affiliated clinics and hospitals. The hope for the future is that Afghan people will see an improvement of the conditions in the country, but if this is likely or not is hard to tell. Unless the Taliban government reverses their decisions and improves the quality of the people, things are likely to remain unchanged.

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