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**SECURITY SECTOR REFORM AND POST CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING IN
AFGHANISTAN**

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To

The people who are suffering in Afghanistan and saw dreams of a peaceful and democratic country after the fall of Taliban regime.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANA	Afghan National Army
ANDSF	Afghan National Defense and Security Forces
ANP	Afghan National Police
DCAF	Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (Geneva, Switzerland)
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
EDA	Event Data Analysis
EU	European Union
ISAF	International Security Assistance Forces
MoD	Ministry of Defense
MoI	Ministry of Interior
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDS	National Directorate of Security
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
ONSC	Office of the National Security Council
SALW	Small arms and light weapons
SCR	Security Council resolution
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstructions
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States

LIST OF FIGURES/GRAPHS/TABLES

Chart #: 1 SSR Dimensions, Major Activities and Programs	23
Chart #: 2 Peacebuilding Dimensions, Major Activities and Programs	24
Chart #: 3 Model Developed for Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan in Bonn Agreement.....	33
Chart #: 4 Ministry of Interior of Afghanistan Organisational Structure and Bodies	37
Diagram #:1 Most Common Tensions/ Frictions in SSR concept.....	28

KEY FINDINGS

In the last 20 years, the US and NATO countries have played a significant role in reforming Afghanistan's security sector. The government has a standing army, air force, national police, intelligence agency, and special forces for the first time with foreign assistance.

However, the US and NATO withdrawal would negatively impact the gains of SSR and the post-conflict peacebuilding in Afghanistan as the Taliban would take maximum advantage of it to pursue its agenda of taking over power again in Afghanistan. It is also likely that in Post-US and NATO withdrawal, there will be a power vacuum that the Afghan National Security and Defence Forces (ANSDF) and even the Taliban might not be able to fill.

The Taliban may take control of the country very soon due to the lack of coordination between the US and Afghan forces. Even in the case of complete military victory, the Taliban may not destroy the Afghan National Security and Defence Forces (ANSDF) because they understand that they will need to have regular security institutions for running a modern state.

ABSTRACT

Security Sector Reform (SSR) is considered a significant feature in post-conflict peacebuilding efforts typically employed by states and international partners. Recently, the concept of SSR has played a significant role in the statebuilding process in Afghanistan after the Taliban regime; however, a disorganised and unplanned withdrawal poses severe threats to the security sector. This thesis explores the SSR efforts made by the western states after the end of the Taliban regime. The holistic approaches present in policy and strategy documents are quite challenging when it comes to SSR implementation in a post-conflict country ruled by an insurgent group for years. This thesis illustrates two competing approaches that show how SSR played a role in the post-conflict peacebuilding within Afghanistan and how peace spoilers and US/NATO withdrawal will impact the gains of twenty years in SSR. In order to better analyse the SSR process, a case study of the Afghan National Police is used. Moreover, this thesis offers some practical policy recommendations that can be useful for the concept of SSR in Afghanistan. This thesis does not offer a solution to the challenges of SSR in post-conflict countries like Afghanistan. Yet, it suggests that an uncoordinated withdrawal of external powers can negatively damage SSR, and it can be avoided through a smooth transition of power.

Keywords:

Afghanistan, NATO, Peace, Post-conflict Peacebuilding, Security Sector Reform, Taliban, US

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	i
LIST OF ACRONYMS/ ABBREVIATIONS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES/GRAPHS/TABLES	iv
KEY FINDINGS	v
ABSTRACT	vi
1 Chapter: 1 Security Sector Reform and Post Conflict Peacebuilding in Afghanistan	1
1.1 Introduction:	1
1.2 Aims and Objectives.....	3
1.3 Research Question(s)	3
1.4 Hypothesis.....	4
1.5 Research Puzzle.....	4
1.6 Scope and Contribution	4
1.7 Relevance of the Topic.....	4
1.8 Limitations.....	5
1.9 Ethics.....	5
1.10 Research Approach	5
1.11 Thesis Outline.....	6
2 Chapter 2: Literature Review	7
2.1 Relevance to the Academic Field/Literature Review.....	7
3 Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology	14
3.1 Theoretical Underpinning of SSR and Peacebuilding	14
3.2 Gap in the Literature Review and Critiques.....	16
3.3 Research Methodology and Design	17
3.4 Justification for the Use of the Qualitative Approach in this thesis and case study	18
4 Chapter 4: Security Sector Reform and Post Conflict Peacebuilding	20
4.1 Peacebuilding and its Aliases	20
4.2 Dimensions of Peacebuilding	20
4.3 The Roles of SSR in Peacebuilding	21
4.4 SSR and Peacebuilding: Key Activities and the Elements	23
4.5 The Challenges of Post-Conflict Peacebuilding and Security Sector Reform	25
4.6 Making Peacebuilding More Effective	29
5 Chapter 5: The Roles of Security Sector Reform in post-conflict Peacebuilding: A Case Study of National Police in Afghanistan	31

5.1	Introduction	31
5.2	Historical Background	31
5.3	Initial Efforts	33
5.4	The US Assistance Program for Afghan National Police	36
5.5	ANP Structure and Composition	36
5.6	Challenges	37
5.7	Conclusion and Recommendations:	38
6	Chapter 6: Part A (US and NATO withdrawal and Spoiling Behaviour of Local and Foreign Actors).....	39
6.1	Overview	39
6.2	The Impending United States Forces Withdrawal and the Activities of Spoilers	39
6.3	The Taliban:.....	41
6.4	Transnational Terrorist Organisation Networks	44
6.5	President Ghani and Administration	45
6.6	Regional and International Stakeholders in Afghanistan	46
6.7	Pakistan	47
6.8	Iran	49
6.9	Conclusion.....	50
6.10	Part B (United States Withdrawal and the Impact on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding and Security Sector Reform)	50
6.11	Introduction	50
6.12	US Withdrawal and Impacts on Afghan Security Forces Training	51
6.13	The Reality of the US Withdrawal and Effects on Afghan Security Forces Training	52
6.14	US Withdrawal and its Moral Impacts on Afghan Security Sectors.....	52
6.15	Conclusion and Analysis.....	53
7	Chapter 7: Conclusion and Policy Recommendations	55
7.1	Conclusion.....	55
7.2	Policy Recommendations.....	56
8	Bibliography.....	58

1 Chapter: 1 Security Sector Reform and Post Conflict Peacebuilding in Afghanistan

1.1 Introduction:

Recently, Security Sector Reform (SSR) is considered one of the significant factors in post-conflict peacebuilding in war-torn states around the globe. Reform of the security sector (police, army and justice) are vital in a country affected by war and insecurity. It creates an environment of trust and builds confidence between civilians and security departments (Law, 2006).

In post-cold war era, a number of conflicts were resolved through mediation in which international assistance played a significant role. As a result of success, the concept of peacebuilding came to mainstream discussion and the whole of idea peace building changes in the fundamental way after the end of the cold war. The way how civil war and other conflicts happen and end there is a radical difference in it. Prior to the end of Cold War most civil wars ended in one side victory (Babbitt, 2009). However, after the cold war, most of the civil wars end with negotiations and settlements among key stakeholders.

Washington consensus might be one of the packages that highlight how to end the war and work on security sector reform. It shows how to end the hostility, power-sharing government; there should be elections, military force should be formed from competing military forces into a single military. It is worth noting that sometimes there could be help from outside or necessary supervision and the main mission here is state-building and it might be nation-building in some situations (Hurt, S.R, 2021). However, there could be an issue of coordination among outsiders (donor states) that are assisting the process. It is because of their own organisational and state objectives.

For the progress of a nation and state success, peace and security are the prerequisites. For the purpose of building peace power-sharing matters, it is because that the competing forces get an assurance that they get some shares that they can stop fighting. This could be a good way to bring peace; however, it might not be a good way to run a government and there might be a vacuum of power.

Endemic corruption the killing of civilians, the death of security personnel, criminal gangs, extremist ideologies and the spread of terrorism have made the headlines regarding Afghanistan. Since the fall of the Taliban regime, common people believed that Afghanistan would become a safe and prosperous country with the US and NATO troops' assistance. The increasing death of Afghan security forces in

the fight against the Taliban has raised concern regarding the ability of Afghan National and Defence Forces (ANSDF). Having all these issues, a number of progress has been made in reframing and reforming the security sector of Afghanistan since 2001. Nearly two decades into the struggle of the US and allies to liberate Afghanistan from the Taliban regime once controlling most of the country (Maizland, 2021).

The most notable efforts are done by the US and NATO partners in training and equipping Afghan forces in the fight against terrorism, preventing violent extremism and containing opium cultivation. Afghanistan has been one of the worst-hit countries due to the conflicts in the last 40 years. It is a zone whereby allies forces and the US have experimented with several approaches focus on SSR; however, we don't know yet that the SSR has an impact on peacebuilding (Witte, 2020). The Security Sector Reform (SSR) process in a country like Afghanistan is a difficult job; however, the changing scenarios provide an understanding that the current peace talk efforts lead us toward the right direction and create hope for peace. It is believed that Security Sector Reform (SSR), makes people's lives harmless through more efficient and accountable security sectors.

Recently, the Office of the National Security (ONSC) of Afghanistan is working to bring reforms in the country's security sector. One of the rationales that these reforms are taking place by ONSC is that they believe that security sector reforms are necessary for ensuring peace and security. Within the system, reforms are divided into three categories—the first reform changes at the top level in the security sectors. The second one is changing the mode of war of Afghan security forces from defensive to offensive style. While, the third reform is collecting the equipment from the ex-government officials (Azadi, 2018).

There is consensus among Afghan security and defence officials that reforms are necessary in the security sectors. However, it is not yet clearly defined how the policy of reforms will be successful in practice. It is also believed that Afghan security and defence forces cannot bring reforms without the constant cooperation and assistance of international partners. Since the peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban have started, the US and NATO troops are not directly engaging in the war but supporting Afghan security forces at the time of critical need. That less engagement of the foreign troops show that security sector reform is critical in the post-conflict peacebuilding situation of the country (SIGAR,2021).

Looking to the current scenario Afghanistan's long conflict is now entering [entered] the final phase. The opportunity for peace is far much achievable than ever before, and that provides an opportunity to

incorporate the Taliban into the security sectors of the country. However, there is a potential threat that this process might be risky in the long run for the security sector reform. Outsiders and some neighbouring countries can likely play the role of peace spoilers and derail security sector reforms.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

This study aims to analyse Security Sector Reform and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Afghanistan after the Taliban regime, using liberal peace theory. The core reasons behind this topic is that Security Sector Reform in Post Conflict peacebuilding as a solid academic research field with high societal relevance and has impact on governments institutions. Its guiding research question ask:

To what extent is security sector reform in a post-conflict situation is critical in consolidating peace in Afghanistan?

The thesis will address its objectives within three interrelated research components:

Component 1: Security Sector Reform and Vulnerability in Post Conflict Peacebuilding

Component 2: Spoiling Behaviour of Regional and Local Actors/States

Component 3: US and NATO withdrawal and its Impact on Security Sector of Afghanistan

This study aims to analyse the Security Sector Reform in Post Conflict Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and it will also analyse the spoiling behaviours of internal and regional actors in peacebuilding process. Moreover, it also discussing the withdrawal of US and NATO troops from Afghanistan and its impact on security sector of Afghanistan.

1.3 Research Question(s)

To what extent Security Sector Reform in a post conflict situation is critical in consolidating peace in Afghanistan?

How spoiling actors and states can harm peacebuilding process in Afghanistan and what are their motives behind their spoiling behaviours?

How US and NATO will affect the security sector of Afghanistan?

Has the Security Sector Reform contributed to the peacebuilding in Afghanistan?

1.4 Hypothesis

The process of SSR can play a critical role in the post-conflict peacebuilding of Afghanistan; however, internal and external actors might likely derail the process.

1.5 Research Puzzle

The current instability and intra-Afghan peace talks create two puzzles. Though the Afghan government has asked for a reduction in Taliban violence since the peace talks began, the level of violence has increased in Afghanistan and civilians are among the primary victims of this violence. Therefore, it is important to probe to what extent the Security Sector Assistance of international partners played a role in the security sector reform of Afghanistan in the Post-Taliban regime and if the efforts were successful then why Afghan National and Defense Forces are not in the position to defend the country following NATO and the United States' withdrawal? It is also crucial to examine how Security Sector Reform will work in the current situation as the Afghan government might incorporate the Taliban into the system in the near future?

1.6 Scope and Contribution

Scholars have not explored Security Sector Reform Afghanistan and its relevance with peacebuilding. Moreover, there is an overlap of the literature review on Security Sector Reform related to Afghanistan to elaborate the contradictory statements and puzzles of the research. Further, this research is limited to the study of Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Afghanistan.

1.7 Relevance of the Topic

In a post-conflict environment such as Afghanistan, in an area of high level of insecurity recovering from a conflict SSR provides a state the basic pre-conditions for statehood and that is monopoly over the use of force. Moreover, in a prolonged post conflict country like Afghanistan security forces in the past have a driver of security in engaging and repressing activities. Reforming these institutions according to the democratic standards are accountable to civilian authorities. Some of the basic characteristics of SSR is a part of establishing a sustainable peace in building the trust of the people in the state.

1.8 Limitations

The major limitation is the lack of access to the relevant and classified documents. Currently, intra-Afghan peace talks are in full swing and both sides are trying their level best to achieve the maximum from it, therefore, it is not clear that how they will reach to a consensus on the division of security sector. The dilemma of peace talks and foreign actors' involvement in it makes the situation more problematic and make it difficult to reach to a consensus.

1.9 Ethics

There are a number of ethical considerations that I have kept in mind while conducting this research. The first challenge is that due to secrecy of some documents it was not appropriate to use them in my research because it could harm the national interests of Afghanistan in the long run. The scope of this work and the conclusions reached have taken into consideration the need to protect the national security of the incumbent states. Second, Afghanistan is a religious country and has strong family and cultural values, therefore, the pictures of the females and ideas with their names is not used while conducting the research.

The researcher acknowledges the ethical implications of using classified state documents, therefore, only secondary literature from open sources are used in the study. The author bears ethical responsibility not to disclose the identity of the sources of any privileged information received during this research. Apart from this, proper credits have been given to all the authors whose work are used in the research.

1.10 Research Approach

This research does not utilise primary data but relies exclusively on secondary data, thus, a deductive technique enabling second-order interpretations (constructing explanations from existing explanations and viewpoints) provides the basis of arriving at the findings of the study.

Accordingly, the qualitative research approach, the main methodological tool used in this study is discussed before the research design is outlined. Furthermore, content analysis as the sole qualitative data analysis tool used in the study is discussed. This thesis has utilised a qualitative methodology to write up significant findings and discussions. This methodology is used to interpret a comprehensive analysis of Afghanistan's perspectives on the Security Sector Reform in Post Conflict Peacebuilding.

The main method of analysis of this research was content analysis since there was no primary data generated due to the many limitations imposed by the global COVID pandemic and security conditions in Afghanistan.

1.11 Thesis Outline

The study is conducted in six chapters.

This introduction is followed by Chapter 2, which undertakes a review of the relevant literature and provides the context of the study. Chapter 3 explains the research methodology, highlighting liberalism theoretical lens and framework to the study. Chapter 4 presents the detailed analysis of Security Sector Reform and Post Conflict Peacebuilding in Chapter 5. A Case Study of the Afghan National Police is conducted, and in Chapter 6 first section discusses the role of peace spoilers. In section B US and NATO withdrawals are analysed that how it will impact the SSR in Afghanistan. In chapter 7, the conclusion and policy recommendations are provided.

2 Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Relevance to the Academic Field/Literature Review

In a post-conflict environment, citizens do not feel secure and do not consider living in a peaceful society. Some of them have lost their loved ones, wealth, property and prestige; they are passing from a traumatised situation and trying to recover from it. The police, army, intelligence people and many other department security people carry weapons, and this security outlook clearly shows that the state has faced a vulnerable period. In a post-conflict situation mostly, there is an absence of the rule of law, and people are not getting their fundamental human rights. Reform in the security sector plays a critical in the process of state-building and making people accountable. The concept of security sector reform provides an environment that favours state functions and helps in governing state affairs (DCAF; UN). Currently, SSR is considered one of the core components in the multi-disciplinary peacekeeping process. It is widely considered a fundamental part of conflict prevention and peacebuilding (UN. Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2012).

In a UNSG report A More Secure World' points out that the concept of peacebuilding is an institutional insufficiency in the system of the United Nations and argues that many countries in post-conflict situations put an obligation on the UN to incline to the distinctive needs of these states. The Secretary General of the UN has praised this concept of creating a new capacity within the organization to assist states in their struggle to make a successful transition from conflict to stability (UN, 2004).

The concept of peacebuilding first came in usage to explain the policies made to meet the necessities of the communities retrieving from clashes and wars, however, the current literature also pay attention to building peace for the purpose to avoid any further war: 'and it is more like a continuous pre-emptive action and strategy, or what is currently known is post-conflict peacebuilding; therefore, it is more like avoiding the conflict not to break out again' (Rotberg 1996, 32). The report that was presented to the Secretary-General of the UN by the panel of political leaders presented a number of reform policies to promote global stability and collective security in the 21st century (UN, 2004).

Recently, an article published titled "professionalization, a local military context, and the reconstruction of the army in Afghanistan" provides first-hand data based on primary resources on the interviews conducted with the practitioners who served in Afghanistan after the US invasion. Research claims that national army reconstruction programs in a country like Afghanistan that aren't tailored to the particular needs of post-conflict countries are unlikely to succeed. As a result, initiatives aimed at re-building the security sector reform must consider the unique features of the conflict-affected nation

and its institutions. The program must be tailored to the particular circumstances because ground realities differ in countries. The research shows that for the successful implementations of SSR in post-conflict countries, there are four basic preconditions such as; political consensus, stable security atmosphere, lasting resources and human and institutional capacity, however, none of the mentioned preconditions can be easily found in the country. The author argues that the military plays a key role in comparison to other security departments because it defends the country from both external and internal threats (insurgency). It shows that a strong military has a positive impact on other security sectors such as intelligence and police. When it comes to the professionalization of the armies and positive peace in Afghanistan it might take many years, however, time should not be our worry and it is not a problem. The rationale behind this is that the cultural identity, social norms in Afghanistan are different. Bringing a positive peace narrative in Afghanistan is a long-term process and building sustainable peace will take time (Cenker, 2021).

Unlike, some other studies this research uses the methodological approach to measure the professionalism and achievements of the SSR in Afghanistan. The measurement criteria that are used in analysing the military education, equipment, number of soldiers, budget and some other criteria, however, still we cannot say that it is enough for a fully valid assessment (Stephen, 1995).

Peacebuilding Scholar Dr. Paul Jackson criticises SSR "orthodoxy" seeking linear models for SSR and clean-cut categorizations of various conflict situations, noting that there may be several repercussions for the word "post-conflict" itself. Author argues that while "post-conflict" countries may be tempting to view as ready for externally imposed models, it may be risky for donors to neglect current norms and the sources of violence in the recipient community. He also warns against disregarding potentially useful local alternatives and processes that might make SSR sustainable (Jackson, 2009).

Donors interested in foreign operations, such as Afghanistan, should also take nuanced approaches to make the best use of moments in which host governments are flexible and open to institutional changes.

This paper provides the progress of almost two decades in the SSR program of the country and highlights both the weaknesses of the concept. The data that the paper provides shows that many Afghans believe that the country is heading in the wrong direction and it indicates that even peace talks are taking place, but the level of trust is coming down in common citizens. There can be multiple factors that create uncertainties, such as; increasing violence, US and NATO troops withdrawals, a peace deal between the US and the Taliban, and many others. The paper also provides the problem faced during the reconstruction process led by the US and other partner countries (Bak, 2019).

According to the author's assessment, it indicates that the key issue in the Afghanistan SSR concept is ethnic differences within the Afghan community. Moreover, it indicates a lack of knowledge among the international troops regarding the role of warlords, local armed groups, and the Afghan army. It is also discussed that the US in particular and allies, in general, were not fully prepared for the post-conflict reconstruction and there was a vacuum in the implementation of proper policies and doctrine for assisting the security sector. To conclude, it could be said that there was a lack of consensus and comprehensive policy in the post-intervention situation among NATO and ISAF allies. The quick decision of invasion made the SSR concept less effective (Wilson Center, 2020).

Fatima, Sari and Rachel did a critical assessment of SSR in Afghanistan and argued that there was a lack of coordination between political and developmental assistance as well as conflicting priorities between EU institutions and its member countries. This report pays particular attention to the rule of law and disarmament processes which took place in Afghanistan and how these contributed to the SSR. The authors believe that Afghanistan's National Development Strategy is very complex and would suit a well-advanced country in a post-conflict scenario rather than a weak state like Afghanistan. A notable aspect of the report is how short term rearming local militias policy outweighed the long-term negative impacts on the rule of law, governance and disarmament process of the country in the future (Ayub et al.,2009).

One of the researchers to investigate Security Sector Reform and Post Conflict Peacebuilding in Afghanistan is Mark Sedra. The author states that Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan is an elusive process. He provides the historical background of the conflict in Afghanistan and argues that SSR is considered as an essential which the success of the whole state-building process depends on (Sedra, 2004). In one another article, titled "Police Reform in Afghanistan: An Overview" written in the early phase of reconstruction Mark Sedra provides a historical perspective of Afghan National Police (ANP), and argues that, like many other countries, police reform is significant in post-conflict peacebuilding. The rationale behind a standing police force is to ensure law and order situation within the premises of the country. Moreover, in a country like Afghanistan, it is vital to build a police force that can work beyond the capital city of Kabul because the country has faced internal conflicts since mid 1970's, and it will help create national unity in the country. For the purpose of making SSR more effective, there was a consensus on police reform among donor states in the Bonn conference, and Germany took the responsibility of police reform. The paper highlights some of the key issues in police departments and the reform process. Some of the mentioned issues are lack of enough training and incorporation of former mujahideen in the police department because they are not clear to differentiate police duties

from army ones and their mentality of fighting. Moreover, the problem of lack in the hierarchal system in police departments shows that police are more loyal to local powerbrokers instead of the central government in many remote areas. The problem it creates is that it hampers the policy of national unity in the country. One of the key challenges that this paper indicates is the lack of ethnic diversity in the police department because the security sector is mostly controlled by a specific ethnic group and lacks equal representation of all nations living in the country. Ali Ahmad Jalali plan for the reform in the security sector is also discussed; under this policy, Jalali main focus was on the acceleration of police reform in a short period. One of the key areas that this plan focuses on is the creation of effective border police to stop the movements of the Taliban and insurgency from neighbouring country Pakistan. Minister Jalali, also initiated the reforms in the intelligence department of Afghanistan known as the National Directorate of Security (NDS), which is key in maintaining peace and stability in the country and gathering key information (Sedra, 2003).

A different approach to this question looks at problems in a deeper way and believes that the main issues with the SSR of Post-Conflict Peacebuilding have multiple factors that are daunting the process. To mention a few of them the report discusses that the international community was fragmented in Afghanistan and the donors were having different interests. It also argues that the rampant corruption and lack of resources were also one of the key issues in the SSR process of Afghanistan. A controversial issue that many scholars have not paid attention to is the causality of civilians by the US and allies through bombing, however, this paper explains how it negatively impacts the process of SSR in Afghanistan (DCAF, 2009). One of the most troublesome problems addressed by Mark Sedra in an article is to pinpoint the systemic failure of the liberal peace project in Afghanistan in the context of Security Sector Reform.

In a report written on Afghanistan security sector reform discusses how the approach of western states changed with the passage of time. The issue of lack of experience of Afghan institutions is also discussed in what ways it contributed to the failure of the liberal peace approach project. The paper also highlights that SSR swung compromises were done for the purpose to achieve short term tactical objectives. It is clear that whenever compromises are taking place it stigmatises the long-term objectives. It also elaborates that there was a lack of sufficient local knowledge in dealing with the SSR in Afghanistan. To conclude the author believes that the reforms regarding SSR in Afghanistan were not sustainable and were based on short term planning, therefore, the western led liberal peace project became hollowed (Ayub et al., n.d. 2009).

A crucial issue that has not been addressed is the formation of ethnic division of the country and the

dilemma of the people on how to cope with the current security nightmare. In the article titled *Afghanistan's Security: Political Process, State-Building and Narcotics*, Bulent Aras and Sule Toktas illustrate that regional states' interest in the security affairs of Afghanistan is mainly dominated by the fear that the current problem of Afghanistan will spill over into their territories. Therefore, regional countries and international partners concur that the presence of the US-led mission is vital for Afghanistan's security sector. This paper also provides the historical analysis of state-building and argues that a new security pattern, based on the gradual formation of the political process, state-building, would have the potential to address the Afghan Security situation. The authors analyse the views of Afghan society in three different categories (Pro-Taliban, Pro-government and in between) and correlate it with the state-building process (Aras & Toktas, 2020).

Unlike some other writing an article written by Stephen Biddle titled "Ending the war in Afghanistan: how to avoid failure on the installment plan" in which he suggests some policy recommendations that how the war in Afghanistan can be concluded in a responsible way and how the US can deal with the potential threats. He insists that a clear military victory against the Taliban is an unlikely scenario. One of the interesting scenarios that the author presented is that after the US withdrawal, Afghan National Security Forces might be able to protect the country against the Taliban; however, for that financially, Afghan security forces will need to get financial aid from the US. For the purpose of sustaining the process of SSR and maintaining peace in Afghanistan, foreign aid is necessary and once it ends the Afghan security forces will no longer be able to fight against insurgents. One of the two alternatives that the author is presenting is negotiations with the Taliban and he admits that it is not the real solution; however, it is the only way to avoid complete defeat. What matters here is that the defeat of the US and NATO allies is an absolute defeat of Afghan Security and Defense Forces and in that situation, the whole process of SSR will vanish shortly. For that reason, peace talks with the Taliban will lead to their amalgamation in the country's security sector. In a country like Afghanistan, poor governance always remains one of the key issues, and even the stakeholders are getting benefits from such wrongdoing. According to the paper, to avoid it, there should be conditionality in assisting the Afghan government and in case of failure to implement reform policies, donor states must withhold their assistance. Without true conditionality from donor states, the governance and reform process will never improve (Biddle, 2013).

Literature on peacebuilding shows that the concept is a "matter political crafting" in which the elite class plays a fundamental role in shaping the post-conflict peacebuilding, particularly through the approaches/tactics they practice achieving power through political institutions. In a post-conflict

scenario, the elites are skilful in changing circumstances in their favour through using different means for the purpose of gaining maximum benefit from it. International peacebuilding plays its role in transforming violent conflicts and civil wars into lasting peace in post-conflict states by altering the root causes of the conflict. The first step for achieving sustainable peace is to create a consensus among the ruling class and bring them on the same page or at least find common ground on crucial issues such as power-sharing, legitimacy of central government and so on. The current Afghan peacebuilding process started in the aftermath of the Taliban regime soon after the Bonn agreement. Under the umbrella of the UN and the US major power brokers of Afghanistan to agree on an interim government led by Hamid Karzai. However, the problem with the Bonn agreement was that the two major groups, the Taliban and Hizb Islami, were not part of it and it showed that it was an ill-prepared agreement. In her book, the author applied a historical institutionalist approach to show that why peacebuilding usually short of its desires and does not meet expectations. The book explains that the concept of statebuilding is a prerequisite for peacebuilding and having an effective state helps to achieve lasting peace and vice versa. The experience of Afghanistan shows that elite bargaining is necessary for a post-conflict situation and elite commitments are necessary for durable peace. The book also outlines the three phases of peacebuilding that happens in the aftermath of foreign intervention: First, the settlement phase, in which an end to the violent conflict takes place then it is followed by the second phase called the transitional period in which the process of democratization and statebuilding happens and leads to the lasting peace. The last phase is very crucial and lasts for a longer period in which the transformation of a post-conflict country pivot to the normal development state (Barma, 2016).

In a broader sense, SSR is regarded as one of the most important elements in the statebuilding process. It contributes to the creation and comprehension of the complex political situation in hostile regimes by giving a platform for liberal narratives (Paris, Sisk 2009:16). In a country like Afghanistan, building positive peace is a complex, challenging and time-consuming process that previously experienced local militias, ethnic violence, and tribal skirmishes. Usually, in such a situation grievance and greed matter and it leads toward violence. Taking a lesson from the peacebuilding efforts in other countries it can be said that there several factors that hinder building durable peace. The record of peacebuilding shows that it is difficult in post-conflict states that all the ethnic groups live together after they have fought for a long time against each other. According to the authors of the peacebuilding as politics, all peacebuilding efforts comprise four key components: a newly established political institution that is an inclusive, safe and secure atmosphere, a healthy economy and mechanism to deal with the past and a focus on transitional justice. When it comes to the challenges of peacebuilding, the process of post-conflict peacebuilding is itself one of the obstacles towards peacebuilding because it is a complex

phenomenon and it is triple transition; a democratic transition from dictatorship or authoritarianism to democracy, socioeconomic transition in which economic transformations take place and most importantly security transition from conflict to security and peace. Promoting an elite and top down approaches matters a lot because in many cases individual leaders and political elites are not willing to have a positive peace because their interests are directly connected with war and due to durable peace they might not have the same power as they are enjoying during the war period, therefore, leadership can heavily impact peacebuilding process. In the case of Afghanistan Taliban and other opponents believe that the current leadership of Afghanistan is the main obstacle towards peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan (Cousins, 2001).

One of the main challenges is the lack of real commitments and true motivations toward the peace process. The civil war of Afghanistan can be traced back to the USSR invasion that led the country into political chaos and created a power vacuum. The brutal phase of the Mujahideen era and Taliban regime continued till the invasion of the US and NATO troops. In the aftermath of the Taliban regime peacebuilding process was started by the western allies. In the post-Taliban peace process, destructive forces: warlords, former Mujahideen leaders, and Ex-soviet proponents were brought together to bring political stability. However, the Taliban were fully ignored and were not included in the peace process.

Tammy Halevy and Nicole Ball give a framework for post-conflict scenarios where they categorise two parts: end of the conflict, including end of enmities among local groups and compromises; and building positive peace, which includes transition and consolidation. Traditionally, the second phase has further divided into philanthropic organisations that assist during the crisis situation in the post-conflict situation and development organizations that focus on longer term objectives such as; improving economic and social recovery of the society and building political institutions. However, throughout the last decade, there has been a consensus of a vacuum between humanitarian and development solutions. As a result, a number of specialized units have been established to focus on this transitional stage and enhanced communication and planning among humanitarian and development organizations operating in these situations. Therefore, several units are established to improve the transitional period and as well as strengthen communication between development and humanitarian organizations working in such environments (Ball, 1996).

3 Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

3.1 Theoretical Underpinning of SSR and Peacebuilding

The idea of Security Sector Reform (SSR) originated in the 1990s; however, the main activities related to the concept trace back to the liberal model. The main aim of the concept is to transform poorly performed states into effective and well-governed states (GNF-SSR 2007; OECD, 2007). There are few interchangeable terms such as; security sector development, security sector renovation, security sector governance used for the concept, but all the terms have consensus on that good governed and accountable security institutions are pre-requisites for lasting and enduring peace (UNSG:2008).

The underpinning ideology of SSR and peacebuilding is based on liberalism, which is concerned with citizens' conditions as much as the state itself. It is also considered to be essentially a reforming process for individuals and institutions and emancipatory. Liberalism, as an ideology and a system through which politics, economies and societies are organised, promotes its version of peace in societies affected by conflict (Mac Ginty, 2016). This argues that stable democracies are less likely to go to war with each other, that their internal contradictions and weaknesses are self-correcting and reforming, and that a universal extension of democracy will guarantee international peace and security; it is founded on the political thought of classical liberals such as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Kant, among others. The liberal peace theory of change, therefore, advocates an external peacebuilding intervention that establishes and controls a causal chain of events that will result in an outcome of sustainable peace (de Coning, 2018). Moreover, as Michael Doyle, also endorses the work of Kant and presents the three pillars of liberal peace theory, in which the very first is represented democratic government in which he talks about the two sided relationships between the state and voters, in which the unpopular policies of elites are punished or rejected by the voters and it is through the idea of genuine interest of voters. Then it is followed by the liberal interests and beliefs, which is built on international and mutual respect. This is related that how international systems fits in domestic system. The third is the relationship is made on bilateral or multilateral beliefs and ties are based on mutual benefits. It underpins that for perpetual peace it is vital to have all these three pillars (Doyle, 1983). The liberal motives of SSR are necessary for the value placed on restraining or limiting the state's authorities through promoting democratic values. Apart from this, SSR also emphasises ensuring the state's fundamental functions, such as; the rule of law, security, and good governance within its confined territory. It also indicates the return of state functions and its importance on the state's role in creating a peaceful atmosphere for its citizens and paving the way for lasting peace and progress. In a larger context, SSR is considered one of the core components in the statebuilding process. It helps in

providing a platform of liberal narratives for creating and understanding the complicated political situation in the hostile states (Paris, Sisk 2009:16).

Since the end of the Cold War, liberalism has provided the policy foundation for many international peace support and peacebuilding programmes in post-conflict states. Liberal peace logic has also leveraged international organisations such as the United Nations and its agencies, international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and non-governmental organisations of Western states for peacebuilding projects, especially in the conflict-prone Global South. Where necessary, the militaries of Western states have also been used as “enforcers of liberal peace”, as done in Iraq and Afghanistan (de Coning, 2018).

Undeniably, SSR and peacebuilding programmes try to create a liberal state, where democracy, respect for human rights, enforcement of the rule of law, representative institutions, periodic elections, press freedom and free-market economy prevail (Barnett et al., 2007, p. 51). Some commentators have criticised this model of peacebuilding as neo-colonialist. Some of the criticisms are discussed later in the essay.

When it comes to the operational level, SSR covers most of the activities in five key areas (Wulf, 2004). The first category of SSR deals with the assessment of SSR strategies and the policies of national security. The second is the judicial system that encompasses prison issues and judicial institutions of national defence, police and other departments (GSDRC, 2008). The third category is related to civil management and democratic institutions (parliament, civil society and other executive departments. Fourth category is related to the post-conflict situation such as the process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), control of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and transitional justice. Lastly, the fifth category is about child protection and dealing with gender issues. To a greater extent, there is a consensus that in post-conflict scenarios, SSR's process plays a pivotal role in contributing to peacebuilding efforts. In a wider context, it helps economically, politically, socially and institutionally to peacebuilding. In economic contribution it shows how to consume the resources of the society for security sector properly; social contribution provides assurance of people safety that they are safe, and their lives are not in danger anymore; political contribution means the increasing role of people over security institutions; and institutional contribution means increasing number of professionals in the security sector (Wulf, 2004).

Security sector reform is considered one of the very popular approaches to deal with some key challenges in post-conflict peacebuilding environments. However, the practitioners of SSR might

remain puzzled when it comes to implementing the concept more efficiently. Nevertheless, due to the previous experiences, a number of lessons can be learned from the process of SSR and can be translated into practical experiences. Some literature is focusing on improving in theory and practices of SSR. Most of the studies show that SSR mainly happens in less favourable and challenging conditions. One of the major issues in liberal peacebuilding in Afghanistan is the lack of cohesion among donor states while contributing in Afghanistan, such as Germany doing their thing, Canada is dealing the issue in their own and other states.

3.2 Gap in the Literature Review and Critiques

The idea of Security Sector Reform and Post-conflict Peacebuilding in Afghanistan have been critiqued in many ways. The concept of SSR and post-conflict peacebuilding has drawn criticism in terms of theoretical underpinning, objectives, means, techniques and outcome. The idea of post-conflict peacebuilding is mainly critiqued due to its conceptual and empirical vagueness. One of the significant issues with the means some believe that the concept of SSR and peacebuilding are focusing on short term, instead of addressing the strategic matter (Donais, 2018). The rationale behind this argument is that the idea is limited to the successful execution of their planned activities and the donor states are having their own goals and mostly not sharing common interests. It is also believed that the concept is state-centric and elite strategy prescription. Moreover, the tenet of the practice of the concepts involving the focus of practice and research of the earlier models of peace-building and SSR which they identify as too state-centric, with a direct concentration (Jackson and Bakrania, 2018).

Another confusion is regarding the concept, the critics of this concept believe that there is an ambiguity while using the term peacebuilding, because most of the times it is used as a synonym for conflict resolution, prevention and preventive diplomacy (Barnett et al., 2007). Many criticise the theoretical underpinning of the two concepts due to the contrast in theory and practice. For instance, David Chandler says that both concepts start with the liberal, however, both ended up with the realist manner of consent. He concludes the concept with a less optimistic tone (Holanda Maschietto, 2019). Taking Afghanistan as an example, it incited that for the purpose of defeating the Taliban, western states including the US supported a number of local militia commanders (warlords) (Mac Ginty, 2011).

Like many other post-conflict peacebuilding literatures, there is also a gap of security sector reform and post-conflict peacebuilding in Afghanistan. Looking at the current literature on the topic, there are two major gaps in it. First is that it is not mentioned in most of the articles that peace and war are working in parallel and both are interconnected in the case of Afghanistan. To further analyse it is said

that the Taliban and other insurgent groups believe that with the withdrawal of US and NATO troops, they can easily win the war through force and this is one of the core reasons in the Afghan conflicts. It is also not clearly mentioned in many writings that for the purpose of sustaining durable peace in Afghanistan, it is vital that fundamental reforms are vital in the Afghan National Security and Defence Forces (ANSDF). This rationale means that in order to maintain post-conflict peace in the country ANSDF must be ready for war and must have the strength to show that they win the war by fighting Taliban and insurgents. If the Taliban and other insurgents are sure that they can defeat the Afghan forces on the battlefield, it is very unlikely that they will come to the negotiating table to solve the Afghan issue. Moreover, previous literature talked about the Disarmament, Demoralization and Reintegration (DDR), in Afghanistan that it was one of the primary agendas for western countries in post-Taliban regime. However, the literature is missing that what were the drawbacks of this process. It is without any doubt that DDR is playing a crucial role in the post-conflict peacebuilding; however, in a country like Afghanistan it has dire consequences as well. My main argument in this section that I will work on during my thesis is to fill the gap that how disarmament was not effective in Afghanistan.

The second issue that the literature is missing and not well portrayed in post-conflict peacebuilding in Afghanistan is that the Heart and Mind strategy failure in the Afghan conflict and particularly its relevance with the security forces of Afghanistan. Anti ANSDF media campaigns also played a role in the failure of this strategy.

One of the issues that the previous literature has not explained to a greater extent is that role of peace spoilers are not mentioned that how in post-conflict peacebuilding situation it can derail the peace process and what are their motives behind it. There is a potential lack in this area that is missing the connection between post-conflict peacebuilding and peace spoilers, and in this sphere, a potential lack can be filled while writing the thesis.

3.3 Research Methodology and Design

This research is using a qualitative approach in analysing security sector reform and post-conflict peacebuilding in Afghanistan on the theoretical framework of liberalism. This thesis utilizes a qualitative methodology based on case study and explanatory approaches to write up significant findings and discussions. This methodology will be used to interpret a comprehensive analysis of Afghanistan's perspectives on the Security Sector Reform in Post Conflict Peacebuilding. The reason for choosing mode is because it is relatively flexible in nature. For instance, if the collected data is found to be not useful, then I could relatively easily change the setting to achieve the desired goals. It

will further allow me to choose a broad area of investigation for getting the right information.

Moreover, the proposes I will analyse secondary data to strengthen the result of this study. Extensive literature from books, articles, journals, and newspapers will be collected. It will be systematically organized, interpreted, analysed, and communicated to make recommendations for addressing the problem under study (Tracy, 2013).

Event Data Analysis (EDA), or qualitative content (documentary) analysis, will also be used to examine the perception through media and examine the validity of the secondary data in a period (McCaston, 2005). For that, I will use several Afghanistan mainstream media and some international media outlets. This study will use Afghanistan and International media due to its objective of understanding media perception on Security Sector Reform and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding. To Conclude, this research aims to capture different dimensions of Security Sector Reform. Qualitative analysis will examine the impact of international assistance and peace programmes to provide a better understanding of gains in the SSR sector and its impacts of Post-Conflict Peacebuilding.

This thesis is an explanatory case study of the SSR and Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan. Case study approach is important for understanding, executing, and evaluating research. The research design identifies that concepts and theories such as; liberal peace theory and post-conflict peacebuilding in a country like Afghanistan is very important however, it faces challenges as well, and it have a practical function in the process of knowledge generation because they provide the loci for research programs and the structure assumed by scientific discourse (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). This case study mainly describes three ideas: The SSR in Afghanistan; Post-conflict Peaceful and Peace Spoilers in Afghanistan and US and NATO and its impact on SSR of Afghanistan. Four approaches are used to generate, analyse and present research data. First, document survey and analyses of Security Sector Reform and Post Conflict Peacebuilding in Afghanistan to thrive. Thereafter, a content analysis of the characteristics of the insurgency typified by the Taliban and other insurgents.

3.4 Justification for the Use of the Qualitative Approach in this thesis and case study

The qualitative method is a broad phrase that refers to the gathering, analysis, and interpretation of data from interviews, participant observations, and documents in order to comprehend and characterise the meanings, relationships, and patterns of a phenomenon under investigation (Tracy, 2013). The qualitative paradigm is based on an idealist worldview that claims there is no single reality, but rather

various realities based on one's creation or interpretation of it (Smith, 1983). It is founded on the idea that an inquirer delivers an interpretation of a phenomenon based on the interpretations of others. Examining a phenomenon using a qualitative research approach allows for the interweaving of different viewpoints and perspectives to produce a study that is interesting, appealing, and valuable (Tracy, 2013). Because this study does not use primary data and instead depends solely on secondary data, a deductive technique that allows for second-order interpretations (constructing explanations from existing explanations and viewpoints) is used to arrive at the study's conclusions.

Conger (1998) justified the choice of qualitative over quantitative methods by stating that the latter is insufficient to thoroughly explore complex phenomena. He went on to say that, when used appropriately, qualitative methods have significant advantages over quantitative methods. More opportunity to explore phenomena in considerable depth and breadth; flexibility to identify and detect unforeseen phenomena during the research; ability to examine processes more effectively; and more opportunities to explore and be contextually receptive to essential research elements.

Similarly, Tracy (2013:5) summarises the advantages of qualitative research to include the following: "it is rich and holistic; provides understanding of a sustained process; interprets participant viewpoints and stories; preserves the chronological flow, documenting what events lead to what consequences, and explaining why this chronology may have occurred; celebrates how research representations (reports, articles, performances) constitute reality and affect the questions we can ask and what we can know; illustrates how a multitude of interpretations are possible, and how some are more theoretically compelling, morally significant, or practically important than others."

As a result of the qualitative methodology used in this case study, the researcher was able to:

- Take a holistic view of the concept of SSR and post-conflict peacebuilding.
- Examine relationships between the SSR and peacebuilding and analyse that how the US and NATO withdrawal will impact the concepts.
- Be aware and responsively incorporate ethical concerns into the study.

4 Chapter 4: Security Sector Reform and Post Conflict Peacebuilding

4.1 Peacebuilding and its Aliases

Peacebuilding often refers to foreign intervention taken by outsiders envisioned to avoid the possibility that a state will enter or return to the conflict. However, different organizations use different terms for the concept linked to but always not substitutes with peacebuilding. Moreover, few use the concept, peacebuilding in different modes. Peacebuilding is the “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid a relapse into conflict” (UN, 1992). As Charles call notes that the UN introduced two significant clarifications. First is that peacebuilding is not confined to the removal of conflict; balance of threat of force leads to achieving peace and stability. It encompasses the formation of a “positive peace” the elimination of the core reasons of the armed conflict so that the actors are no longer able to use the violence to reconcile their differences. Second, is the rational consequence of the first is that the same technologies can be used in building peace can be used by the societies in post-conflict situations to avoid any further conflict. Therefore, it can be conflict prevention as well (Call, 2015).

4.2 Dimensions of Peacebuilding

When it comes to the dimensions of peacebuilding for investigative reasons, it can be divided into three categories to recognise the layers of post-conflict peacebuilding. First is stability creation; in this phase, the primary aim is to strengthen stability and stop ex-combatant from going back to the war. In the restoration of peace, it is very significant to discourage the previous fighters from returning to the fight against state security forces. Peacebuilding remains an essential aspect of peacekeeping, and in this regard, it is vital to have a monitoring policy for combatants. In order to reach the end of peacebuilding, some activities are necessary, such as; disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), control of all kinds of weapons and security sector reform. In the long run, it is also vital to avoid using toys in kids that resemble weapons. However, it is mandatory to accept the ex-combatants in society and give them social recognitions and provide them economic opportunities for sustaining peace.

Second is the restoration or rebuilding of the state functions to provide basic public goods and ensure the rule of law. The main activity of a state is to provide public goods to the citizens; however, in post-conflict situations, many states cannot provide those essential goods. Consequently, donors or peacebuilders play the role of an alternative to the state and in many areas, they provide such goods to

the citizens. They also offer technical assistants and play their part in infrastructural projects such as; building roads, railway links, health and educational centres, and many more. As international actors are not staying for a long time and at the end, it is the state responsible for providing basic goods to its citizens; however, the donors provide capacity-building assistance. State legitimacy is very significant in peacebuilding.

The third dimension is about the economic development of the society, and it is more about creating harmony and trust among all the groups. Moreover, this section, it is about the capacity building of a society in order to administer conflict peacefully in a post-conflict scenario. It is a bit longer approach, and in the end, a number of activities are taking place in it such as trauma, distress advising, community-level dialogue, mediation, transitional justice, strengthening civil societies, promoting human rights, increasing awareness regarding other social issues such as girls education, women rights and providing relief at the grassroots level to the citizens. It is not only about promoting peace culture, but it is also about developing civil societies and other organizations that have the ability to protect people's interests and can check the ability of state behaviour and functions. It is now clear that civil society is not necessary only in theory but in practice as well. There has been much support for civil society organizations by international governments and organizations in recent years. This shift in the peacebuilding and security sector reforms are becoming more global as it is believed that peacebuilding and SSR happen through foreign interventions and international support; however, the shift happens that it is clear that peace has to come within so that the donor states and organizations only support them. It is the combination of both internal and external actors, and the support has increased massively for the civil society organizations. A local initiative of peacebuilding such as; people on the roads for peace and advocacy campaigns contributing to the peace (Barnett, 2007).

4.3 The Roles of SSR in Peacebuilding

The roles of Security Sector Reform in post-conflict peacebuilding can be conferred with the framework of three levels of peacebuilding concept that are consolidation, stabilisation and transitional. However, looking at these three phases still, there is an overlap gap among them and there are no additional stages following one another with a given goals or boundaries (Accord, 2015). Further analysing these stages as the name stabilisation shows that it is the first stage and mostly happens in post-conflict or it happens in post ceasefire settlement. When peacebuilding is planned properly through stronger national capacity, in that case, it provides more effective conflict prevention and achieves sustainable peace. Putting it in the framework of SSR here involves establishing a favourable environment of security, as the primary objective of stabilisation is assuring the physical

security of both state and individual and it is critical in this phase and consequent stages of the peacebuilding (Accord, 2015).

The second stage is the transition from conflict to development, in which often there is a selection of transitional government. This is a difficult process because all the parties need to agree on the transitional government that who will lead it, and how the power of transfer will take place. Experiences show that peacebuilding is most effective at leveraging and supporting SSR during the transitional phase, which often involves selecting a transitional government, leading to the election of a government under participatory constitutionalism, when it is not overly focused on the role of intervention forces providing security services. Therefore, it is significant to focus on building the capacity of local (security and justice) sectors that can help to play their role in building peace. For example, in 2002, after the US invasion of Afghanistan, an agreement took place in Bonn. It was decided that transitional government will take place through which the different parties can take place in the discussion regarding the country's future. One of the core aims of the talks was the selection of the transitional government in the post-Taliban regime. The agreement's mandate was to finish the past miseries and work together for a better future for the country. It was mentioned that security is significant in achieving peace. It was decided that international troops will be deployed to Afghanistan to assist the newly elected interim government (Accord, 2015).

The next phase is consolidation, which is a long-term phase and it lasts from a decade to few decades because it depends on the circumstances of how it goes. Peacebuilding is a long-term process constrained by short-term realities. In this phase, SSR plays three significant roles:

First, it empowers the state's safety and within that protection of territory and territorial integrity, sovereignty and the rule of law. This empowerment of state sovereignty is necessary because it builds confidence among the people that their rights are protected and living in a safe and secure environment.

Second, during the recovery period of fragile or failed States, SSR can force a new national security strategy and craft the new security architecture looking to the security situation.

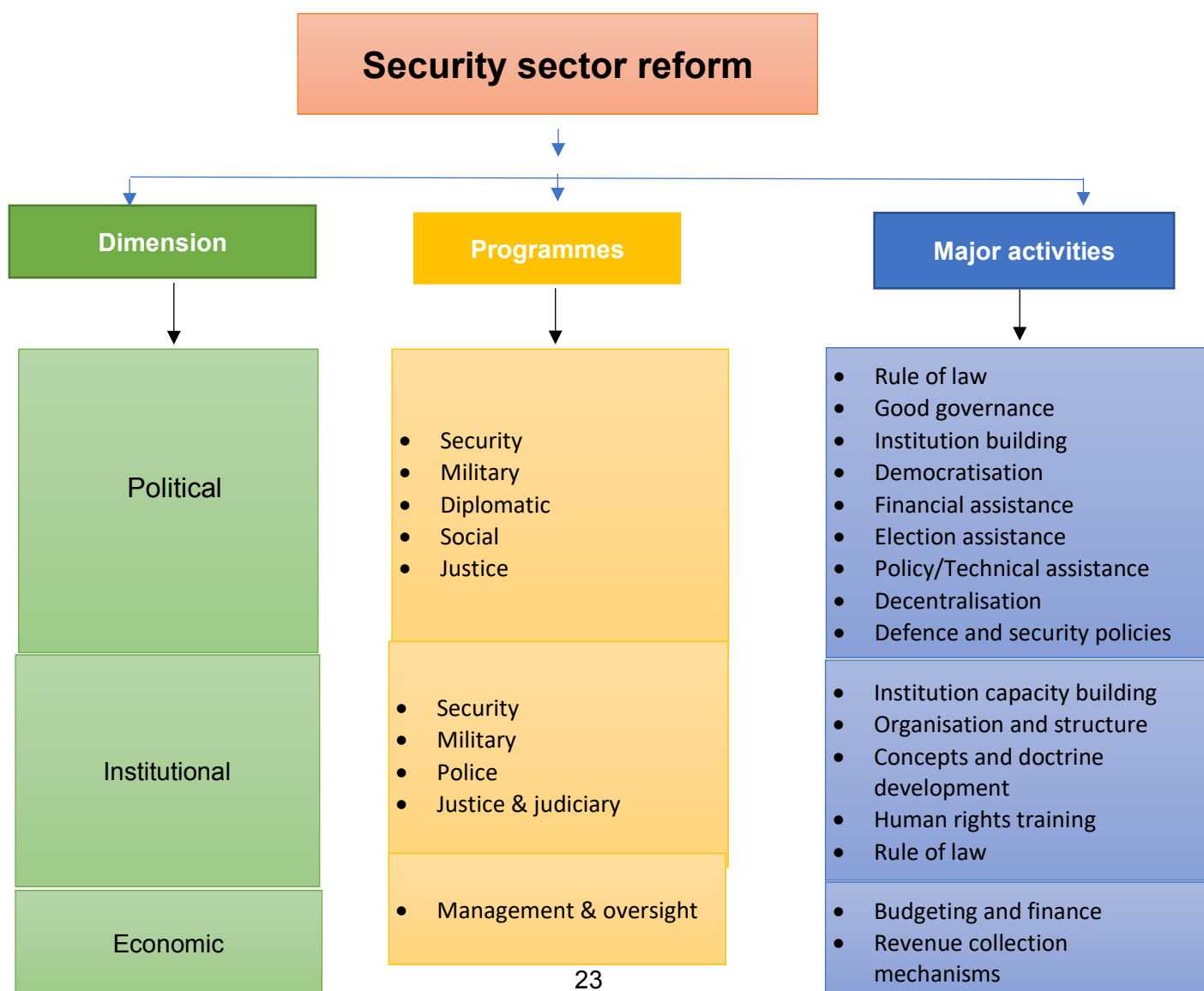
Third, it assesses the overlap in the security institutions and outlines the possible threats.

It is based on more practicality because it evaluates how the state economic situations can provide the resources required to address the threats and gaps. Lastly, as a tool of conflict transformation, SSR addresses some key challenges such as; economic and social marginalisation, discrimination against minorities and derived societies and inequality that are mostly the root causes of greed, violence, and

grievance. For instance, it can address the issue of gender inequality in different sectors, particularly in the recruitment process of security institutions. It is a systematic process and lasts for a more extended period (Accord, 2015).

4.4 SSR and Peacebuilding: Key Activities and the Elements

A number of reasons for conflict result in several activities that include the scopes of peacebuilding and SSR. These activities and elements can help the post-conflict societies recover from fragility and instability and overcome repression and authoritarianism. The plans and activities of SSR and peacebuilding as grouped are not comprehensive. These activities differ from country to country and depend on how international and local actors are approaching them. Political will and resources are also affecting these activities. Many of the programs and activities of both concepts (peacebuilding and SSR) overlap and complement each other. Both concepts are having their dimensions, major activities and programs that will be shown below.



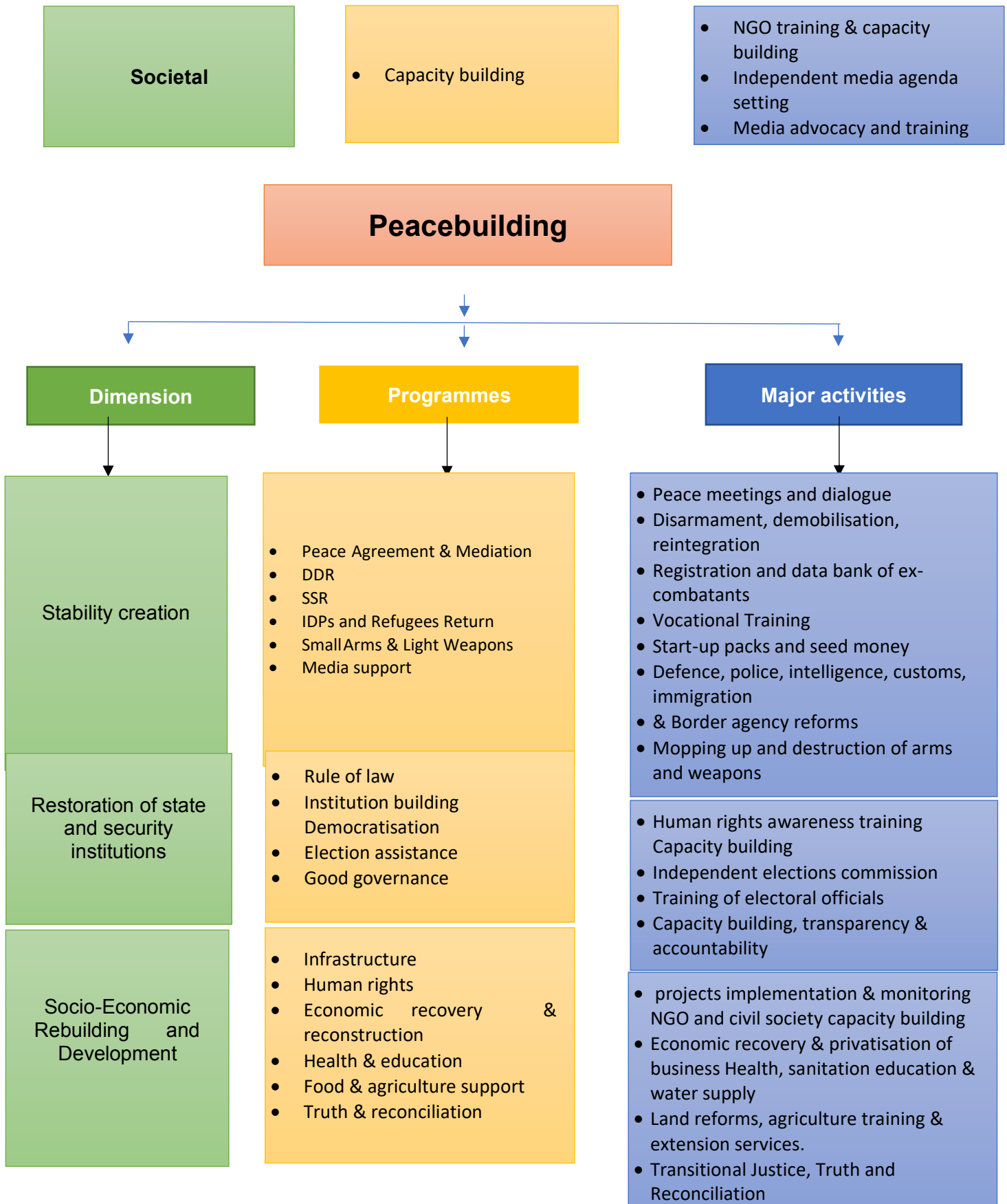


Chart #:1 and 2 SSR and Peacebuilding Concepts

Sources: Barnett, et al, *Peacebuilding: What is in a Name?* Global Governance (13), 2007, p.51.

The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) Peacebuilding Handbook, (First Edition, 2013, p.28.

Chapter 1, *The security sector reform agenda*, The Adelphi Papers, 2002, 41:344, 13-31,

4.5 The Challenges of Post-Conflict Peacebuilding and Security Sector Reform

Looking at the history of Afghanistan since the 1970's there are a lot of transitions of power, mostly by force. These transitions have different type of governments, from absolute monarchy to republic, from a communist system to Mujahedeen and from the Taliban regime to a democratic system (Allchin, 2021).

It is always challenging to talk about the challenges of SSR and post-conflict peacebuilding. Among other issues, the most noticeable is the contrast in theory and practice because the results on the ground are different and always not the ones that are expected. It is also clear that there is a lack of consensus on an integrated, comprehensive approach. Moreover, there is a lack of knowledge and capacity in the country and among donor states. More agencies and institutions engage in the process that is a challenge and opportunity at the same (DCAF, 2015).

Besides, it is necessary to have a stable economy and finance the security sector to sustain long-term peace. Whereas a country like Afghanistan, which is dependent on foreign aids, always struggles to present a proper budget for improving the equipment of her troops in the fight against opponents. As post-conflict peacebuilding and SSR are both political phenomena and take long-term approaches to implement them. It is believed that the concepts are closely related to the political process and certainly have control and ownership are deeply tied into a political relationship, power, and society. Both approaches face impediments mostly related to the diversity of involved actors, their priorities, interests, lack of coordination, sustainable funding, method, and implementation strategies. One of the critical challenges of SSR and post-conflict peacebuilding depenalizations is their higher expectations and broad agendas. In this context, there is less focused on that what can be done rather than what should be done or, in other words, "can do things" than "to do things," which often makes the situation more complex and theoretical instead of being practical (Wilcke, 2008).

Moreover, local knowledge, need is primary and necessary, which is inadequate and insufficient in this perspective. For instance, in the case of Afghanistan, after the fall of the Taliban regime, the US

and allies ignored the amalgamation of the Taliban to the new interim government of Afghanistan, and less attention was paid to the state-building process (Lister, 2007). Besides, for the sustainable development of the country and security sectors, a long-term self-sufficiency approach was necessary rather than relying on foreign aids. In the post-Taliban regime, there was ambiguity in terms of state-building and peacebuilding. A mixture of unrealistic techniques, misunderstanding local and historical perspectives, poor coordination, false assurances, wrong assumptions, and planning failures led to post-conflict disorder, limiting the security sector reform in Afghanistan within the timeframe set by the US and international partners (Vendrell, 2012).

Moreover, for the donors, the key role is to help those people and groups who shares those interests and who see more accountable and more professional, and more responsive security forces and to be able to do that to provide them the tools within the organisation the political supporters and outside and inside the security sector the executive the political parties to understand and to work with those bodies. The key element of SSR is to move beyond what the key issues are to look at what the proponents, issues, and technical requirements are but rather to figure out what the tools are that can empower the people that need to be supported. When it comes to poor coordination, the assisting countries have their national interests and that competing interests create a vacuum and that poor understanding among states signals mixed messages to the recipient country and creates an environment of distrust and turmoil. Implementing incoherent and mostly linear approaches such as financing training programs without thorough analysis and assessment of how these programs fit in the local context and whether these initiatives are productive. Likewise, providing funds for economic activities and growth without comprehensive long-term investment initiatives and a check and balance system could also negatively affect (Coning, 2018).

Another obstacle is the short-term approach that hinders the implementation of peacebuilding and SSR in a post-conflict situation. As SSR and post-conflict peacebuilding are a complex process, it needs a long-term commitment and engagement. In 2015, the UN reviewed the peacebuilding architecture (PBA) and realized that the devoted budget to peacebuilding was not enough. Even after that, the budget is still limited, and it is based on a short-term approach. Thus, to make it efficient, additional long-term funding will play a critical role in making it successful (Coning, 2018).

Another challenge is the lack of local ownership because it's a long-term process and locals or recipient involvement is crucial for its success. However, to a greater extent, there is a lack of capacity among locals and very few local people in many post-conflict countries can play an effective role in the process of state-building. Local ownership gets into the relationship between Local international

ownership and the relationship between the international community and local actors (Peake, 2009). There is an implicit assumption within the framework of SSR that the goals and motives are shared by both locals and internationals particularly in the context of post-conflict peacebuilding. In a post-conflict environment mostly, the countries are struggling with the economy and relying on foreign aids. Moreover, sustainability of the gains and reviving the economies are other challenges that can hinder the success of the concepts. In order to make the country's institutions self-sufficient, it is vital to have a good economy that can contribute to the financial sector (Rosenberger, 2019). A country like Afghanistan faces the challenge of economic instability and reliance on foreign aids. Political will is another challenge that is to a greater extent. It is necessary to realise that the holistic vision of SSR currently exists and allocate resources and people to implement it in the way it is required (Peake, 2009).

Most Common Tensions/ Frictions in SSR concept

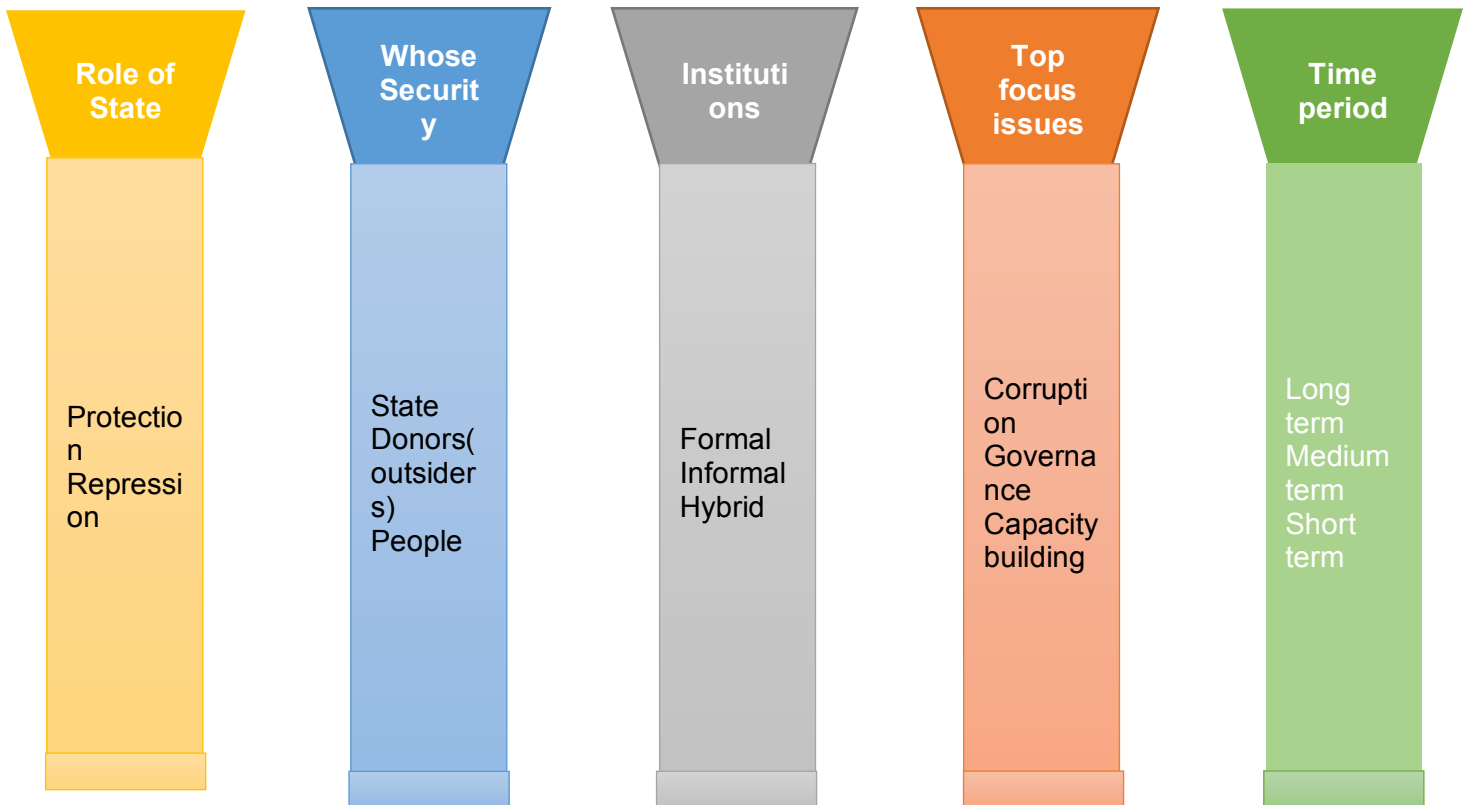


Diagram #:1 Most Common Tensions/ Frictions in SSR concept

Source: presented in an online event titled 'Security Sector Reform as a Strategic Policy Tool' initiated by Dutch Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fa6sroQnSNA>

4.6 Making Peacebuilding More Effective

Peacebuilding is considered a complex process, mostly missing the root causes of the conflict and not finding long-term solutions. Support for the concept has grown a lot in the last two decades around the globe. However, many times it ends without effective engagements. These undesirable approaches divert people from its core objectives of assisting countries and their citizens to maintain the rule of law and peace. By monitoring progress and better planning, states can build longer-term solutions that are exceptionally designed with their needs. It improves peacebuilding tactics, preparations and skills to deal with possible challenges (Költzow,2013). In the mentioned concept of peacebuilding, there is no linear route towards peacebuilding. More capacity and coherence in policy approaches are significant in its success. In this sense, collaboration with donor states, NGOs, and civil societies is necessary to ensure that common people are directly affected by the conflict benefitting from the peacebuilding approach. Looking at the priorities of local people, it is pivotal that peacebuilding must not show that their preferences are included in the context of the broader plan of the specific country. External support always remains on the top of the peacebuilding agenda. The concept of peacebuilding is a long-term phenomenon obliged by short-term realities. National consensus also helps in achieving peacebuilding (Donais,2014).

There are two kinds of peace and both are interlinked with another and mostly one leads to another. First is negative peace, which means stopping the violence that is happening due to the conflict. The second is positive peace, in which the core aim is to create a wave of long-term peace. For the purpose of creating lasting peace, individual positive is one of the steps in which there is a process to educate or train the people to opt for nonviolent behaviour instead of selecting violence. It is about changing the mindset of individuals and making commitments for peace. The second stage is positive structural peace that focuses on changing laws that favours injustice to the laws that support justice. In this stage, it means building an environment that creates opportunities for all. The third stage is positive cultural peace, in which transformation is taking place from a culture of violence and discrimination to a culture of harmony, justice and equality (Galtung, 1969).

Then to make peacebuilding more effective, lasting and sustainable peace is necessary. According to Johan Galtung, for lasting peace, there are six key terms respect for human rights, a system, justice, equality, communications, cooperation, and infrastructure, necessary for a peace that lasts (Galtung, 1969). Here we can see a parallel between the UN idea that what was needed for cultural peace is that cultural peace is needed for lasting peace. Cooperation is mandatory from all sides (including actors)

for sustainable peace (Johnson, 2012). Political leadership also matters because sometimes it can be a hurdle in achieving lasting peace and there can be multiple reasons behind that, such as personal interest, hunger for power and other selfish reasons (Mahmoud, 2019).

To conclude, it can be said that just the idea of a reduction in violence or stopping it does not work; the involved actors must work to create long-lasting peace. To achieve it is vital to support human rights and justice. It is more about inclusiveness because it focuses on the involvement of different stockholders in peacebuilding. A democratic system and culture of peace are required for lasting peace.

5 Chapter 5: The Roles of Security Sector Reform in post-conflict Peacebuilding: A Case Study of National Police in Afghanistan

5.1 Introduction

Afghanistan is a landlocked country with multiple ethnic groups situated between South-Central Asia and considered as the heart of Asia due to its geographical location. Historically major powers invaded the country a couple of times; however, none of those powers succeeded in controlling Afghanistan. The mountainous landscape made it difficult for outsiders to get victory in the country. Modern-day Afghanistan gained independence in 1919, and the country has experienced different types of government and invasions in modern history. In 1979 the country was invaded by the Soviet Union, and at the beginning of the 21st century Taliban regime was overthrown by the US and its allies, and a new era started in the country. The concepts of peacebuilding and SSR commenced effectively after the Taliban regime soon after the US invasion. In 2002, an interim government was selected for two years and then, for the first time in the country's history, elections were held with the assistance of the US and other allies (cfr, 2020).

Previously security sector reform (SSR) was mostly confined to military forces. After the cold war, the concept was expanded to the police sector and intelligence agencies. Police reform is still not the top priority for SSR; however, it can play a more significant role in peacebuilding in post-conflict states. The idea of post-conflict may differ among scholars and practitioners; however, one thing that is common is that it is the phase that is happening after conflict; although still, the violence may be happening, the intensity is not that high. It is mostly followed by a mutual peace agreement between conflicting parties, where they are showing their commitments for reconstruction. Great powers and other external actors play a significant role in post-conflict peacebuilding (Friesendorf 2011).

5.2 Historical Background

The deteriorating security situation of Afghanistan started after the military coup of 1978 that killed Sardar Dawood Khan and the pro-soviet government came into power under Nur Muhammad Taraki. Later on, the Soviet invasion of 1979 further completed the situation of Afghanistan and became a battleground for regional and great powers. The Taliban regime came into power in 1996 and controlled most part of the country between 1996 and 2011 (BBC, 2019).

The process and efforts of Security Sector Reform (SSR) began soon after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2011. The first official program that were launched at a G8 donors meeting held in spring 2001, in

Geneva. The core theme of the meeting was categorization of SSR into five areas and it was decided that each leading donor state will follow up the process and progress of their respective areas (DCAF, 2015).

The Bonn Agreement held in 2001 by the UN to end the long catastrophic conflict in Afghanistan and promote peace and stability, initiate national reconciliation, and ensure respect for human rights in the country. It was the first-ever such agreement after the fall Taliban regime for initiating state-building in post-conflict Afghanistan (UNSC,2001).

In 2006, another key conference was held in London, sketching a comprehensive post-conflict reconstruction program that includes the structure for Afghanistan's security sector reform, which can promote lasting peace in the country. The conference's main aim was to strengthen the partnership between the international community and Afghanistan, which can bring a positive impact on the livelihood of Afghans and contribute to the three layers of security (national, regional and global). Keeping in mind that it is not yet assured that the period of transition and newly elected Afghan government and parliament is not fully capable of maintaining peace as required, international cooperation is vital to address the challenges in the security sectors of the country (Howells, 2006).

Primarily, a number of patron countries took charge of the security sector reform process in Afghanistan. Most notably, the United States leading military reform, Japan leading the process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), the United Kingdom leading in the fight against narcotics and Germany working on police reform. Nevertheless, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) started training Afghan National Security and Defence Forces (ANSDF). In 2009, NATO launched a training mission for Afghanistan under which NATO troops will train Afghan National Army (ANA) and providing professional training to Afghan National Police (ANP). It was aimed to train ANA and ANP and monitor their progress in close cooperation with Interior and Defence Ministries (DCAF, 2015).

During the 2010 NATO summit, it was decided that by 2014 Afghan forces will take full responsibility for the country's security. However, NATO troops will assist Afghan security forces when necessary (Traynor, 2010). In 2015 the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) was initiated, following the drawdown of ISAF troops in 2014. The main task of RSM was to provide assistance, train and advice the security forces of Afghanistan. NATO allies supported the intra-Afghan peace talks. They urge both the Taliban leadership and Afghan government to stay committed to their promises and work for a desirable peace. Moreover, NATO believes that reduction in violence is vital for the success of intra-Afghan peace

negotiations. Further, the US and allies remain committed to assist the security forces of Afghanistan financially and provide training to them (NATO, 2021). In 2016 the president of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani issued a decree on the creation of Office for the State Minister on Security Sector Reform and a high officials appointment board of Security and Defence forces. The main aim of the decree was to faster the process of reforms in the security sectors of the country. The decree is subcategorized, which focuses on that how an effective reform process can take place (Joyenda, 2017).

Currently, Afghan security and defence forces are facing a challenging time due to the partial or full withdrawal of the US and NATO troops. This situation sits the country at a critical moment. The government needs to strengthen the existing security departments that could accommodate ex-combatant participation in a better and effective way.

Model Developed for Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan in Bonn Agreement				
Germany	Italy	Japan	UK	USA
Police Reform	Judicial Reform	Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)	Counternarcotics	Military Reform

Chart #: 3 Security Sector Reform Model for Afghanistan after Bonn Agreement
Source: Chart is designed by the author on the base of the text

5.3 Initial Efforts

The country has experienced a long war and has hit by terrorism and civil war. Afghanistan has not had fully equipped and trained police forces. With foreign assistance, things changed for Afghan police, and they were equipped with weapons and ammunition; the US, NATO and other allies helped to develop the forces in training the new recruits (NATO, 2021). Despite many limitations, Afghan forces remain key to the operations in different parts of the country. Four times successful presidential elections held so far and for the first time in the history of Afghanistan peaceful transition of power took place from one elected government to another in 2014. Overall, ANP played a significant role in the elections (cfr,2020).

In the Bonn agreement, it was also decided that a coalition force of partner countries will be created with the name of International Security Assistance Force for a short period of time to support Afghan

police in conducting daily patrols within Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan. ISAF forces accompanied Afghan forces in routine patrols and helped in the process of training ANP. The process of training and assisting gave a moral edge to them and a space to build and improve the bureaucratic system within ANP. ISAF troops were not working with the US, and they were separately working directly with Afghans in assisting ANP (Shanahan,2002). Unlike some other countries, the Afghanistan conflict is really complicated, and a number of internal and external actors are part of it. In post 9/11, western countries worked hard to build a strong and stable Afghan National Security and Defence Forces (ANDSF) for the purpose to defend the country against terrorist threats and stop another outbreak of war. The situation in Afghanistan changed rapidly, and insurgency and terrorism became a threat for the country even during the presence of the US, and NATO troops and many parts of the country became conflict zones (Jalali, 2016). SSR in the Afghanistan post-conflict context was started by the UNSC Resolution 1378 on 14 November, 2001, which condemned the brutal regime of the Taliban and pledged full support for Afghans to replace the Taliban regime and asked that UN member states “provide long term-social assistance for the social and economic reconstruction of Afghanistan” (UNSC, 2001). A number of subsequent summits were held to support the Afghan government that included inclusive agenda for the country, including SSR (UN, 2001).

Building institutional capacity that includes recruitment, training, and equipping as well as regenerating structured, legal, and centralised structures in justice delivery is all part of the security sectors reconstruction. The US initially supported the defence security reform, and Germany assisted police reform. They engaged with local groups such as civil societies, other stakeholders, and the Ministry of Defence and Interior Affairs. Under the umbrella of the Afghan Ministry of Interior, a local police initiative was launched, and the core reason was that the familiarity of those forces with villagers and local people could identify the threat better than outsiders. This effort was to assist counterinsurgency efforts in the country (GCSG, 2015).

Afghan National Police (ANP) take part in diverse activities to protect the people in danger, respond to the injuries and deaths, prevent further damages, and collect evidence from the crime and incident place. ANP tries to keep the rule of law in different parts of the country and avoid crimes. Afghan local police also play a role in deterring violent actors against civilians. In local police initiatives, they are directly engaged with the villagers and local communities and hear the issues of villagers from a local perspective. The positive impact of this approach in peacebuilding is that they (local police) are among the local people and it creates trust in the community. It decreases the level of crimes because they can identify the suspects quickly. Involvement of Local police with the local population is that they can

patrol in the village streets and talk to the people, build trust and confidence. It is a real potential comparative advantage. This mechanism can recognise the potential strengths, weaknesses, self-protection mechanism and empower communities to participate in local ownership.

Besides, local police can assist the military, provide police function in joint missions, and support the military in detecting and arresting terrorists and criminals. It can be said that the local police are a bridge between local people and the military through sharing information. The concepts of SSR and peacebuilding have perhaps succeeded in Afghanistan to some extent in a way it has helped the country to avoid the Taliban from a full or long victory (cfr, 2020). The police department of Afghanistan and its governing bodies provide a noticeable level of security to its citizen; however, there is still a lot needed. The police department has played a significant role in the process of democratisation and elections. The role of the outsiders is pivotal because, in a country like Afghanistan, it is difficult to hold the election peacefully without the Taliban attacks. The efforts made by the UN, the US and allies in security sectors assisted the country in making post-conflict peacebuilding. Economically, both SSR and peacebuilding helped the government to create an environment favourable for investment and business. This has led to a considerable increase in the country's foreign direct investment (FDI) compared to the Taliban regime and the immediate post-Taliban era (All, 2018).

In the initial years, Afghan National Police were facing some basic challenges such as; lack of basic equipment, transportation vehicles, no official training, and corruption in the ministry of interior. Most of the former Mujahideen fighters joined Afghan National Police, and they had that mentality that was not beneficial for efficient policing. As mentioned earlier, Germany took the leading role in ANP reform and started it by launching a number of initiatives to make a favourable environment for essential reforms. The US assistance in police reform was the key as they established a centre in the capital to train police and successively expanded to eight regional training centres. Without any doubt, reforms have taken place in the ANP; however, the overall reform process has been slow down due to some factors. The most notable reform challenges that hindered the process are poor infrastructure, less pay, assurance of backup supply during the fight with insurgents, corruption, lack of trust within top officials and recruitment problems. Training of ANP is crucial; however, it is not the end goal to itself, rather it is mean towards the end. The deployment and of newly trained officers and police to the war zones create a direct fear within the people who are willing to join the ANP. Moreover, the problem of personal relationships and connections are also creating a lack of trust among newly trained police because some of them are deployed to difficult places. In contrast, others are serving in a safer

place, and it is not based on merit, but the deployment is mostly taking place on a personal relationship (Sedra, 2004).

5.4 The US Assistance Program for Afghan National Police

In 2003, the US initiated a program to assist and train Afghan National Police. The program was not to compete with German training or opposing their approach, but it was a more professional program designed for those already serving in ANP. The US built a centre to invite servicemen from all the zones. In that centre, the instructors were from the US and some other countries along with Afghans. There were three main categories of courses, and courses curriculum idea was taken Police Service School in Kosovo (Sedra, 2007). The first course was for eight weeks which was specified to teach basic police skills for literate, a five-week for uneducated police officers, and a 15 days course for experienced officers. Moreover, there were 2 to 4 weeks of training for instructors development. The US program played a significant role in mobilising ANP (Sedra, 2008). However, some challenges hampered the process. In Afghanistan, as most training participants had very little previous study background, it was quite difficult for them to sit in the cemented classrooms and listen to foreign teachers for hours in Kabul's harsh winter and sunny summer without air-conditioned classrooms. Apart from this, some instructors had minimal experience of adult education methods as well. Besides, the translators could not convey the correct message to the trainees due to unfamiliarity with terminologies. Most of the course participants were illiterate and were not able to read and write to memorise things and take incident records (Murray, 2007).

Furthermore, having training issues, there was a lack of understanding of strategic objectives between German and the United States program and lack of funding and poor leadership from the Afghan Ministry of Interior. Afghan government could not pay salaries to the policemen in Kabul, and it created an environment of distrust, and ANP lost confidence in the government (Laurel, 2004).

5.5 ANP Structure and Composition

After the election, an environment more favourable to rebuilding the country with international facilitation. Afghanistan became one of the first countries to benefit from the UN peacebuilding funds set up to assist post-conflict peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan. The top priorities in the countries were to promote the rule of law, institution building, eradicate terrorism and insurgency, national reconciliation and security sector reform. The ANP comprises several diverse bodies working under the command of the Ministry of Interior. These forces are made of the Afghan Uniform Police; their main task is general police responsibilities such as protecting civilians and ensure the rule of law:

Afghan Sarhadi, which stands for border police, Afghan Auxiliary Police, Afghan Local Uniformed Police, Counterterrorism, Nazmi Aama, Counter Narcotics Police (Perito, 2009).

Ministry of Interior of Afghanistan Organisational Structure and Bodies							
Afghan Uniformed Police	Afghan Border Polic/Sarhadi	Afghan National Civil Order Police / Nazmi Aama	Counter Narcotics Police	Counter Terrorism	Afghan Local Uniformed Police	Criminal investigation police	Afghan National Auxiliary Police

Chart #:4 Mol of Afghanistan Organisational Structure and Bodies

Source: Chart is designed by the author on the base of the text

5.6 Challenges

Once Confucius said that “To lead an untrained people to war is to throw them away”. An effective force of ANP is significant from keeping peace and stability in Afghanistan and currently, one of the impediments that ANP is facing is lack of proper training and equipment (IV. William, 2010). Overall, the Afghan case study does not entirely support Wilson's liberal peace theory, but it also does not refute it. What is clear, however, is that complex SSR and peacebuilding mechanisms can be completed with international actors political will, sufficient social resources, and the cooperation and desire of recipients to create peace. However, in Afghan security forces, particularly in ANP, there are some noticeable issues: the politicisation of the police department, lack of familiarity of national police with the constitution, lack of professionalism, and language barrier (Perito, 2009).

ANP is facing capability issues along with internal chronic weak governance and corruption within the ministry of interior. The gaps of ANP can be classified into five major areas; however, these gaps are interlinked with each other. The current gaps can be named as force generation, leadership, air support, operational capability, logistics issue and intelligence. One of the most chronic issues is the appointment and recruitment of policemen for senior positions based on political affiliations and pressures, bribery and favouritism (Jalali,2016). To conclude, the challenges it can be said that ineffectiveness, unprofessionalism and corruption are the lingering issues that ANP has to deal with. These three terms explain the lasting story of ANP, which still remains as stigma over their

performance (Legon,2009).

5.7 Conclusion and Recommendations:

There is a lot that ANP has gained in the initial years after US and NATO intervention in Afghanistan. However, the ANP is failed in many areas to fulfil its primary task such as controlling crimes, providing security to Afghans, stop narcotics flow to other countries and defeating the re-emergence of the insurgent Taliban at the local level (Neuger, 2009; Lindenlaub, 2020).

The ongoing withdrawal of the US and NATO forces has shown that the developments in the security sector reform, particularly in the Afghan National Police sectors, will face tough challenges from the Taliban side and might collapse without foreign assistance in a short period. It is unlikely that the Afghan National Police may sustain the status quo of post-US intervention in Afghanistan. The current withdrawal has demoralised the ANP, and it feels that the current number of the police force is not enough to defend the country against the Taliban (Brown, 2021).

Lack of justice, weak governance, rampant corruption, and crimes are the primary reasons ordinary Afghans see daily, and it increases sympathy for the Taliban. The only possible condition that Afghans will consider the government as legitimate they feel secure and see the rule of law in the country. In the fight against terrorism, professional ANP can play a significant role. Afghan police have a plus point that, unlike Afghan National Army and western troops, they know the ground realities and recognise insurgents and understand what they want (Lindenlaub, 2020).

In this challenging time, several decisions must be taken to make ANP more effective and efficient in post-US withdrawal. First, ANP needs to focus on ensuring the rule of law and providing security to the citizens instead of just fighting the war against counterinsurgency. ANP cannot win hearts and minds, but rather, they lose hearts and minds (Gibbons, 2021).

6 Chapter 6: Part A (US and NATO withdrawal and Spoiling Behaviour of Local and Foreign Actors)

6.1 Overview

This Chapter discusses local and foreign actors as spoilers of Afghan Security Sector Reform and peacebuilding programmes. It provides an analysis of what spoiling in the context of Afghanistan and its post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding is, and how each actor is constituting this impediment. It states the consequences of the activities of the spoilers if allowed to succeed, on the peace process and particularly on the SSR and peacebuilding.

6.2 The Impending United States Forces Withdrawal and the Activities of Spoilers

As the US and NATO withdraw from Afghanistan, it is necessary to address the question of how to deal with the peace spoilers for an understanding of what their motives are and how it could hamper the security sector reform and peacebuilding programmes in the country. There are several potential peace spoilers in Afghanistan that would like to see the peace process and entire nation-building efforts fail and the security sector degenerate to the Mujahedeen (post-USSR) withdrawal era. Arguably, some of the spoilers have intentions to derail the peace process and create an environment of perpetual insecurity and weak central government. The activities may be hinged on the premise that a peaceful and secure Afghanistan may strategically hinder their political and economic interests and could limit their power in the long term if the peace process succeeds. Undoubtedly, fixing conflicts and handling possible risks to peacebuilding present manifold complexities to the international community (USIP, 2021). These include understanding the network of spoilers and their power relations, their approaches that hinder and cause troubles through different ways, and the interests they project and defend.

In the Afghan context, spoilers could be terrorists, warlords, local chiefs, insurgents, minorities, neighbouring governments and other bodies. Spoiling conduct involves the practice of challenging strategies in a struggle to support the hardliners on both sides of the war. On the other hand, spoiling behaviour may also include using non-violent methods- such as government delegation not willing to work genuinely for peacebuilding and intentionally delaying the process even when most citizens favour it (Nilsson, 2011). Another non-violent means is that of opposition to the government not engaging actively in the process with the belief that such tactics might help them in the long run since the government would be under public pressure and take the blame for any increase in violence. Both these scenarios are currently taking place in peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. This antic hampers the security sector reforms in the country as casualties in the conflict mount on both sides and a blame game continues between different interest groups. However, it is also

understandable that war will end when conflicting parties feel that the peace deal is more valuable than the war. Moreover, in a post-conflict peacebuilding scenario, an agreement can remain valid when all parties to the conflict have the same expectations and believe that if they resume the war, they could all be losers (Hartzell, 2009).

Approaching the elimination of spoiling activities through the military means and victory may lead to unsustainable peace because it brings defeat to one side, and it shows that the defeated side would seek more resources and support to pursue its goals militarily, thus derailing the peace process. Taliban considers that they have won the war against the US and its allies and can defeat the Afghan government militarily as well (Kirmani, 2021). Whereas, when peace comes as a result of negotiations and conciliation, it may be more lasting. This is the real dilemma that manifested in the peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. There were concerns that the Taliban prisoners, who the Afghan government freed, may return to the war and start fighting against the Afghan people and government (Ibrahimkhail, 2020).

Understanding the approaches of spoilers, the means employed, and desired ends, including the support they garner are critical in mitigating their activities and accommodating their interests where necessary and possible. However, the idea of spoilers does not necessarily mean they are all against conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Also, the existence of spoilers does not inevitably lead to a peace process destined to flop (Newman, 2006). Spoilers, in the final analysis is about interests and how much can be protected through negotiation and conciliation without a recourse to violent conflict that brought down the country in the first place.

A question could be asked about what the best way is to end the Afghan conflict without a resurgence, especially with actors who would be willing to go back to the trenches in the pursuit of their interests. The obvious answer would be that the successful reduction of violence and peacebuilding requires all stakeholders' forgiveness, accommodation, and integration into the nation-building programmes and processes. This could involve provincial and national stakeholder conferences to agree on programme content and ways of implementation, mapping out the previous activities of spoilers and accommodating them in the system (social, political, economic and security).

Specifically, determining peace spoilers in Afghanistan is complex and debatable as it depends on the person one asks. For instance, the government will blame the Taliban, some regional countries and a few other groups. However, if the same question is posed to the Taliban and their supporters, obviously, they will blame the Afghan government for sabotaging peace talks. Their main narrative is

that the current government leadership is not willing to leave power. Therefore, in their opinion, the political leadership in Kabul is the main hurdle toward nation-building, of which SSR and peacebuilding are essential components (Editorials, 2021). Nonetheless, the reality on the ground and for academic discourse, the interest groups that constitute spoilers to the SSR and peacebuilding process in Afghanistan could be broadly categorised into the following:

6.3 The Taliban:

The war in Afghanistan, which ensued after the 9/11 US invasion, is now the longest in US history. Paradoxically, the toppling of the Taliban regime has brought more bloodshed than peace to Afghanistan. During the Taliban regime, international terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and its leader Osama Bin Laden were sheltered and provided safe haven. Since the US and its allies removed the Taliban regime, the latter has been in a continuous war against the Afghan government and foreign troops. However, the intensity of the fight in Afghanistan has changed over time. The level of violence is massive, and a considerable number of Afghan security forces and ordinary citizens have lost their lives. Nonetheless, after fighting for 20 years, it is only fair to admit that the US and its allies have achieved a lot regarding women rights, including girl child education and creating democratic institutions and government required for the liberal peacebuilding project. However, very little has been achieved in defeating the Taliban (Roggio, 2021). The current situation in the country is problematic and undeniably, the Taliban control a vast area that allows them to run their network. It appears that there are no sincere steps taken by the Taliban to end the current state of insecurity in the country. Their strategy seems to wait out the Americans and the allied forces so as to attain their goals of regaining power.

One of the rationales that the Taliban are spoilers to the peacebuilding talks and focusing on war is that they consider getting military victory over the Afghan government and defeating the Afghan defence and security forces in the battleground (Jomhur ,2020). The Taliban are using extremist techniques such as; destroying schools, roads, bridges and other state infrastructure in the fight against the Afghan government and the people (Saif, 2021). However, to a greater extent, it is the international community that gave political recognition to them. Taliban are fighting a war not only against Afghan forces, but civilians are the primary victims of it. Currently, many Islamic scholars worldwide called on the Taliban that this war is unjustified according to Islam. (Reference) There is no Islamic justification for extending the war in Afghanistan. Many consider that this is an implemented agenda over the Taliban to spoil the peace talks with the Afghan government and use destructive techniques to maximise their pressure over the Afghan government (Radpoor, 2021). Such acts of violence show

that the Taliban are unwilling to cooperate with the Afghan government in the peace process and believe in military victory over the Afghan government (Jomhur, 2020).

The Taliban uses terminologies like puppet government of the West and also (Kabul administration) instead of Kabul government (Kermani, 2021). However, at the same time, it is believed that the Taliban is getting external support from different states in the region, and they have safe havens in Pakistan. The Afghan government has repeatedly said that the Taliban is getting foreign backing and strong connections with some states (Haider, 2021). During a lecture at Kabul University, the Afghan President raised the question: can the Taliban cut off their ties with their sponsors or not? The Taliban has fought a long war and still fighting, and ordinary citizens are suffering the most (Arg, President Ghani lecture, 2021). However, during a short ceasefire when the Taliban came to the cities and met with the people, and no hostility was shown towards them. Women, children, elders, students and others met them. However, they did not respect the terms of the ceasefire and returned to the battlefield. Therefore, both the government and many others believe that they are not sincere in peace negotiations (Arg, President Ghani lecture, 2021).

The dilemma and changing policies of the US administrations arguably, has given a psychological boost in the long run to the Taliban. The Taliban apparently feels that if all the US and allied strategies cannot defeat them, even if they are spoilers of the peace process, it is not a lost game to them. Unlike the government, the Taliban do not have conventional warfare weapons such as tanks, jets, or heavy artillery. However, they have local legitimacy and credibility more than the government, which is why they are using it as a bargaining chip with the US and the Afghan government. One of the examples of local legitimacy for the Taliban is their popularity among local farmers who are getting benefits from opium production as it creates a win-win situation for the Taliban and the locals. The Taliban makes money as usher or zakat (tax) from opium production. If there is peace and the central government exerts control over the entire country, opium production would cease since bilateral and multilateral relations with the US and the West would outlaw such criminality. Therefore, the Taliban are not in favour of such peace, which would harm their interests in the long term (Hindukosh, 2021).

Another reason why the Taliban are peace spoilers is that they believe that the Afghan government has lost its legitimacy and there is anarchy in different parts of the country. Therefore, the Afghan Taliban cannot believe that it is possible to talk to and reach an agreement with such a government that does not have control over its territory. Without doubt, Afghanistan has a strong tribal system. Warlords and tribal chiefs play a fundamental role in shaping local politics. In many cases, people prefer their local Jirga (decision making) system instead of the government judicial system due to lack of

transparency and corruption. Recently, in many parts of the country, local warlords have challenged the central government through their militias, and it strengthens the Taliban logic that the central government is weak, and it would be not very meaningful to talk to them (Behzan: Sarwar, 2021). Therefore, they are fighting or, in other words spoiling peace talks. Taliban argue that the problem is within the Afghan government and it needs to be solved within the system, and they should not be blamed for the ongoing violence in the country (Nick Grono, 2011).

Taliban believe that the current Afghan government does not have popular support among the people of Afghanistan. The low turnout in the 2019 elections was a reflection of little faith in the electoral process. According to the independent election commission of Afghanistan, around 2.5 million voters have cast their votes out of 9.6 million registered voters (BBC, 2019). The current power-sharing between President Ghani and Dr Abdullah, head of the peace and reconciliation council, shows a power vacuum in the country. It gives in the upper hand to the Taliban to undermine the peace process and fight against the government. The Taliban does not seem to believe in dialogue with and working with a government that came to power through corruption and fake votes. Moreover, power is divided 50/50 between the government and the Taliban, and it would be meaningless for the latter to negotiate with the former to resolve the Afghan conflict (Nann.Asia, 2018).

However, the recently appointed Afghan Defence Minister asked people to support the nation-building process and project, of which SRR and peacebuilding are critical components (Constable: Mehrdad, 2021). He stated that the government is ready to provide the necessary logistics to the people in the fight against the Taliban (Hindukosh, 2021). This seems to portray the Afghan government as being serious and committed to the peacebuilding process to the international partners.

In sum, the current contradictory approaches of the Taliban to the peace process in Afghanistan shows that it is not genuinely desirous of peace as an unstable country is to its advantage. Theoretically, the Taliban says it is loyal to the country and wants to establish a system based on Islamic values. In practice, its actions only fuels division, hatred and insecurity among Afghan society against them. The murder of educated people, technocrats, religious scholars (Mullah Imams), destruction of bridges, burning of schools and hospitals, and sharing of information with Pakistan shows that the Taliban owes its country no loyalty but is more loyal to Pakistan. Furthermore, killing those who speak out against them and those supporting the Afghan government and security forces Only confirms that it is hungry for power and acting as spoilers to the peace process and post-conflict peacebuilding in Afghanistan (Shamshad, 2021).

6.4 Transnational Terrorist Organisation Networks

It is always very likely that terrorist groups are willing to help other terrorist organisations and provide them safe-havens. Terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and Islamic State (IS) or Daesh داعش in Arabic, standing for وشم عراق اسلامى دولت are very interested in conquering Afghanistan. Their fundamentalist ideology leads them to believe that the Islamic Army will come from Khurasan, which is currently Afghanistan, and that the last battle will occur in Syria. Currently, international terrorist groups active in Afghanistan have about 650 foreign terrorists in Afghan prisons, which shows their desire of a mission to destabilise the country to entrench a rule of Islamic extremism (Arg, 2021).

Terrorist groups believe that a Taliban controlled, in other words, an unstable and weak Afghan government is in their favour. Since other terrorist groups like Daesh and Al-Qaeda see their strategic interests as a breeding ground for Islamic extremism actualised, If the Taliban-controlled country, they are not likely to support a peace agreement that empowers the security sector actors like the Afghan Security and Defence forces. Instead, they will support the Taliban to sabotage the peace process and scuttle SSR and peacebuilding programmes. (Bezhan, 2021). Recently, Al-Qaeda is trying not to show its linkages with the Taliban not to damage their diplomatic position around the globe and in the region (Report,2020).

Terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda believe that it will continue to have sanctuaries in a country ruled by the Taliban. For this purpose, they support the Taliban by sharing ideas on undermining and weakening the Afghan government. One of the fundamental articles of the Doha peace agreement between the Taliban and the US was to ensure that other terrorist organisations, including Al-Qaida, do not have sanctuaries on Afghan soil (Doha, 2020). However, the killing of some key figures of Al-Qaeda leadership in the Ghazni province of Afghanistan shows that the international terrorist group is still active and operating in the country (Thomas, 2021).

Studies over the years confirm that SSR and peacebuilding programmes are more successful when all stakeholders domestically support it (Detzner, 2017). The prevailing atmosphere of insecurity and instability in Afghanistan and the efforts of the Taliban and other terrorist groups to act as spoilers of the process has made the success of the SSR and peacebuilding doubtful. Without the SSR and peacebuilding success, there are no prospects for capable security sector actors that can defend the country against external threats and internal uprising. Current assessments show that transnational terrorist groups, particularly Daesh and Al-Qaeda, would do anything to derail the peace process, reverse the progress made in security sector reforms and the establishment of a strong democratic central government in Afghanistan since this will enable them to get at the United States and derail its

strategic goal of a stable Afghanistan (Khalilzad Congress testimony, 2021). All terrorist organisations in Afghanistan and the border areas of Pakistan seem to view their interests politically and economically as realisable in the battlegrounds of Pakistan (UNSC, 2021). In the long term, this scenario indicates that strategic partnership between terrorists and the Taliban will continue to wax rather than wane. During congressional testimony, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, Special Representative of the US government for the Afghan peace process, mentioned that Daesh is trying to blow up schools to disrupt peace talks in Afghanistan. Moreover, according to him, the Taliban is fighting Daesh in some areas so as to distract the government and undermine the peace process (Khalilzad Congress testimony, 2021).

6.5 President Ghani and Administration

It is evident that the Taliban wants an end to the government of Ashraf Ghani. It has severally called on the Afghan President to step down and pave the way for peace talks (Hasrat, 2021). It believes that the hurdle to genuine peace talks, negotiations, and a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan is the current administration led by President Ghani. The Taliban and other Anti-government forces claim that the President is hungry for power; therefore, the war in Afghanistan is not likely to end. The real solution, according to them, is that for Afghanistan to have peace, a transition government under which further developments can be made through consensus has to be put in place (Ariana, 2021).

Moreover, some regional states, notably Pakistan, echo the views of the Taliban directly or indirectly and favour the interim government. The rationale behind this is that Pakistan considers the Taliban regime a strategic victory for itself. For that reason, elected politicians in Pakistan publicly endorse the Taliban and their insurgency in Afghanistan, believing that the group is fighting Pakistan's war in Afghanistan (KPK Assembly, 2021). Therefore, the views of Pakistani political figures and other terrorist group is that President Ghani's government is a spoiler of the peace process.

The Taliban seem to buttress its point by veiled support of the capacity building of the Afghan security forces. Apparently, its interests are that the current security forces built by the US and other international partners will provide stability to the country when it eventually takes over power. It is clear that the Taliban's plan of taking over government in the coming years is predicated on a strong security sector it considers could provide regime security, including external defence of the country. It, therefore, accuses the current administration of not thinking or worried about the welfare of the security forces and developing the appropriate capability but lust for power and antics to keep such power at all cost, including remaining a puppet government to the Americans (Congress testimony, 2021).

In the view of President Ghani, the Taliban are not willing to make peace; therefore, they would be blacklisted and left out of the process. Whether the government has the power to implement such a policy successfully remains to be seen. Such statements are considered unhelpful to the peace process as it could further damage the Taliban's trust and their willingness to participate fully and genuinely. Some observers also claim that the Afghan government supports other terrorist organisations such as Daesh to defeat or weaken the Taliban. Yet others believe that the current Afghan government is working on the Taliban surrendering to the government but is not sincere in making peace with the Taliban so as not to be seen as equals (Abdullah, 2017). In sum, the idea of spoiler in the Afghan SSR and peacebuilding process is debatable and contentious.

6.6 Regional and International Stakeholders in Afghanistan

The peace process, political developments and changing scenarios in Afghanistan has attracted international and regional attention more than ever. There are contradicting interests of some states bordering Afghanistan that have political and strategic stakes in the country. Some states are taking advantage of the turmoil in the country, while others are worried about changing political landscapes that could also affect their national security. The country is attracting great powers, and it might play a substantial role in new great power relationships. For instance, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is concerned about the situation in Afghanistan because it has economic and security interests in the country (Masab, 2020). Also, an unstable Afghanistan means that East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) can have safe havens next to Xinjiang. Whereas a stable and peaceful Afghanistan free of the Taliban is unlikely to be a sanctuary to the ETIM. It is the biggest threat that China's western province is facing at the moment. Apart from this, peaceful Afghanistan can also provide economic leverage to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Rajaye, 2021). However, the presence of western and NATO troops in her backyard is also something that China has been uncomfortable with. Looking at the realities on the ground, it is evident that China favours peaceful and stable Afghanistan because it will bring prosperity to the region, and there will be less possibility of a spillover of terrorism in the region. China can play a very constructive role in the post-conflict peacebuilding process of Afghanistan by using its influence over Pakistan (Siow, 2021). However, since the United States and its allies have already taken the lead, China has been ambivalent, and it is tricky to classify it as a peacebuilding supporter and enabler or a spoiler.

There are some doubts about Russia's role in the current efforts at a political settlement in Afghanistan. The Russian Federation is one of the few countries that are openly inviting the Taliban and other Afghan leaders for peace talks. However, the problem with this is that it provides a diplomatic victory

to the Taliban and political recognition. There can be several reasons behind Russian mediation efforts. Analysts consider one of the rationales is to defeat the US and western troops in Afghanistan through its proxies, such as the Taliban (Ramani, 2019). It is also believed that Russia has provided bounties to the Taliban for killing the US troops in Afghanistan (White House, 2021). The Taliban group is labelled as a terrorist group; however, Russia has maintained close ties with for its political gains and in favour of a more significant role of the Taliban in the future of Afghanistan. It can also be said that the reason that Russia is supporting the Taliban is for the purpose to weaken Daesh in Afghanistan because it could spill over to Central Asian Republics in the coming years. Here, Russia uses the Taliban as a tool to fight against Daesh in Afghanistan (Ahmad, 2016; Brian, 2015; Panda, 2017). Russia could therefore be regarded as a spoiler in the peacebuilding and SSR processes.

India's role is always considered positive in Afghanistan by most Afghans and some government officials. However, the Pakistani leadership, which has a critical role influencing the Taliban and its destabilising activities in Afghanistan, views India as a peace spoiler in Afghanistan. Pakistan considers that India fears seeing the Taliban in power. Another logic is that Pakistan believes that instability in Kabul affects Islamabad due to a common border; therefore, India may use it as an opportunity (Indus, 2020). One possible scenario discussed by commentators is that India may exploit the ongoing developments of post-conflict peacebuilding in Afghanistan because of its rivalry with Pakistan. A destabilised Afghanistan will become a safe haven for terrorist groups around the globe. For example, Pakistan considers Tahriki Taliban Pakistan (TTP) a threat to its national security and this group has its elements in the tribal areas of Afghanistan. Should the Taliban return to power in Afghanistan, TTP may use Afghan territory for their activities in Pakistan. Therefore, India would have a strong proxy in the TTP for its intelligence gathering and pursuing other interests in Pakistan. Furthermore, regional and great powers rivalry may come into action because through funding terrorist groups like TTP and ETIM, China and Pakistan's Economic Corridor (CPEC) could be jeopardised by the activities of multiple terrorist groups in the region (Mahmood, 2019).

6.7 Pakistan

Afghanistan and Pakistan are neighbouring countries and share a 2640km long border in South Asia (Schons, 2011)—Diametrically opposed interests and accusations of harbouring terrorist networks result in historical skirmishes and a low level of bilateral relationships between the two countries. It is believed that Pakistan always favours a weak centralised government in Afghanistan because it undermines its strategic interests. Both countries still have unresolved issues, one of which is the border dispute of the Durand line. Going back to the history during the USSR invasion of Afghanistan,

one of the countries that supported anti-Afghan insurgent groups was Pakistan, which provided them with ammunition, logistics and moral support. After the collapse of the Soviet-backed government and the Mujahideen era in Afghanistan, the Taliban emerged as the country's ruler and controlled most of the territory. Pakistan was one of the very few countries that recognised the Taliban government. Pakistan always considered Afghanistan as its strategic depth during the Taliban regime (Akhtar, 2008).

Also, After the collapse of the Taliban regime, Pakistan started harbouring the Taliban and Al-Qaeda leadership in Pakistan and at the same time, decided to support the Global War on Terror (GWOT) (Akhtar, 2008). In post 9/11, many of the wanted terrorists were either killed or found dead in Pakistan. The most notable being Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden, Mullah Omar (Taliban leader), Mullah Akhtar Mansoor and many more (Britannica, BBC,2015, Boone, 2016). The Pakistan leadership also affirmed that some of the Taliban families live in Pakistan and that the Taliban who were injured in Afghanistan during the fight were being treated in Pakistani hospitals (Jirga, 2021). Pakistan's interest in who is in government in Afghanistan is aimed at curbing the influence of India in Afghanistan since it considers the Indian intelligence agencies, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), as using Afghan territory to destabilise Pakistan (Raza, 2021). Pakistan Army and Intelligence agency are the two most influential bodies in Pakistan's politics, and they have more control over formulating policies toward Afghanistan. In contrast, civilian leadership in Pakistan does not have firm control in this sphere. It is also believed that in the past few years, civilian leadership in Pakistan wants to normalise relations with Afghanistan; however, they are not able to do so due to military influence (Grare, 2015).

As mentioned above, there are a couple of reasons that Pakistan is not favouring a strong central government in Afghanistan. First, if Afghanistan is stable and has strong security forces, economic security activities like building dams on the rivers flowing into Pakistan may commence (Majidiyar, 2018). Second, Afghanistan may start supporting Pashtuns living in Pakistan, fighting for their rights. Many of the Pashtuns trace their ancestry to Afghanistan and consider themselves Afghans. Implicitly, they would desire an independent country which could be another black day in Pakistan's history, like 16th December 1971 when Bangladesh got independence from Pakistan (Nasar, 2020).

Like most governments of the past, the deep suspicion between the Ghani administration and Pakistan is the close ties between the Taliban and the latter. To buttress this, during the Doha peace Talks, the leadership of the Taliban repeatedly travelled to Pakistan and met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Tanzeem, 2020). According to a terrorist group like the Taliban, the status of state diplomatic protocol confers victory and political legitimacy to it and emboldens it to believe that it can get even with the

state of Afghanistan (Hindustan Times, 2020). Within Pakistan, debates continue whether the Taliban is terrorists or not. The Pakistani media and officials portray them as freedom fighters and faithful defenders of Islam. Pakistani media has also played pro-Taliban roles in the Afghan issue. Several media outlets in Pakistan repeatedly created a scenario that the Taliban are fighting for a genuine cause, and they can defeat or have defeated great powers of the world with the assistance of Allah Almighty. The media uses the historical analogy of the defeat of Soviet troops to argue that the US and Western troops in Afghanistan would be defeated and that Afghan soldiers cannot defend their country against the Taliban (Dunya, 2021) (Geo, 2021). Pakistani media does not refer to Afghan security forces as martyrs; instead, they use the word HALAK (ہلاک) which is not appropriate in Islamic culture. Conversely, the Taliban they use terminologies that boost their morale (Express, 2021) (Hum, 2021). To further enrage the Afghans is the evidence that Pakistani Militias are fighting along with the Taliban against the Afghan government. Moreover, Pakistanis control the fight and play a leading and commanding role in the daily battles. Proxies of Pakistan like the Lashkari Taiba and Lashkari Janghwi (terrorist organisations) formed by Pakistani intelligence and army to fight in Kashmir are currently deployed to Afghanistan to help the Taliban against Afghan security forces (Shafaqna, 2016). These claims are also made by the Afghan security forces that lately, most fighters are coming from Pakistan and are in the rows of the Taliban. The United Nations organisation estimated that around 6000 Pakistani nationals are fighting in Afghanistan along with the Taliban (Afzal, 2021). Afghan security forces found a number of proofs, such as Identity Cards (IDs) in the battlefield showing that the fighters are Pakistanis.

The role of the Pakistani media and the involvement of Pakistani militia and terrorist groups in fighting alongside the Taliban negatively impacts Afghan security forces and the post-conflict peacebuilding process. Therefore, resolving the suspicion and bad blood that exists between the Afghan government and Pakistan is critical for the success of the SSR and peacebuilding efforts of the former. (Crisis group, 2021).

6.8 Iran

Iran and Afghanistan share a 921km border; both states have long historical, political and cultural ties. Iran is the top trading partner with almost 2.5 billion USD exports to Afghanistan. Iran is keen to see Afghanistan as a peaceful and stable country and fears that the Taliban takeover may bring another refugee influx into the country, which will be a massive burden on the crippling economy of Iran (NDC report, 2021). The return of the Taliban regime also contradicts Iranian policies and considers that they can pose a threat to Shia people in Afghanistan. It is in Iran's interest to have a safe and stable

Afghanistan (USIP,2021). Since the start, Iran has vehemently opposed the peace deal between the US and Taliban, arguing that Afghans should decide the country's future, not the US (Meo, 2020).

As much as Iran favours a peaceful and stable Afghanistan, the presence of the US in the country threatens its interests. Therefore, it would favour the support of and use of the Taliban to destabilise Afghanistan if only it can frustrate the US and allied forces out of the country. Also, Iran believes it could use the Taliban to weaken other terrorist groups in Afghanistan that threaten Iranian interests (Esfandiari, G. 2021).

6.9 Conclusion

Determining who the SSR and peacebuilding spoilers are in Afghanistan is as contentious as defining the interests of the many internal and external stakeholders in the nation-building project. Even within the official circles of the government of Afghanistan, defining who is a spoiler of the peacebuilding project is debatable. The implication of this lack of agreement is manifold: First, it results in a lack of cooperation between the stakeholders. Second, it leads to the dissipation of resources since there is no unity of purpose between the stakeholders. Third, it makes attainment of peace in Afghanistan a distant prospect as the average Afghan continues to suffer in the process and casualties continue to mount. Lastly, without peace and stability, Afghanistan continues to constitute a source of threat to regional and international security. Ultimately, the US and NATO withdrawal would negatively impact the post-conflict peacebuilding in Afghanistan as the Taliban would take maximum advantage of it to pursue its agenda of taking over power again in Afghanistan. It is also likely that in Post-US and NATO withdrawal, there will be a power vacuum that the Afghan National Security and Defence Forces (ANSDF) and even the Taliban might not be able to fill.

6.10 Part B (United States Withdrawal and the Impact on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding and Security Sector Reform)

6.11 Introduction

On 14th April 2021, televised remarks of the United States President, Mr Joe Biden, made it clear that the US will end the long military engagement in Afghanistan. For months, there were rumours that the Biden administration would delay the military drawdown and continue the American military security support to Afghanistan (Liptak, 2021). The question is that whether or not the military drawdown will directly impact the post-conflict peacebuilding of Afghanistan?

The US and NATO withdrawal will end the military engagement in Afghanistan; however, it doesn't

mean that the conflict in Afghanistan will end and Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces will not be in a fight with insurgents. But it is more likely that new security threats will emerge that Afghan security forces will face in the near future. Lasting peace is not coming quickly, easily and the post-conflict situation is likely to be a return to violence and war, leaving the war-weary Afghans at the receiving end. There is also a likelihood that the Afghan security sectors, notably Afghan National Army and Police, will be in a precarious situation while facing the Taliban, considering their low warfighting capability (Watkins, 2021).

The following section examines the challenges that the Afghan security sector is likely to face in the post-drawdown of the US and NATO troops. It is also fundamental to address what international partners can do to assist Afghan security organisations in mitigating the emerging threats and continuing the SSR programmes and peacebuilding in Afghanistan. Even though it is apparent that violent conflict will continue in different forms in the life of Afghans, for which the Afghan Security forces would have to deal with, it is also important that the US and the international community does not allow Afghanistan to return to its former status as the safe heaven of international terrorist organisations (Brown, 2021).

6.12 US Withdrawal and Impacts on Afghan Security Forces Training

The Taliban and the US signed a second peace deal on 29th February 2020, formally titled “the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan”. In their agreement, the US and Taliban rebels agreed that all US military personnel and NATO forces and other coalition governments and all civilian contractors would depart from Afghanistan. As a whole, there is a lot related to the US drawdown for Afghanistan. It is not just the US troops who are leaving the country, but many contractors serving in Afghanistan will also leave Afghanistan (Welna, 2020). Afghan forces could lose the leverage they have over the Taliban in the coming days as the US forces leave the country. The ANSDF were relying heavily on the US paid foreign contractors to assist them during the war. It is very likely that the Afghan security forces will not be able to manage the US provided warfighting equipment like helicopters, drones and Humvees without foreign contractors. The Taliban believes that without US assistance to the Afghan government, they can get military victory quickly; however, the contractor's withdrawal could worsen the situation for Afghan security forces. It is apparent that the Taliban's main objective of US and allies troop withdrawal, which participation in Doha talks was achieved (Rasmussen, 2021).

6.13 The Reality of the US Withdrawal and Effects on Afghan Security Forces Training

The US withdrawal poses several problems for Afghan security forces regarding equipment, logistic support, air support and contractor assistance. Within Afghan security forces, there is a belief that the main problem is the lack of technical capacity, which the US forces and the contractors were providing. For instance, Afghan police do not yet have the capability to demine the vast area laden with Taliban land mines without foreign assistance. Since the security forces lack capacity and their equipment are obsolete, the Taliban is likely to have the upper hand in the ensuing war.

The Afghan government is also unhappy with the US withdrawal since the transition is sudden, not smooth, and has an imminent security gap (Vice, 2021). Significantly, funding and implementing training and other capacity-building programmes of the Afghan national army and police will be negatively affected. Furthermore, the security forces will be demoralised by the sudden withdrawal of the US and the contractors. The lack of funding for the activities of ANSDF will hamper the security of the country and invalidate the US efforts in the last 20 years and result in the resurgence of the Taliban

Another possible challenge that the withdrawal of the US and NATO troops may pose to the security sector of Afghanistan is that SSR and peacebuilding programmes will be cut short. The larger implication of the abrupt end to the SSR and peacebuilding programmes would be a lack of peace and development in Afghanistan in the long run. Since Afghanistan's conflict is complex and multi-dimensional, it needs a long-term commitment and engagement from outside, which the withdrawal of the American forces has severed. The UN assessed the peacebuilding architecture (PBA) in 2015 and concluded that the budget allocated to peacebuilding was insufficient. Even after that, the budget remains constrained and is based on a short-term strategy. The current situation of Afghanistan needs strong military and financial support, and it is unclear whether or not the US will keep their commitment to financial assistance with ANSDF (Coning, 2018). As a result, more long-term funding will be vital to breathing life into SSR and peacebuilding. It is unrealistic in practice that the US and NATO will keep assisting Afghan security institutions in the long run.

6.14 US Withdrawal and its Moral Impacts on Afghan Security Sectors

The ongoing battles between Afghan security forces and the Taliban are entering into a new phase after the withdrawal of the US troops. The US withdrawal and the Taliban's occupation of several districts of Afghanistan create a domino effect where success or conquering one place leads to another.

Military analysts suggest that Afghan military troops are dependent on US and NATO air support and

logistics. According to David Petraeus, former commander of coalition troops in Afghanistan he believes “that the US should have maintained a sustainable commitment on the ground to help our Afghan security forces partners” because it will help in the prevention of outbreak of a civil war in the country, and along this to not let other terrorist groups make Afghanistan is a safe haven for their activities. It shows that Afghan security forces alone are not capable of defending the country against insurgent Taliban and other terrorist groups, and US withdrawal will put the Afghan security forces in a chaotic and challenging situation. It would put them at risk and halt the reforms that have taken place in the security sector of Afghanistan. The ongoing battles between Afghan security forces and the Taliban may divert the attention of Afghan forces from reforms in the security sector to focus on fighting on the battlefield (Expert. Foreign Affairs, 2021).

Another expert, Gayle Tzemach, shares her opinion regarding the US troops withdrawal says that "supporting Afghan security forces is critical", and with this decision, it will be difficult for Afghan forces to defend the country alone. The rationale is that, currently, Afghan security forces do not have the capacity to stop the Taliban from wrongdoings (Expert. Foreign Affairs, 2021). It is also believed that the withdrawal of the US forces without building efficient Afghan security forces means pushing the country into the Taliban's hands, and it will create a pre 9/11 situation in the country (Expert. Foreign Affairs, 2021). It means that still, there is a lot that needs to be done in reforming the Afghan security sector.

6.15 Conclusion and Analysis

At the time of writing this part of this thesis, the US and NATO partners have already withdrawn most of their military troops from Afghanistan. Less than one thousand American troops will remain in the country to protect the US embassy and the diplomatic staff. However, the US will continue its support for Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF). The US will support ANDSF financially but will not be there to train Afghan Police and Army, who are fighting there on the battlefield with insurgent Taliban and other terrorist groups. Financial support is critical in supporting Afghan security and defence forces; however, without proper training and assisting them directly will have dire consequences on the security sector reform in Afghanistan and all the efforts that have been made in the last two decades in security sectors reforms and peacebuilding would be wasted (SIGAR, 2021).

The initial idea of the security sector governance in Afghanistan, as in Western countries, was that it would make the security sector actors answerable and accountable to the democratic political government of Afghanistan, which the US and its allies were desirous to build. Therefore, for the security sector in Afghanistan to function properly, there has to be a strong democratic government.

Unfortunately, the US force withdrawal is likely going to reverse both democratic practices and its attendant liberties and the process of building a security sector that would be subject to the laws of Afghanistan. In the end, the reform process will not achieve its aims and all the US efforts and resources, including the lives of the US citizens who have been building democracy and reconciling the people post-conflict, would be wasted. This only underlines the reality of external political support as a vital ingredient of Security Sector Reform and peacebuilding.

7 Chapter 7: Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

SSR and peacebuilding are complex political endeavours that do not easily align with a linear process. due to the intrinsic requirement of social relations transformation and the multiplicity of actors and interests involved. The two concepts are closely linked and complementary to each other in the attainment of set goals in the long-term state-building project. Since peacebuilding concerns facilitating space for post-conflict societies to robustly and resiliently self-organise in order not to relapse into conflict, such societies must facilitate peacebuilding themselves instead of peacebuilding being provided for them.

In practice, SSR has enabled peacebuilding as the Liberian case study shows, with some with limited success, as the two evolve in response to changes in the environments in which they are implemented. The failure of critiques of liberal peace to offer a viable alternative shows that the malleability of the concept is yet to be disproven. As the concepts of SSR and peacebuilding evolve in theory and practice, the approach and strategy that best create space and facilitate locals to take their destinies in their hands and build sustainable peace will always gain more acceptability, and perhaps, have a better chance of success.

The process of SSR in Afghanistan was terrifying, and there were a number of challenges that the international community was facing. The country had nothing, and it was like building a country from the ground up'; however, the international community in general and Western states, in particular, played a more significant role in the rebuilding process. In the post-Taliban regime, the US and other partners started building a new national army, police, intelligence, and special forces in Afghanistan. The key challenges that the international community faced in Afghanistan were both internal and external. Internally, the terrorist resurgence posed a serious challenge to the concept of SSR because there was a constant threat of terrorist attacks on civilians and security forces. Moreover, the risk of warlords, local militias and ethnic configuration always remained a challenge. Externally, some states, particularly Pakistan, never stopped its attempts to destabilising the country and its institutions. It is without any doubt that the country has Progressed substantially in the security sector after the Taliban regime and has a standing army. However, the withdrawal of the US and NATO troops from Afghanistan again made the situation deteriorating and now there are increasing fears that the country may face the same situation as it was during the Taliban and all the efforts might be vanished. Strong commitment and long-term support will remain vital for Afghan security and defence forces to

maintain the status quo in the country. Without foreign support, it will be quite challenging for Afghan security and defense forces to defend the country against the Taliban and other insurgent groups.

7.2 Policy Recommendations

Analysing the gains of the last 20 years in the security sector reform and post-conflict peacebuilding of Afghanistan is remarkable; however, threats posed to the security sector are still notable. The government Must commit to further reforms to be better equipped to face handle these new challenges While studying both national and international opinions, documents, and strategy papers, I concluded that now this is the time that in the post-US and NATO withdrawals, the fundamental reforms are necessary both at policy and operational levels.

Some recommendations are given below.

- First, achieving public trust is very significant for ANDSF because the poor performance of the security sector is increasing the gap between society and government. In this case, it is necessary to stop the ongoing irregularities such as; corruption, poor governance, and political appointments in the country's security institutions. Now, this is the time that instead of appointments based on political affiliations need to be replaced on performance.
- Second, in the security sector, there is a need for categorisation and a priority-based approach rather than generalisation. The country security departments must know their top priorities and what should be done in the long and short run.
- Third, both Interior and Defence Ministries are not dividing policy areas sufficiently, such as; Afghan National Army is working as a law enforcement authority in the major cities even though this is the job of the national police, and such an approach is affecting ANA performance in the fight against insurgency.
- Fourth, special attention needs to be paid to the Special Forces of Afghanistan to increase the size of the unit because, so far, it is the most effective and trustworthy force of Afghanistan in the fight against terrorism and extremism.
- Fifthly, the Afghan government needs to invest in Afghan National Air Force. Therefore, a well trained and equipped Afghan air force will give moral support to the Afghan National Army and Police.
- Sixthly, at the policy level, the Afghan government needs the capacity to attract recruits and give them moral assurances and courage that the government will provide all necessary logistic supports to them whenever necessary. Because in many places, ANDSF faces a lack of logistic support.

- Even if the Taliban controls power peacefully or by force, it will be beneficial for them in the long run not to destroy the institutional security structures and security and defence forces trained and equipped by the West.

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