

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

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.