Warlords, Militias and Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan

Exploring the constructive potential of non-state armed actors

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# Table of Contents

MAP OF AFGHANISTAN ........................................................................................................................................ IX
ACRONYMS .......................................................................................................................................................... X

1. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1 MAIN FINDINGS ......................................................................................................................................... 5
   1.2 THESIS OUTLINE ....................................................................................................................................... 5

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .......................................................................................................................... 7
   2.1 CASE STUDY .............................................................................................................................................. 7
   2.2 WHAT IS RELEVANT TO MEASURE? ......................................................................................................... 9
   2.3 CAN THE EMPIRICAL DATA BE TRUSTED? .............................................................................................. 11
   2.4 INTERVIEW DESIGN ............................................................................................................................... 12
   2.5 DATA ....................................................................................................................................................... 14

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND DEFINITIONS .......................................................................................... 16
   3.1 SECURITY SECTOR REFORM .................................................................................................................. 16
   3.2 NON-STATE ARMED ACTORS .................................................................................................................. 18
      3.2.1 SPOILERS OR POTENTIAL GOVERNANCE ACTORS? ............................................................... 18
   3.3 OPTIONS FOR DEALING WITH NON-STATE ARMED ACTORS ............................................................... 20
      3.3.1 REALIST APPROACH: COERCIVE DISARMAMENT .................................................................. 21
      3.3.2 INSTITUTIONALIST APPROACH: CO-OPTATION ................................................................. 22
      3.3.3 CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH: SOCIALIZATION ................................................................. 23
   3.4 SUMMARY ............................................................................................................................................... 25

4. A CASE-STUDY OF AFGHANISTAN .................................................................................................................... 27
   4.1 A TYPOLOGY OF NON-STATE ARMED ACTORS IN AFGHANISTAN ..................................................... 27
      4.1.1 WARLORDS ....................................................................................................................................... 28
      4.1.2 LOCAL MILITIAS ............................................................................................................................. 29
   4.2 SECURITY SECTOR REFORM IN AFGHANISTAN ..................................................................................... 30
      4.2.1 CASE I: COERCIVE DISARMAMENT OF NSAAS ...................................................................... 32
      4.2.2 CASE II: CO-OPTATION OF WARLORDS ................................................................................... 35
      4.2.3 CASE III: SOCIALIZATION OF LOCAL MILITIAS ....................................................................... 37
   4.3 SUMMARY ............................................................................................................................................... 40

5. ANALYZING THE AFGHAN CASE ..................................................................................................................... 41
   5.1 OUTCOMES OF THE REALIST APPROACH ............................................................................................ 41
Map of Afghanistan
# Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Afghan Local Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANA</td>
<td>Afghanistan National Army</td>
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<td>ANAP</td>
<td>Afghanistan National Auxiliary Police</td>
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<td>ANBP</td>
<td>Afghanistan’s New Beginnings Programme</td>
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<td>ANP</td>
<td>Afghanistan National Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>APPP</td>
<td>Afghan Public Protection Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDI</td>
<td>Community Defence Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIP</td>
<td>Commander Incentives Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COIN</td>
<td>Counterinsurgency</td>
</tr>
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<td>DDR</td>
<td>Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIAG</td>
<td>Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIROA</td>
<td>Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISAF</td>
<td>International Security Assistance Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDI</td>
<td>Local Defence Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoD</td>
<td>Ministry of Defence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSAA</td>
<td>Non-State Armed Actor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNAMA</td>
<td>United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSR</td>
<td>Security Sector Reform</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Introduction

All states are – in theory – the guarantor of public domestic order, while simultaneously constituting a part of the international system of states. An ineffective and weak state undermines its function on both levels by failing to provide public services to its citizens and being incapable of performing its duties as a member of a global order. A fragile statehood not only poses challenges for domestic governance, but also has ramifications on the regional and global level (Schneckener 2006:23). In spite of its importance, the lack of a state’s ability to conduct its responsibilities was by Western governments largely perceived as a matter of internal affairs until the 1990’s. With the exception of a few extraordinary cases in which interventions for humanitarian reasons were deemed necessary, fragile statehood was not perceived as an issue of international security policy. After the terrorist acts of 9/11 this has changed profoundly through a shift towards a more security-oriented approach to international relations. As a consequence, internal conflicts and instability are now perceived as a potential threat, directly or indirectly, to global peace and security (ibid).

One of the core challenges in Afghanistan is state building – the development of a national government that has the monopoly over the legitimate use of force throughout the country. This goal is pursued through efforts of strengthening security institutions through a process known as security sector reform (SSR), which is an important element of state building. The centralization of authority has been one of President Karzai’s most severe challenge – extending the reach of the government and redirecting local forces to become constructive contributors to efficient governance. The essence of state building lies in either to destroy, include or undermine local power brokers in order to gain political authority. Moreover, the logic of state building is often founded on the rationale that an emerging system should build on existing
structures and that it should be based on socio-cultural contexts. 1 The perception that bottom-up approaches to state building leads to more viable state systems has emerged as a trend in the more recent years, though it remains disputed. In armed state building, strengthening institutions and building foundations for a sustainable and well-functioning state is accompanied by counterinsurgency (COIN) 2, as is the case of Afghanistan. The efforts to “clear”, “hold” and “build” are also founded on success on the local level, pursuing a bottom-up approach for sustainability. A functioning military force is required to defeat insurgents and “clear” areas in which they have been operating. Then, local security forces operating in concert with some sort of governance structure to provide rule of law is required to “hold” the area. Finally, after clearing and holding a disputed area, conditions are ripe for what is known as post-conflict reconstruction, or at least to commence the first steps of reconstruction as it is not always in the aftermath of conflict.

Involving local communities is commonly cited as a key priority within the peace building agenda. 3 As this legitimizes external involvement it is believed to provide more viable solutions that are tailored to the local context. Karokhail and Schmeidl (2006) for instance, argues that a state in Afghanistan can only function if it accepts to co-exist with local structures, 4 and uses the example of the Tribal Liason Office in Loya Paktia to illustrate the possibilities and ways to engage traditional structures into the reconstruction process of Afghanistan. It is an increasingly common perception that externally assisted SSR and state building should build on pre-existing structures

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1 See for instance Seth Kaplan (2009) Rethinking State Building
2 “Insurgency and counterinsurgency are a complex subset of warfare. (...) insurgency is an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control. Counterinsurgency is military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological and civic action taken by a government to defeat insurgency” (Counterinsurgency Army Field Manual 3-24).
3 See for example the United Nations High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change: A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility
4 Here understood as tribal structures: “a complex clientelistic network where the importance of family and kinship overrules interest-oriented association”.
and be tailored to the socio-cultural context. However, still relatively unexplored is the inclusion of non-state armed actors (NSAAs) in the provision of security. NSAAs are commonly referred to as a major challenge for security governance, as they undermine the states’ monopoly on the use of force. Yet, NSAAs have throughout time maintained spheres of political, economic and military control within states, and has arguably had a profound influence on the formation of states.

In the modern context, post-conflict environments face the challenge of how to deal with NSAAs. The roles of NSAAs is nonetheless an understudied subject, and is as a consequence not properly understood. By far the most common perception is that NSAAs are spoilers of state building processes. This thesis contradicts this notion in asking whether NSAAs might in fact play a significant and constructive role in the inevitable and persistent insecurity of the post-conflict state. Should, in other words, NSAAs be engaged in the provision of security within state-led efforts to effectively provide security to the state and its population, or are they merely spoiling the democratic top-down process? In order to ensure a sustainable peace and state building process, the role of NSAAs in Afghanistan must be part of the equation. This thesis explores the potential of NSAAs to act as providers of security on behalf of the centralized government in Afghanistan. It does so by asking the following research question:

*To what extent can non-state armed actors contribute constructively in Security Sector Reform?*

Non-state armed actors are in this thesis understood as warlords and militias, representing armed actors that operate beyond state control. Security Sector Reform is understood as comprehensive formalized efforts to improve the states’ ability to effectively provide security to the state and its people. By *constructive contribution*
this thesis refers to contributions that enhance the security situation, which is the paramount objective of SSR. The research question will be answered by conducting an explorative and descriptive case study of Afghanistan, thus, exploring the extent to which warlords and militias can contribute constructively in the provision of security in Afghanistan.

This thesis analyses the outcomes of three individual strategies for handling NSAAs implemented in post-Taliban Afghanistan. The three strategies in question are coercion, or the use of force (and the threat thereof), co-optation, or the offering of political positions, and socialization, the creation of common normative foundations through local engagement. These approaches reflect Stedman’s (1997) main strategies in addressing spoiler problems in peace processes. Each of these three strategies are placed within a theoretical framework derived from international relations theory and proposed by Schneckener (2009). Coercive disarmament represents realist logic, co-optation of NSAAs represents institutionalist logic, and socialization represents constructivist logic. These three theoretical approaches are based on and distinguished by their underlying assumptions about the potential of NSAAs in security governance. On the one hand, realism perceives NSAAs as mere spoilers, while institutionalism and constructivism on the other hand perceive NSAAs as potential providers of security.

By analysing the outcomes of the three strategies implemented in Afghanistan this thesis will contribute to the theoretical debate on whether NSAAs can serve as constructive providers of security governance or whether they are mere spoilers. In so doing, this analysis also sheds light on how to manage NSAAs in post-conflict rebuilding. This study explores the possibility of outsourcing the responsibility of security to functional equivalents of statehood that can cushion violent conflicts and provide security within the efforts of SSR.
1.1 Main findings

This thesis sets out to explore the extent to which NSAAs can contribute constructively to SSR and finds that to characterize the involvement of NSAAs in state building and SSR as merely opportunistic and damaging is to offer an analytically limited paradigm. As security institutions are often critically weak in the initial period of transition from war, assistance from local armed actors in the provision of security may in fact greatly benefit state building efforts. More precisely, this thesis finds that NSAAs are potential constructive contributors in post-conflict states. This potential relies above all on the NSAAs will and ability to contribute, and secondly on whether or not it in contributing undergoes a behavioural and motivational change. Despite not undergoing such change the contributions of NSAAs may be beneficial in the short run, as it leaves room for the strengthening of state institutions while simultaneously controlling NSAAs to prevent confrontation. However, this thesis demonstrates that co-optation and socialization of NSAAs is more likely to be effective if NSAAs are subject to control mechanisms and strategies for how to remove underperforming NSAAs. By utilizing the potential in NSAAs as agents of peace and stability, the security system created becomes more efficient and tailored to the local context, while also allowing the government to map and address local grievances.

1.2 Thesis outline

The first chapter of this thesis has introduced the subject under study and explained what this thesis sets out to do. The second chapter will present the research methodology undertaken in this research paper. The third chapter clarifies the concepts used and presents the theoretical framework that the analysis will be conducted within. The realist, institutionalist and constructivist theory each represents alternative strategies in dealing with NSAAs, and are founded on differing logics on NSAAs as spoilers or constructive contributors in SSR. The forth chapter describes the empirical context within which this study will be conducted. Afghanistan, being the case at point, will be described based on what has been described in chapter three. The fifth
chapter applies the theoretical framework presented in the third chapter to analyse the empirical context presented in chapter four. The fifth chapter will analyse the outcome of the three strategies used in managing NSAAAs in Afghanistan. The lessons drawn from this analysis will serve to illuminate the theoretical debate on whether NSAAAs can play a constructive role as local governance actors or whether they are mere spoilers. The sixth chapter, offers concluding remarks and theoretical and political implications of the findings. Finally, this thesis concludes by proposing some future prospects.
2. Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research methodology employed in this study, firstly, presenting the choice of using a case study, secondly, discussing the validity and reliability of the study, finally, presenting the interview design and data used. The challenges met during and after conducting the research will be described throughout the chapter. This study sets out to study the extent to which NSAAAs can contribute constructively to SSR in Afghanistan, and will be conducted through a qualitative study. The aim of this thesis is to acquire empirical knowledge on the outcome of various approaches towards NSAAAs by relying on documents, secondary sources and eight in-depth interviews. The findings will be analysed to highlight if there is a potential in NSAAAs to operate as governance actors in the provision of security. To arrive at these findings, international relations theory is applied as an analytical tool. The theoretical framework offers an analytical framework for improved understanding of the underlying logics of the differing approaches towards NSAAAs.

2.1 Case study

Although there is a substantial scholarly literature both on the concept of SSR and Afghanistan, very little research has been conducted on the potential of NSAAAs to contribute constructively in Afghan SSR. This is, naturally, largely because the main focus by NATO and its allies has revolved around eliminating potential spoilers. Considering that this study focuses on outcomes still under development, the research design is in principle explorative and descriptive. A qualitative approach in this study has clear advantages as the field of addressing NSAAAs within SSR is still theoretically underdeveloped, and the concepts are to some extent vague (Ragin and Meur 2000:750). This research is based on an analysis of three cases conducted within the single-case study of Afghanistan. The three within-cases are three concrete initiatives implemented in an effort to deal with NSAAAs. Such a research design allows for observation and analysis of within-case variation. The three within-cases are selected based on their high degree of resemblance to Stedman’s ideal-types, represented in the
A theoretical framework. All three within-cases mirror the characteristic of the theoretical strategies and its underlying assumptions about the potential of NSAAAs in the provision of security. By applying a single-case study along with three within-cases it allows for in-depth knowledge of a complex phenomenon in contextual conditions through the use of multiple sources of evidence (Yin 2003:13).

A case can be defined as “an instance of a class of events” (George and Bennett 2005:17), and describes the case study approach as “the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical event” (ibid: 5). According to Yin (1993), the major rationale for using a case study is if the research wants to cover both a particular *phenomenon* and the *context* within which the phenomenon is occurring. In this case, the phenomenon and context constitutes NSAAAs and SSR in Afghanistan. The advantage of case studies is the ability to use several sources to measure the same phenomenon. It is also powerful in the sense that it may lead to the identification of new variables and hypothesis, in addition to exploring complex causal mechanisms and relations (George and Bennett 2005: 17ff). By using a “small-N” study this thesis is able to acquire detailed knowledge about the context by drawing on multiple sources – consequently leading to enhanced validity and reliability – as the research provides multiple measures of the same phenomenon (Hellevik 1991; Yin 2003).

The drawback of using case studies is that insufficient information may lead to inappropriate results. Moreover, in this thesis the researcher must take into account that there may be a hidden third variable affecting the outcome. Even though X leads to Y, there could be a third variable (Z) that influences the outcome (Bryman 1988:31). Acknowledging that correlation not necessarily means causality and being aware of possible third variables is important in this study.

Although the objectives of this thesis is to contribute to knowledge about the extent to which NSAAAs can contribute constructively to SSR by studying the outcome of various strategies in managing NSAAAs, the process under study is currently undergoing and therefore the conclusion drawn must be regarded as tentative rather than assertive. Nevertheless, tentative conclusions based on documents, interviews and
secondary sources may provide valuable indication of the actual outcomes of various approaches towards NSAAs. Thus, ultimately contributing important knowledge to an area relatively unexplored, but nonetheless important.

Understanding the complexity of the Afghan society and its local security structures is crucial to improve the Afghan and international efforts to reform the security sector and to bring stability to the war torn country. Hence, the choice of Afghanistan as case is one of importance. The aim of the study is further to contribute in improved knowledge on SSR as such, as peace and stability operations are today more complex and ambitious than ever before. External actors not only intervene with a UN mandate to keep or to enforce the peace, but they also subsequently aim to create a stable state able to provide security effectively to its population.

In order to ensure the relevance and trustworthiness of the study, specific methodological criteria must be adapted to the research in question. Therefore, the following section will pay particular attention to the questions of validity and reliability.

2.2 What is relevant to measure?

A challenge when studying SSR and NSAAs is that there is not necessarily only one definition of the concepts. Therefore, making sure the informants had the same perception of what the SSR comprises; a necessary assurance was to initiate the interviews with discussion about the concept itself. Clarification was also necessary about the concept of NSAAs, as there are numerous actors operating in the complex landscape of Afghanistan. To control for this uncertainty, the interviewees were asked to define how they understood the concepts, and subsequently to reflect upon the potential of NSAAs as governance actors.

Measurement validity, also known as concept validity, refers to if the study “meaningfully captures the ideas contained in the corresponding concept” (Adcock
and Collier 2001:530). Put simply, is this thesis measuring what it is supposed to measure?

It is important to conduct a study that is free of random errors, which also secures the reliability of the study (Hoyle et al. 2002:83). Hoyle et al. (2002) underlines the importance of concept validity, which aims to make sure that the operationalization reflects the concept in use by the researcher. Therefore, concepts used in this study has been considered. In this thesis the choice of concepts are linked to the aim of the study, and the context of which the research is taking place. This is in line with the argument proposed by Adcock and Collier (2001) on how to choose the right concept.

The dependent variable this thesis analyses is the outcomes of different governmental strategies towards NSAAAs in SSR. These changes are identified from analyzing official documents and reports, secondary sources and interviews. The independent variable or the different approaches towards NSAA – which are presented in an analytical framework of international relations theory – is operationalized as three concrete initiatives implemented in Afghanistan. This will provide for a high degree of precision and quality of measurement.

In order to answer the question of whether or not NSAAs can contribute constructively to SSR this thesis investigates the extent to which they contribute to the paramount objective of SSR, namely an improved security situation. This is in this thesis the main indicator of NSAAs constructive contributions to SSR. However, as NSAAs are per definition exerting power, often armed, outside the realm of the state itself it challenges the states’ monopoly on the use of force. The second key indicator in this thesis is accordingly the NSAAs ability to contribute to improved security without undermining the legitimacy of the state and its monopoly on the use of force.

A potential challenge that could have affected the validity of this thesis is the fact that three differing strategies in dealing with NSAAAs are used on two different NSAAAs, namely warlords and militias. This could create a false analogy, meaning a research comparing two cases that cannot validly be compared. However, as warlords and
militias in this thesis are defined as NSAAAs, they both represent actors that are challenging the states monopoly on violence. As this thesis investigates to what extent untraditional providers of security can contribute constructively in SSR, the differences between warlords and militias in the two within-cases is not important. Furthermore, the significant division between the three within-cases is not necessarily the differing strategies per se, rather it is the line of separation between their underlying logic on whether NSAAAs can contribute constructively in the provision of security or if they are mere spoilers.

External validity addresses the issue of whether or not the findings can be generalized beyond the case study. This thesis studies the outcome of various strategies in addressing NSAAAs to analyse to what extent NSAAAs can contribute constructively in the Afghan SSR. Even though this is an in-depth study of the case Afghanistan, NSAAAs in other post-conflict countries may have similar characteristic. Moreover, several lessons learned from the outcome of SSR-initiatives may be applicable to other post-conflict cases. The research conducted seeks also to offer a framework on how to engage with NSAAAs and explores the possibilities of outsourcing security governance. Hence, it could be possible to apply the lessons learned from Afghanistan to similar cases undergoing a process of reforming the security sector in a security environment made up of NSAAAs.

2.3 Can the empirical data be trusted?

Reliability relates to whether or not the study is replicable, that is to say, if another researcher conducts the same study will the same results be obtained (Willis 2007:216; Yin 2003:7). The reliability of the official documents used is reasonably high, and so are many of the secondary sources which are based on extensive fieldwork. Regarding the interviews, a tape recorder was used in all of them except from the one in the Japanese Foreign Ministry. All informants accepted and were comfortable with a tape recorder being used before the interview started. After the interview, a summary was written and if requested sent to the informant to make sure that the essence was
captured. Before the interviews were initiated, the subject of the research was presented, without revealing the questions to be posed. The interviews were semi-structured, which strengthens the reliability of the data, as it opens for cross-referencing information and facts between the different interviewees. Taking into consideration that a triangulation of interviews, documents and secondary sources has been conducted, that secondary sources and documents are easily accessible, and that interview notes are available upon request, this thesis should yield a high degree of reliability.

2.4 Interview design

The interview design in this research is largely in line with the design proposed by Rubin and Rubin (1995). The interview was semi-structured, entailing that a list of questions was prepared but not followed systematically. Rather, leaving room for probing and follow-up questions as the conversation proceeded. The design remained flexible throughout the study allowing new ideas to emerge during the interview. The set of questions also remained flexible as the interviewees had different knowledge about distinct parts of the subject, hence, adjusting the questions to fit their knowledge and experience. A point of remembrance when not using a detailed interview guide is to be aware of not loosing control over the topic and the format of the interview, as it may become easy to digress and become sidetracked with anecdotes and generally inappropriate information (Kajornboon 2005:5). Knowing that the method in use is not free from methodological issues leads the researcher to be aware of important questions, such as how to avoid posing leading questions, how to know if the informant is speaking the truth, and how to analyze the interview afterwards.

Being able to conduct fieldwork would have strengthened the insight on the initiatives executed in the SSR-process and the actual outcomes. An opportunity to visit Afghanistan during the research would have made it possible to conduct interviews and increase the understanding of the process and the outcome of approaches towards NSAAAs. Due to the security situation, and the lack of facilitation to conduct fieldwork,
such opportunity failed to occur. Hence, the research is based on interviews with informants that have served for an extended period in Afghanistan, including military personnel, experts, researchers, policy makers and political advisors of various nationalities.

As Kidder, Judd and Smith (1991) suggests, *non-probability sampling* is beneficial when the consideration of the relationship between the sample and the population is less important. When the goal of a study is to obtain information about specific events and processes; the “testimony concerning key processes is collected from the central players involved. In such circumstances, random sampling would be a hindrance rather than a help, as the most important actors of interest may be excluded by chance” (Tansey 2007:767). Tansey continues by identifying four different types of non-probability sampling – each with varying rules for selecting the final sample – convenience sampling, quota sampling, purposive sampling and snowball/chain referral sampling (ibid). As they are not mutually exclusive, this study uses a combination of the two latter approaches. First, through purposive sampling respondents were identified and sampled based on who were most appropriate or available. This implies informants with excessive knowledge about the topic and with extensive experience from Afghanistan. These informants include people who have worked in political processes, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) or as researchers on the subject. Then, after identifying the initial set of relevant respondent, other potential interviewees were suggested by the first group of respondents – functioning in line with the snowball/chain-referral sampling.

Rubin and Rubin emphasises the need to “build a relationship with the interviewee and the importance of having visible cues in a conversation” (Rubin and Rubin 1995:141). However, as fieldwork was not a part of this study, and some of the informants were abroad, some telephonic interviews were conducted. Contact was initially established and a written appointment made, before the actual interview was carried out. In such manner, they were prepared, knew the project and had set aside time for a long conversation. In some of the cases the interviewee was acquainted with the researcher,
and a relationship as outlined above was already established, they could then be contacted and interviewed either in person or by telephone.

In this study, preparing for interviews involved reading academic literature on Afghanistan, reading official reports and documents from the GIROA, ISAF and UNAMA on the developments in SSR, and finally to attend seminars on Afghanistan. Working as Executive Officer at the Norwegian Atlantic Committee, leading the Afghanistan-project, allowed for the arrangement of seminars and workshops on Afghanistan issues. In addition, this lead to a broader network and the establishment of contact with relevant people in the Norwegian Armed Forces who has served in Afghanistan, personnel from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and researchers with relevant experience and in-dept knowledge. Having the affiliation with the Norwegian Atlantic Committee facilitated the arrangement of meetings abroad, as was the case in Japan and with the foreign SSR and/or Afghanistan experts. Later, the transference to an Advisory position at the Embassy of Afghanistan in Oslo, only contributed to the benefits earlier experienced.

In total, eight informants were interviewed, in addition to several “loose conversations” on the subject. Underrepresented in the selection were Afghan decision makers and NSAAs in Afghanistan. It would have been beneficial to include these two groups, however, the security situation did not allow for it. The informants were asked three introductory questions, followed by seventeen main questions. Depending on the position of the informant, its experience from Afghanistan or the development of the conversation, additional questions were posed.

2.5 Data

The topic of this study, the potential in NSAAs to contribute constructively in SSR and strategies in dealing with NSAAs, is not a theme widely researched and in Afghanistan it is mainly an ongoing process. This makes the collection of data somewhat challenging. Hence, dealing with this kind of challenges can partly be done by using triangulation. Methodological triangulation involves confirmation across three
different data collection methods (Willis 2002:219), in this study involving interviews, documents and secondary sources. “The rational for this strategy is that it flaws of one method are often the strengths of another, and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each, while overcoming theirs unique deficiencies” (Denzin 1970:308). However, the researcher needs to be aware of the differentiation of different types of data, and to not fall into the trap of treating data superficially even though data triangulation may produce large amounts of data. Triangulation can also be conducted across different types of informants, for instance civilian and military personnel, government officials and other experts. In sum, triangulation improves the precision in research findings through cross-reference.
3. Theoretical Framework and Definitions

This chapter will present the central concepts used in this thesis. To clearly present and define the concepts and terms used in this study is important to create a common understanding of the analysis that follows. The most central concepts in use are NSAAs, who are the targeted subjects, and SSR, which is the framework for addressing NSAAs. Furthermore, this chapter creates an analytical framework for the forthcoming empirical analysis by introducing the three differing strategies on how to deal with NSAAs, all found within international relations theory.

3.1 Security sector reform

Security sector reform (SSR) as a concept has emerged since the late 1990’s as a response to the increasing necessity to include security actors within the framework of post-conflict reconstruction and state building. SSR has become a central focus to prevent states from relapsing into chaos. The rebuilding of effective and accountable security institutions is increasingly becoming a priority and considered a basic precondition for sustainable peace building. In October 1999, the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan referred to the concept of good governance and claimed that “another very important aspect is the reform of public services – including the security sector – which should be subject to the same standards of efficiency, equity and accountability as other services” (Annan 1999:5). He thereby made a strong case for security sector reform.

It is debatable what actually constitutes the security sector. Traditionally the security sector has been made up of the military, the police, intelligence, border and customs guards and all other formal state institutions with mandates and mission to secure its citizens. However, the security sector is by the OECD-DAC defined as “including all those institutions, groups, organisations and individuals – both state and non-state –
that have a stake in security and justice provision” (OECD-DAC 2007:22). In adhering to this definition, this thesis will explore a broader definition of the security sector where NSAAs may contribute constructively in the provision of security.

SSR gathers several reforms under one policy concept aiming at strengthening not only the security institutions but also their oversight bodies and control mechanisms. It integrates all partial reforms such as defence, police, intelligence and justice reform, which have all traditionally been evaluated and implemented separately (Hanggi 2004:5). SSR is a holistic process “to enhance the operational effectiveness of the security forces with the need to ensure democratic civilian control of the sector” (Sedra 2008: 159). SSR, in other words, strives to reconstruct the security sector in order to successfully provide security to the state and its people.

When SSR is conducted in a post conflict context it is often assisted by external actors. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) offers an authoritative principle on the overall objective of such external assistance. The objective is to “increase the ability of partner countries to meet the range of security and justice challenges they face, in a manner consistent with democratic norms, and sound principles of governance and the rule of law” (OECD 2007:21). It is, however, worth underlining that also developed and stable states are under pressure of SSR, specifically with the new security requirements after 9/11. However, developed states do not face the challenge of handling the remnants of the past like in the cases of post-conflict rebuilding, which includes efforts of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants. DDR is widely recognized as a core element of SSR in post-conflict states.

There is tension between a liberal-institutional approach to SSR, which is based on the belief that there exists a universal set of principles and structures of ideal security governance, and a communitarian view that believes that programmes must be carefully tailored to local context and realities on the ground (Donais 2009:122). The former approach has for long been the prevalent, while the latter is slowly gaining
foothold. This study explores a communitarian view of security governance in which SSR is tailored to the pre-existing security structures found in Afghanistan.

Within the concept of SSR, the impact (negative and positive) of NSAAs must be considered in order to facilitate sustainable peace building. Reforming the security sector in post-conflict host nations requires a sophisticated understanding of state and non-state actors and their interconnectivity. Understanding how to address NSAAs, the potential outcome of the approach chosen to address them, and the prospect for NSAAs to function as constructive actors in security governance – are all significant issues within SSR.

3.2 Non-state armed actors

NSAAs have always accompanied wars and societies ravaged by violent conflict, and have traditionally been seen as the principal opponent of a states’ monopoly on the use of force. Societies characterized by numerous actors challenging the traditional notion of a state possessing the monopoly of violence has first and foremost been a result of the states’ inability to supply the population with the security needed. Corbridge (2005) offers a helpful definition of how local security providers can be seen; as “bundles of everyday institutions and forms of rule” that has emerged as a result of conflict. The concept of non-state actor refers to an entity that is not actually a state. In the specific context of post-conflict peace building, the expression non-state armed actor is being used to refer to a range of armed groups that operates beyond state control (Holmqvist 2005:45; Clapham 2009) and could include rebel groups, warlords, militias, and political-military parties. However, for the purpose of this paper this thesis will exclude rebel and insurgency groups.

3.2.1 Spoilers or potential governance actors?

Since the establishment of what we today know as states, the exertion of power has combated NSAAs or incorporated them into the state structure. NSAAs are in other words not a new challenge for governments. Nonetheless, it has increasingly become a
crucial issue for successful externally assisted post-conflict reconstruction to engage with such actors in one way or another.

The role of NSAAAs is dominated by the perspective that these groups are rebels that constitute a problem for the state authority. They are “spoilers” to use Stedman’s (1997) terminology, meaning that they show no interest in state stability due to a range of political and socio-economic reasons. NSAAAs constitute a threat to human security through direct violence (armed attacks, rape, killings) or indirect violence (forced displacement, enslavement or destruction of property), or through economic exploitation of the civilian population (Holmqvist 2005:47). They not only contribute to violence and conflict, but they also make it difficult to restore peace and conduct post-conflict state building. NSAAAs may directly affect the efforts of external actors through for example hostage taking or plundering of humanitarian aid.

This thesis explores NSAAAs as potential governance actors. In the absence of a centralized monopolization of violence, NSAAAs may emerge as an alternative logic of governance. They might be able to serve as providers of public goods and security in provincial areas outside of reach and influence of the centralized state. They may, in other words, “provide stability and fill the functions of a state in areas of limited statehood, even though the distribution of goods may be based on patron-client relationships” (Schneckener 2006:7). Concerns may arise as they are not necessarily accountable to any authority, and they often function beyond the checks and balances of the state. Furthermore, NSAAAs may easily establish economic zones that are outside of the governments’ revenue thereby challenging the legitimacy of the state. Still, there might be a chance that NSAAAs may operate as a part of the solution and a resource in peace and state-building processes. This could constitutes what can be referred to as *transnational security governance*, where armed groups like warlords and militias cooperate with international actors in providing security for the population.

Perceiving NSAAAs as spoilers or potential governance actors would entail the provision of different strategies. The first would call for containment and coercive means, as NSAAAs are perceived as spoilers. The other perspective, perceiving NSAA
as potential governance actors, would entail addressing them with co-optation, negotiation and socialization (Schenckener 2006:8).

3.3 Options for dealing with non-state armed actors

There is little consistency in the way the international community deals with NSAAs. The work of Stedman (1997) is central in the discussion on former commanders and combatants becoming spoilers of peace processes. He suggests three main strategies for approaching the problem of spoilers of peace processes. The first strategy is *coercion*, the use of force (or the threat of using it). The second strategy is *inducement* (in this thesis referred to as co-optation), offering NSAAs political positions. The third strategy is *socialization*, building a common normative foundation through local engagement. Schneckener (2009) has created a theoretical framework for these three strategies that will be employed in this thesis. Clearly, it is difficult to provide a standardized answer on how to deal with NSAAs, as context-specific approaches will always be necessary. However, by using international relations theory it is possible to provide various interpretations for the different strategic options. International relations theory provides a conceptual framework that facilitates the understanding of events and approaches in politics. According to a *realist* approach, the most efficient way to deal with NSAAs is through hard power means, such as elimination, suppression by force or coercive disarmament. An *institutionalist* approach would consider it more efficient to alter the interest of the actors through co-optation. A *constructivist* perspective would emphasise the change in norms through interaction and the establishment of initiatives inspired by local security structures (Schneckener 2009:19). The different schools of thought provide a set of explanations on how NSAAS-strategies can be interpreted. It also builds on an underlying assumption – either positive or negative – regarding the possibility of behavioural change, ranging from on the one hand not believing in the receptiveness of NSAAs to change and therefore utilising force, and on the other hand to build on a positive perception and believing the effectiveness of influence. This reflects the perception of whether it is beneficial to draw on the potential of local security actors in a decentralized system of
security governance, or if they are merely spoilers that cannot contribute in governance.

3.3.1 Realist approach: coercive disarmament

The realist approach suggests NSAAs should be addressed by coercive means (Schneckener 2009:20). Realism emphasises the role of power and interest in politics and international relations, and the constraints imposed by the egoistic human nature. As Machiavelli states, “it must be taken for granted that all men are wicked and that they will always give vent to the malignity that is their minds when opportunity offers” (Machiavelli [1513] 1970:112). This defines, according to realists, the problem of politics and leads to the need for controlling human nature. The international community is an anarchic system, and therefore the “law of the jungle still prevails” (Schuman 1941:9). These assumptions lead the realist approach to believe that NSAAs are mere spoilers and must be addressed through coercion. This includes the direct use of force by deploying armed forces to fight rebel groups, implementing international sanctions, or using coercive disarmament or coercive diplomacy, including the threat of force to punish non-compliance (George 2003:VII). Other means within the realist approach includes control and containment, marginalization and isolation, split and rivalry, bribery and blackmail. However, due to the scope of this paper the realist approach will in this thesis mainly describe realism through coercive disarmament in Afghanistan as this is the initiative that has most accessible data.

Coercive disarmament is defined as the purposeful and strategic use of incentives, such as wealth or lucrative positions, and threat to influence the target’s decision to retain a particular class or classes of weapons. In other words, coercive disarmament seeks to use threats and incentives to convince the targeted actor to disarm. Coercive disarmament intends to affect the military capabilities of the target, and to affect its motivation to pursue a certain course of action. Paradoxically, arms are means of self-defence and a mean to limit vulnerability to threats, while coercive disarmament seeks to use threats and incentives to make NSAAs give up their means that provides
protection against such threats (Martin 2006:2ff). Therefore, coercive disarmament is seldom initiated as an isolated measure, as it is believed that the disarmament process needs to be accompanied by the provision of security and economic guarantees.\textsuperscript{6} Hence, relying on the realist approach towards NSAAs often encompasses coercive disarmament paired with sequenced processes of demobilisation and reintegration. DDR is an important part of post-conflict SSR, and closely linked to the importance of strengthening the army, police, ministries and the judiciary sector. These are all institutions that are important in filling the power vacuums after disarmament and providing security and justice (Rubin 2003:3).

\subsection*{3.3.2 Institutionalist approach: co-optation}

Institutionalism suggests that common interests motivate states and NSAAs, and that states therefore could benefit from co-opting local armed actors into the government (Nee 2003:31). One can derive an underlying conviction that NSAAs has the potential to be utilized as governance actors within the institutionalist approach. Schneckener (2009) identifies some measures in dealing with NSAAs which falls within the institutionalist approach, encompassing mediation, negotiation, co-optation and integration. However, for the purpose of this paper the institutionalist approach will be described through co-optation of warlords into the Afghan government.

Some scholars argue that states can be founded on today’s NSAAs, as NSAAs may serve as a source of future stability. For instance, in the classical discussion of Mancur Olson (1998) he explains how warlords seize territory and provide security within them. Warlords becomes “stationary bandits” that protects against “roving bandits” and who encourage people to engage in local investment. Moreover, Charles Tilly (1985) implies that kings who founded the modern state were merely medieval warlords who were successful and able to provide security for a population within a

\textsuperscript{6} See for instance Doolan, Shane R (2008): Coercive Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR): Can it be Successful? Naval Post-graduate School: Monterey, CA
given territory. From this, and other contemporary scholars like Jones (2009), it is possible to extract reasoning that co-opting warlords into the government may be a feasible solution to security issues such as those present in Afghanistan.

The institutionalist approach holds that material entitlement and economic incentives can be offered and power redistributed through co-optation and integration of NSAAs. Such a strategy seeks to include pre-existing security structures into the political setting. There are a number of strategies of co-optation and inclusion, ranging from power-sharing agreements, various kinds of decentralised federalism, to incremental integration of NSAAs into the centralized state system (Schneckener 2009:22ff). Co-optation and inclusion could change the behaviour and motivation of the newly included actors, leading warlords to gain political legitimacy and consequently seizing to be a warlord. Through this alteration, warlords would become governance actors representing the people and acting on behalf of the state. The institutionalist approach builds on the assumption that NSAAs are operating based on grievance and political demands, and that an agreement satisfying both parties can be reached by granting NSAAs access to formal decision-making structures. Through co-optation warlords can then address their grievance and political demands through the formal structures. The government can deal with powerful local actors and create a system that includes local actors and represents the public. David Mitrany (1975) suggests that “functional agencies”, such as the international community, could organize cooperation among conflicting actors. External actors can shape actors preferences by structuring incentives, redistributing power and facilitate co-optation.

3.3.3 Constructivist approach: socialization

The constructivist approach suggests using socialization as a mean for addressing NSAAs, paired with amnesty, and “naming and shaming”. NSAAs and the government will, according to the logic of this theory, become intertwined through interaction (Schneckener 2009:23). The constructivist approach is based on the assumption that that NSAAs can contribute constructively in SSR. This thesis will
analyze a constructivist initiative based on socialization in the case-study that follows, leaving the two remaining means for further research.

Constructivism in international relations theory emphasises social interaction and communication in society (Adler 2002:99). Based on the concept of learning, cooperation develops into the institutionalization of values. In other word, interaction between actors is believed to cause a convergence of interests and development of common values. The constructivist focal point is the social construction of reality; through interaction, actors create their identity and interest, and it is therefore the causal power of the process that leads to the shaping of a common reality (Jackson 2007:164ff).

Through a process of interacting between the state and NSAAs the latter will be socialized, and develop an acceptance of certain norms and values based on collective learning. It will become increasingly difficult for NSAAs to rebel and to break out of the new commitments. In the end, NSAAs are likely to benefit in economic terms through the socialization with the formal government structures. The constructive approach, in sum, emphasise assimilation of armed groups to accept certain norms (Schneckener 2009:23).

At first glance, the institutionalist and constructivist approach may seem overlapping, but although they do share some characteristics, such as the notion of a change of motivation and behaviour through interaction, they do differ on other aspects. For the purpose of preventing any confusion the difference will be clarified. The institutionalist approach addresses NSAAs by co-opting them into the government thereby granting them access to the decision-making mechanisms. In such way, they will become a part of the government through a process of socialization which reduce their warlord characteristics. The constructivist approach addresses NSAAs by creating structures which are based on local security systems. In pursuing a constructivist approach the government will initiate new security structures based on pre-existing structures, or by supporting those operating on the ground. Consequently,
a bottom-up approach is created by relying on local mechanisms. This decentralized effort develops a institutionalization of common values and convergence of interest.

The strategies available in dealing with NSAAs and their theoretical anchor are summed up in table 1. In addition, the three empirical cases from Afghanistan are placed according to their affiliation. The following chapter is dedicated to these empirical cases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 1: Approaches for dealing with non-state armed actors</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Approach</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Theoretical anchor</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Empirical case</strong></td>
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**3.4 Summary**

In this chapter SSR has been defined as a holistic process to improve the security situation. SSR is in this thesis understood as a comprehensive approach to address potential threats to security, and to strengthen the security sectors ability to provide security to the state and its people. What constitutes the security sector has been presented in this chapter, illustrating that this thesis explores the potential of creating a security sector made up of untraditional providers of security. An NSAA is defined as an armed actor operating outside of the control of the state, and will be the subject in focus when later analyzing the different approaches chosen in the case study. Finally, this chapter presented a theoretical framework for analyzing the approaches towards NSAAs. Within international relations theory, three approaches are found; the realist approach (coercion), the institutionalist approach (co-optation) and the constructivist
approach (socialization). Whereas this chapter has dealt with the theoretical aspects of this analysis, the following chapter is empirical of character. It will present the NSAAs in Afghanistan and the different approaches within the theoretical framework of realism, institutionalism and constructivism that have been initiated in Afghanistan. By referring to the theoretical and conceptual framework presented in this chapter, the empirical evidence presented in the following chapter will allow for an in-depth analysis of the governance potential of NSAAs in Afghanistan.
4. A Case-Study of Afghanistan

This chapter serves as an outline of typologies and cases of SSR in Afghanistan. This chapter is initiated by outlining a typology of NSAAs in Afghanistan developed by Michael Bhatia (2008). The three cases of SSR in Afghanistan chosen for this research target two of Bhatia’s three types and will be presented empirically. The three cases within the case of Afghanistan will finally be categorized according to their respective theoretical affiliation.

4.1 A typology of non-state armed actors in Afghanistan

Afghan armed groups are very large in numbers and inherently diverse, and thus difficult to categorize without conglomeration into too broad and generalized stereotypes.7 There is no one single type of armed group or militia operating in Afghanistan. A simplification is nevertheless useful in the analysis of the local Afghan security structures. Bhatia (2008) develops a simplified typology of the complex security picture in Afghanistan. Three “ideal types” of armed groups are presented, namely warlords, community militias, and political-military organizations known as tanzims. These ideal types differ across a number of variables such as in structure, source of authority and legitimacy, recruitment, relationships with local communities, distribution of weapons, economy, and type of activities.

The three cases of SSR-initiatives in Afghanistan chosen for this research are selected based on the theoretical framework presented in the previous chapter. These initiatives mirror realistic, institutionalistic, and constructivistic initiatives respectively. They do however not represent initiatives targeting all three “ideal types” specifically. As Bhatia (2008) explains in his typology, all three types can be considered as hybrid

7 International Institute of Strategic Studies estimates around 1 800 NSAAs were operating in Afghanistan in 2005, with a total member number of as many as 100 000 (IISS 2005). Barron (2005) categorizes 100 NSAAs as dangerous.
types, and they may move from one category to another. Warlords and militias are often part of political-military parties. However, their membership may be challenging to map and their political affiliation is not relevant for the question this thesis sets out to explore. Consequently, the third type, the *tanzims*, will not receive further attention in this research.

The following paragraphs present and define the two types that are subject to analysis in this thesis, namely warlords and militias.

### 4.1.1 Warlords

The term warlord refers in this thesis to an individual that enjoys local legitimacy and autonomy from the state, a charismatic and patrimonial military leader that controls an army that enjoys a monopoly on the use of violence in a given area. According to Daniel Birò (2006), warlords emerge as an alternative logic of governance as a result of the absence of centralized monopolization of violence. Hence, warlords can potentially emerge as a “proto-state builder” that provides services like security and other public goods. Warlords depend on personal armies to control territory, to increase their influence, and to gain respect either through the threat of force or through the provision of security. The respect these armies create increases chances of establishing loyalty – the foundation of patron-client relationships – between warlords and local communities. The warlords depend on loyal combatants to safeguard their military abilities. These combatants are associated with the warlords along hierarchic orders of membership. Warlords often have broad networks of connections in all levels of society, not only in local terms but also in the provincial and national governments, regionally and internationally. This broad variety in networks and connections on all levels is according to Jackson (2003) a key characteristic of warlords. Another characteristic of warlords is that they do not enjoy *political* legitimacy, but rather *military* legitimacy in their respective territories. By acquiring some level of political legitimacy warlords would by definition seize to be warlords (Giustozzi 2009a:8).
Two types of warlords figure in Afghanistan, and they are distinguished on two variables. First, warlords are distinguished on their scope of influence, and second by their position in the local community. This thesis operates with a wider understanding of warlords, covering both types of warlords. Variation across these variables will consequently not be given further attention.

4.1.2 Local militias

In Afghanistan, many armed groups are best characterized as local or community militias. The term militia refers to a body of ordinary citizens, armed and organized for military service. A militia represents, in other words, an unauthorized militarized group. Giustozzi defines militia as “irregular or semi-regular formations, generally local or regional in character, semi-trained or not trained at all, subject to a less formal discipline than regular armed forces, and often not even wearing a uniform” (Giustozzi 2000:198). The advantages of such formations are the low operational costs, easy recruitment and effectiveness in mobilization (Giustozzi 2000:198). Local militias are commonly subject to control mechanisms, either the checks and balances of the community of elders, or subject to control by warlords. Bhatia remarks that militias under warlord control are likely to pursue personal gains by way of violence rather than operating for the provision of public goods for the community (Bhatia 2008:89).

Local militias can take several shapes and forms, and the Arbakai represents merely one of many. There is however, reason to believe that the southeastern based Arbakai have some defining characteristics that enables it to be especially successful in the provision of security to its community. The Arbakai is based on the customary tribal code of conduct of the Pashtuns – the Pashtunwali. Its tasks and functions include the implementation of the decisions of the jirga, the maintenance of law and order, and the

8 Pasthunwali – “the way of the Pashtun” – refers to the ancient code of honor of the Pashtuns. The Pashtunwali is integrated in the Pashtun identity and society, and is based on nine principles; hospitality, asylum, justice, bravery, loyalty, righteousness, trust in God, dignity and honor of women (Kakar 2005).
defence of local boarders. The jirga determines the number of arbakai required to achieve their goals, and which members of a given society are suited to become one. For matters of defence and collective security a Chega, or common call, is issued, calling for all people to participate in the collective defence of their constituency. The enlarged armed force resulting from the Chega is referred to as a Lashkar (Tariq 2008: 2ff).

4.2 Security sector reform in Afghanistan

SSR is commonly perceived as the foundation upon which the whole state building process in Afghanistan depends. SSR was a central component of the road map for peace and stability in Afghanistan agreed to at Bonn in 2001, where high-ranking Afghans met under UN auspices to decide on how to govern and rebuild the country. The Bonn Conference resulted in the creation of a transitional government, a new constitution and the decision to hold elections to the Afghan presidency in September 2004. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was created to contribute to development and state building efforts. Priority in the road map was given to Afghan leadership, at least de jure, and the international community chose a “light footprint” approach. The argument for such an approach was that national leadership is believed to be crucial for long-term success in state building (Ayub et al. 2009).

Afghanistan’s security sector reform process was launched with two security donor meetings in Geneva the spring of 2002. The SSR in Afghanistan was divided into five pillars: i) military reform, ii) police reform, iii) judicial reform, iv) disarmament,

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9 Jirga refers to a “gathering of people”, and is a traditional institution and gathering of Afghans where authoritative decisions are made. It often functions as a mechanism for conflict resolution and social order. Jirga is commonly perceived as a Pashtun tribal institution, but similar mechanisms are found in other areas among Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks. Then referred to as Shura (Wardak 2003). Similarities between the Jirga and the Shura are evident, but Carter and Connor (1989) finds that the Shura diverges from the strongly institutional and egalitarian Jirga, in it being more a short-term advisory council of elders, landlords, khans, and more recently by military commanders and warlords.
demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and v) counter-narcotics. Each pillar was to be overseen by a lead-donor nation, and was later to be replaced by an Afghan-led system following the interim period of training and mentoring. This thesis researches SSR as a concept, a concept aiming to improve the national governments ability to provide security to the state and its people. It does so by identifying and analyzing three cases representing SSR efforts in Afghanistan. While the first within-case of this research, DDR, happens to represent one of the five pillars of SSR in Afghanistan this thesis maintains an understanding of SSR abstract from its specific contextual structure. The five-pillar structure will therefore not be given any further attention.

Within the holistic approach of reforming the security sector lays the challenge of how to cope with NSAAs, and how to address those who defy the state’s monopoly on the use of force. In Afghanistan, where NSAAs are numerous, developing strategic options for how to address NSAAs is a key issue. By considering the latent security governance potential of NSAAs this thesis explores a comprehensive approach to security and stability in Afghanistan.

In the remaining parts of this chapter the three cases of SSR-initiatives in Afghanistan will be presented. Each initiative represents and refers to the logic of one of the theoretical approaches outlined in the previous chapter. In this respect, the coercive disarmament initiative represents a realist approach; the co-optation of warlords initiative represents an institutionalist approach; and finally the creation of militias initiative represents a constructivist approach.

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10 Sedra (telephonic interview on 17th of July 2009 ) points to the slow strengthening of institutions in Afghanistan as an indicator of that the five pillar system has not produced the intended effects.
11 According to Shinichi Kobayashi, the Assistant Director of the Afghanistan section at the Ministry of Affairs (interviewed in Tokyo, December 9th 2009), the lead nation approach is in practice not existing anymore, as all contributing partners have different projects within several pillars. Japan has, for instance, initiated efforts on police reform.
4.2.1 Case I: Coercive disarmament of NSAAs

From a realist approach to SSR, NSAAs should be addressed by coercion as there is a need to control the urge for power and selfish interests which constitute the foundation of human nature. NSAAs should, according to this approach, be persuaded to disarm through the use of threats and incentives. Coercive disarmament is often initiated through a program consisting of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR). In Afghanistan, DDR has been identified as the number one priority to increase the personal security of Afghans.\(^{12}\) The objective of DDR is to demilitarize the country by disarming and demobilizing NSAAs in order to ensure that the Government and the Afghan National Army (ANA) exercise monopoly of the use of violence. While the Bonn Agreement created the roadmap for peace and stability in Afghanistan, SSR and DDR in particular was not emphasized until the Afghanistan Compact of 2003. Japan, as the donor country for DDR, was slow to initiate any efforts on the disarmament programme due to the reluctance of the Afghan Ministry of Defence (MoD) to undertake any structural reforms, a prerequisite set by Japan to release the funds.\(^{13}\) A DDR unit was not established until 2003, 11 months after the Geneva conference. Subsequently, the Japanese Government gradually devolved responsibility of overseeing the process to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) (Sedra 2003a:5; Sedra 2008:127ff).

After a few unsuccessful efforts, an ambitious DDR program named *Afghanistan New Beginnings Program* (ANBP) was initiated in October 2003. The program was under the administration of the UN who assisted the Afghan Government in striving to disarm 60,000 combatants over a period of three years. Financial compensation was provided as an incentive to submit weapons. In theory, reintegration of former NSAAs was intended to commence two weeks after initiating the demobilization phase.\(^{14}\)

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\(^{12}\) See the Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium (2003:2) “Speaking out: Afghan Opinions on Rights and Responsibilities”

\(^{13}\) The UN and the donor countries wanted to include DDR in the agreement, but the United Front (Northern Alliance) opposed the idea of being stripped of weaponry (Sedra 2003:5).

\(^{14}\) The number was initially 100,000 but was later adjusted to 60,000.
Through the *Commander Incentives Programme* (CIP), commanders were offered USD 550-650 in a monthly stipend for a two-year period, supplemented by opportunities for travel and training overseas. In addition, suitable candidates were offered positions in the government (Sedra 2008:129). The ex-combatants were to select a reintegration option for themselves – either agriculture, vocational training, small business training, teaching, demining or to join ANA or the Afghan National Police (ANP) to mention a few (Rossi and Giustozzi 2006:8). The ANBP identified and pursued two reintegration strategy focal points: “first, the possibilities for isolating and engaging commanders in legitimate enterprise; and second, employment and training opportunities for the ex-soldier” (Sherman 2005:7).

According to the ANBP the program disarmed approximately 63,380 and collected somewhere close to 70,000 weapons (Rossi and Giustozzi 2006:4). The weapons collected did however represent a mere 56 percent of the amount of weapons registered.\(^{15}\) This suggests that militiamen were able to hand in as little as possible, and reports indicated that the quality of the submitted weapons was very low (ibid). In fact, Dr. Kenji Isezaki, who led the Japanese DDR unit, characterized most of the collected weapons as “junk”.\(^{16}\) Isezaki also claimed that the efforts of disarming and dismantling security actors had a regional bias and that the process led to a large security vacuum in large parts of Afghanistan (Isezaki 2009). As the national security forces lacked the capabilities to create security buffers in disarmed parts of the country other opportunistic armed groups met little or no resistance in filling the emerging power and security vacuums.

Another weakness in the DDR efforts was according to Isezaki (2009) the double standards and the rush for benchmarks and results. By 2004, no more than 10% of the DDR process was accomplished, and the strengthening of the ANP and ANA was

\(^{15}\) The weapons are usually considered the private property of the commanders, rather than the soldier. As the commanding officers has not been willing to reveal the number weapons in possession, an exact estimate has been difficult to make (Sherman 2005:10).

\(^{16}\) Personal Interview in Tokyo on 16th of December 2009
proceeding slowly. As the Afghan Presidential elections were approaching, the Bush administration insisted that the elections could not proceed until the DDR process was finalized. At the same time, the administration maintained that not holding the presidential elections would be a breach of the constitution. The Bush administration was in other words eager for progress in the DDR and consequently sped up the program despite warnings of its prematurity. The accelerated process resulted in the Afghan presidential elections being held, which provided evidence of progress being made in Afghanistan. However, the accelerated DDR-efforts would in the long run prove to have counterproductive effects. The sped-up DDR-efforts impacted particularly negative on the reintegration part of the program, as it made it even more difficult to find alternatives to fighting.

It may be argued that reintegration is the most important part of DDR as it ascertains that militiamen do not fall back into their dependency on commanders. However, according to Strand (2008) this most important part of DDR appears to have been poorly implemented in the ANBP, as the program by no means was able to guarantee employment for disarmed parties. It proved difficult to find and create sufficient amount of jobs to the Afghans, who in many cases had served in militias absent alternative employment. The “success” or “failure” of DDR is usually measured by the quantity of weapons collected while ignoring the equally important social aspect; the economic and social integration of former combatants (Rossi and Giustozzi 2006:3). Adding to the complexity is the challenging task of targeting the mid-level commanders. These commanders, who have benefited from the war through drug trade, extortion and other criminal activity, are often feared by the people, and are by many perceived as unsuited for army or police service. In addition, mid-level commanders are more difficult to map and track than top-level commanders and warlords as they less frequently hold central positions “visible” to the outsider (Rubin 2003:43; Bhatia and Muggha 2008:133).

Despite meeting several challenges under adverse conditions, the “ANBP was well designed and marked a breakthrough in the SSR” (Sedra 2003a:20). It also achieved
its mandate regarding the number of weapons collected and ex-combatants disarmed. Nevertheless, the Afghan Government estimated that there were at the end of ADBP still 1,870 illegal armed groups, comprising approximately 129,000 members, which fell outside of the mandate of the ANBP (Sedra 2008:135). Those mid-level leaders enjoying membership close to the centre and most trusted by the commander were often kept away from the DDR-process by their leaders. This consequently led to major gaps in the disarmament process. As a consequence of this deficiency the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) was initiated in 2005, a DDR-program targeting particularly those who fell outside the ANBP, but also tribal militias, community defence forces, warlord militias and criminal gangs. Many of these groups were difficult to identify, as they are commonly non-uniformed and makes efforts to conceal their weapons (Sherman 2005:11). The central role of the Arbakai in providing security was recognized through the exclusion of community militias from the DIAG programme (Bhatia 2008:91).

4.2.2 Case II: Co-optation of warlords

The institutionalist approach suggests handling NSAAs by initiatives aiming at co-opting them into the formal governmental structures. According to this approach, NSAAs will through co-optation and accommodation undergo a behavioural and motivational change, enabling them to serve successfully as governance actors. Andrew Bacevich (2009) argues that since real influence in Afghanistan is found among tribal leaders and warlords, US efforts in Afghanistan should be decentralized and outsourced, offering governmental positions and economic incentives and basing their efforts on local leaders. In Afghanistan, co-optation of warlords has been a common endeavour, both on the initiative of Karzai and NATO.

The coalition forces gave its support to warlords in the Northern Alliance in the initial phase of the intervention in 2001. A strategy was created to co-opt local commanders in the new governance structure in an effort of reducing the military and political opposition to the international engagement and the recently initiated peace process.
Just a few months after the intervention in Afghanistan warlords were emerging as the new rulers. Warlords were included in the government when the reconstruction began and had influence on the Loya Jirga that established the constitution of Afghanistan (Marten 2009).

Karzai has since he came to power co-opted a number of local power brokers into the formal governance structures. Karzai managed to co-opt warlords like Ismail Khan and Rashid Dostum by coaxing them away from their regional power bases. Karzai embraced a policy of accommodation and co-optation during the interim and transitional periods. Karzai was reluctant to challenge the status quo, and received neither support nor pressure from NATO do so (Middlebrook and Sedra 2005). However, Karzai later came under pressure from the international community and the parliament to remove prominent warlords involved in the illicit economy or implicated in human right abuses. One of the changes made during the 2004 presidential election was the removal of the Minister of Defence Marshall Fahim, who in the eyes of many had destructed the demilitarization process. The new Minister engaged in a process of opening the Ministry to new reforms and gave a boost to the demilitarization process (ibid).

Another one of Karzais co-optives is Dostum, a powerful northern warlord with a record of human right abuses dating back to Afghanistan’s civil war in the 1990’s. While Dostum was offered and accepted the position of Deputy Defence Minister he spent very little time governing in Kabul. Rather, he was preoccupied fighting for supremacy in and around Mazar-e Sharif. His opponents for supremacy included forces loyal to the current governor of Balkh Province, Atta Mohammad Noor (Tarzi 2006). Governor Noor is himself a warlord who earned his title in 2005 by virtue of his alignment with Karzai. He has been able to maintain a monopoly on the use of violence as well as control over illicit activity such as drugs trade by appointing his militia clients to powerful positions throughout the provincial administration (Mukhopadhyay 2009:11). By employing informal power and rules as well as personal networks to preserve control over Balkh, Noor has unlike many other warlords proven
quite successful in providing security, reconstruction and counternarcotics initiatives in his province. The two examples presented by Dostum and Noor illustrates that warlords in Afghanistan do differ, as one has proven to be able to serve the people while the other one has been accountable to none.

4.2.3 Case III: Socialization of local militias

The constructivist approach suggests using socialization to address NSAAAs. Through the use of social interaction, based on the concept of learning, interaction is believed to develop into the institutionalization of values. By creating structures that resemble familiar systems to the local actors, NSAAAs and the government will become intertwined through interaction. Rather than co-opting actors into the government, the governments adjust to the realities on the ground by creating systems that are familiar to the NSAAAs. Through social interaction a process of assimilation will develop into the institutionalization of common values. Informal and formal security governance structures will converge and become intertwined, ultimately developing into exclusively formal structures (Schneckener 2009:23). In Afghanistan, this process has been executed through the creation or support of militias based on the Arbakai structure that has been able to provide security in some of the Pashtun areas.

Jones (2009) argues that power has in Afghanistan been based on local governance. He refers to the Musahiban dynasty (1929-1978) where Zahir Shah, Nadir Shah and Daoud Khan ruled the country through the most stable period in modern Afghan history. This has partly to do with their understanding of the importance of local power. They believed in competent government and a strong army, but established a tribal engagement strategy in the Pasthun areas of Afghanistan. Zhahir Shah also engaged the Arbakai for the establishment of order and for local defence under control of legitimate tribal institutions. In this manner a bottom-up approach to governance developed, establishing law and order building on local security structures. Adhering to the historical reference in Afghanistan, a constructivist approach may appear reasonable. Nonetheless, when the SSR process was initiated, the existence of the
Arbakai structure became a matter of controversy as efforts to build on existing security structures was initiated through the creation and armament of militias (Tariq 2008:1).

Even though history illustrates that local resistance should be supported and US and Afghan efforts should be focused on the local level, there are few targeted bottom-up programs in Afghanistan (Jones 2009). The lack of progress in the security situation has led to what some call questionable strategies, such as US and Afghan engagements of local militias to fight the Taliban. Such initiatives are based on the notion of a district level counterinsurgency, and to leverage the concept of Arbakai.

The first local militia program was the Afghanistan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP), which trained recruits and provided them with uniforms, weapons and a monthly salary. The program was terminated in 2008 after heavy criticism of the armament of local actors. It was considered a failure as a number of problems were emerged due to lack of training and competence, corruption and the minimum of obligation towards their duty and the GoA (Cordesman, Burke, Kasten and Mausner 2008:129ff).

The Afghan Public Protection Program (APPP) was a second iteration of community level security programs. APPP started as a pilot project in Wardak Province in the Eastern parts of Afghanistan, where villages throughout the province convened Shura-meetings of local tribal, political and religious leaders. The elders were then to recruit and oversee the activities of the local militias. The program aimed at making local militias able and willing to guard their neighbourhoods and assist the ANA and the ANP in providing security. The plan was, if the model proved successful in Wardak, to replicate it throughout the country (Filkins 2009). Though the program was considered a success, it came under criticism for its detachment from Afghan government control.
Yet another program, the *Community Defence Initiative* (CDI), was initiated in mid-2009, and was endorsed by General McChrystal. In this initiative, US forces provided support through ammunition, communications equipment, food and training. They did however not provide weapons. The program was short lived due to the lack of governmental support, and was followed by a fourth program, the *Local Defence Initiative* (LDI). The LDI supported pre-existing armed groups that were resisting the Taliban. It aimed to benefit the local community through development aid rather than paying individuals for their loyalty (Kilcullen 2010). The LDI-program was funded by the US military.

As a refinement of the CDI and the LDI, the *Village Stability Program* was initiated. This program was explicitly built on the notion that the solution to the security question in Afghanistan is found at the local level. It was initiated as a bottom-up approach to establishing security, governance and development at the local level. The Afghan government agreed to the *Village Stability Program* on the condition that the forces would be paid by and remain under supervision of the Afghan Interior Ministry, and that they would wear uniforms equivalent of the armed local police (Rubin 2010). Karzai demanded that the forces be under the Ministry of Interiors command in order to prevent the militias becoming another kind of instability by undermining the government (Rubin and Oppel 2010). The new program, which was developed with the adjustments made by Karzai, was named the *Afghan Local Police* (ALP). Karzai approved the ALP in July 2010 after negotiations with Petraeus. The MoI would provide equipment such as vehicles, radios and light weapons. Unlike the ANP, the ALP would not have authority to arrest people and their salary would be more modest than the ANP (NTM-A 2010).

According to Colonel Wayne Shanks, a spokesman for the NATO command in Afghanistan, the goal of local militia initiatives “is to create a situation where the local

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17 General Mcchrystal served as the American Commander of ISAF and the U.S. Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A) until he was fired for his critical remarks of the US administration during an interview in the Rolling Stones Magazine
population is inhospitable to insurgents and where legitimate local leaders can provide security and services, ultimately, effectively connecting communities to the Afghan government” (as in Ackerman 2009). He also claims that the broader SSR efforts are not affected by the community based bottom-up approach to security (ibid).

4.3 Summary

This chapter has outlined the empirical context upon which the upcoming analysis will be conducted. Afghan NSAAs has in this chapter been described as warlords and militias. Three approaches within SSR which has been implemented in Afghanistan, have been described. Firstly, the DDR-process representing coercive disarmament and the realist approach. Secondly, the co-optation of warlords into the central government, corresponding to the institutionalist approach. Thirdly, the creation and support of local militias in Afghanistan to create a process of socialization, corresponding to the constructivist approach. These three initiatives will be analyzed in the following chapter in order to find what has been the outcome of the strategies chosen in Afghanistan, and to explore the extent to which NSAAs can constructively contribute to SSR.
5. Analyzing the Afghan Case

The previous chapter served two purposes. First, it presented and defined two types of NSAAs present in Afghanistan, namely warlords and local militias. Second, it outlined three concrete initiatives for handling such NSAAs in Afghanistan, namely DDR, co-optation and the creation of local militias. The following analysis is presented in two parts. First, the three initiatives are examined individually in order to analyze the outcome of each approach. Second, the results of the first part of this analysis serves to highlight the extent to which NSAAs can contribute constructively in SSR.

5.1 Outcomes of the realist approach

The realist approach, emphasizing the role of power to address NSAAs through incentives and coercion, does not believe in the potential of NSAAs as arbitrators of peace (Scheneckener 2009:20). In Afghanistan, this approach is reflected in the coercive disarmament in DDR. The DDR program was implemented to disarm illegal armed actors, and to control and contain the activities and influence of the NSAAs, a typical characteristic of the realist approach. DDR-programs target warlords and militias. DDR can arguably be seen as one of the most important parts of SSR in Afghanistan, as it contributes to improved security and stability by removing arms from the ground, as well as giving combatants other livelihoods. The process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of NSAAs in Afghanistan was initiated in 2003 through the Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme (ANBP).

Japan, as the leading nation on DDR in Afghanistan, was slow in executing any disarming efforts. The program was delayed on several occasions, partly due to the reluctance of the Ministry of Defence to undertake structural reforms which was set as a precondition by the Japanese for releasing the funds (Sedra 2008:127). On the one hand it can be argued that the Japanese failed to timely and adequately implement their disarming mandate. On the other hand it can be argued that the challenges facing DDR were rather political in nature. According to Rubin (2003), the vast majority of
Afghans perceived the MoD under Marshall Abdul Qasim Fahim as just another factional army. NSAAs were unwilling to submit their arms to what they perceived as just another rival faction. Accordingly, it can be argued that reforming the MoD would in this case be a precondition for the successful implementation of DDR in Afghanistan. Rubin’s findings suggest that the legitimacy of the disarming party can be an important factor in the success or failure of DDR processes, and that this is a concern that should be addressed in order to succeed in disarmament efforts. However, Sedra (2009) has criticized the Japanese for their slow implementation of DDR and thus suggest that DDR is a time sensitive issue. This view provides nuance to Rubin’s perspective in showing that the successful implementation of DDR requires a careful weighing of two priorities. An early start could serve to prevent an up rise of violence, while the more time consuming reformation of the disarming party, in this case the MoD, would serve to improve the positive impact of the program.

The pilot phase of the ANBP targeted five Afghan regions: Kunduz, Gardez, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar and Kabul. Afghanistan is however an ethnically divided and diverse society with a history of polarization between ethnic groups, and the intentions behind the program was questioned by the groups being disarmed (Isezaki 2009). The realist approach is not an approach that creates trust in the first place. By disarming NSAAs the government deprives them of their traditional source of security, decreasing already weak bonds of trust between the NSAAs the disarming actor, the MoD. Moreover, according to Isezaki (2009) and Sedra (2003b), a security vacuum emerged as a result of bias in the regional implementation of DDR. Commanders and local security actors were successfully disarmed in concentrated areas, but the security structures of the central state had been weakened by many years of civil war and were consequently unable to fill the emerging security vacuum. As the international community also failed to address this issue, the security vacuum was easily exploited by other local armed actors unaffiliated with Kabul (Isezaki 2009; Sedra 2003b:8).

These findings thus suggest that the disarmament of NSAAs as it was implemented in Afghanistan appear to have been successful. However, the paramount objective of
security was undermined by the state’s institutional weakness and consequent inability to follow up the initial success achieved in disarmed areas. This implies that security vacuums emerging in the aftermath of disarmament efforts should immediately be addressed with suitable means to prevent unwanted actors gaining influence in the targeted areas. Furthermore, it can be argued that the persistent insecurity such security vacuum implies may foster the perception that the people either must acquire weapons themselves or align with NSAAAs in order to stay safe, and thereby undermining the effective implementation of DDR.

As illustrated in this thesis, the ANBP found it challenging to address the mid-level commanders. Consequently, mid-level commanders continued to constitute a threat to the goal of SSR. Why was the program not able to adequately target the mid-level commanders? First, mid-level commanders have often benefited financially from war and may therefore not see how contributing to a disarmament process would be beneficial to themselves. Second, some mid-level commanders are due to their human rights abuse records unsuitable for service in the ANA or ANP and were deliberately excluded from the reintegration program. Third and finally, mid-level commanders have proven to be difficult to map, as they are far less exposed than their commanders (Rubin 2003:43; Bhatia and Muggha 2008:133). Nonetheless, the mid-level commanders are important actors in the process of securing the people as they are key actors in the network of NSAAAs. If they are not specifically targeted they may continue to constitute a threat to security. Little research has been conducted on how to address mid-level commanders and how to establish strategies to deal with them. The fact that they were able to avoid the implementation of DDR and to continue their business as usual implies that mid-level commanders should be carefully targeted, mapped and studied in order to understand how and what incentives and disincentives can be utilized to demobilize them. It also suggests that a more network-oriented approach would have been beneficial, focusing not only on the top-level commanders but also on commanders at other levels within the network.
Even though the DDR program led to a high number of disarmed commanders, Sedra (2008:128) argues that the program underestimated the strength of the commanders’ patronage network and the legitimacy many of them enjoyed in their local communities. The Afghan government and the international community incorrectly assumed that the patronage links between commanders and their militiamen would fade by the provision of economic incentives to disarm. This underestimation enabled top-level commanders to surrender only their least loyal troops and their low quality weapons while maintaining their power basis and networks (Sedra 2008:140; Isezaki 2009; Stapleton 2004:128). Incidences like this highlight a key weakness in the ANBP: by failing to provide targeted incentives and failing to pair incentives with disincentives the ANBP failed to effectively engage commanders. The realist approach to NSAAs implies that a combination of coercion and incentives should be provided. The case of ANBP did however not provide any disincentive mechanisms, which could arguably have contributed to the shortcomings of the program (ibid). The Afghan government was unwilling to impose disarmament in fear of that the fighters would unite against them (Middlebrook and Sedra 2005). It is conceivable that efforts to engage commanders more effectively earlier in the process paired with the introduction of credible disincentives would have resulted in greater cooperation from the commanders.

The realist approach reflected in the ANBP relies on incentives alone. NSAAs are however likely to choose not to comply if these incentives are not sufficiently appealing. If the incentives offered do not provide an improved situation for the NSAA they are most likely to choose not to engage in the process. It then becomes clear that the government or whoever initiates the program may have to consider providing targeted incentives to NSAAs to maximize likelihood of their engagement. Such incentives could for instance include access of water and building of schools or it could include personal enrichment, depending on the need of the local actor or community. However, such a framework of mere incentives may create a situation in which NSAAs choose to accept the incentives and receive the corresponding benefits while not fulfilling their commitments to DDR, such as proved by the submission of
low-grade weapons (Sedra 2008:145). The outcome of the DDR program in Afghanistan thus indicates that incentives alone are insufficient tools for successful disarmament, particularly regarding the break-up of patronage ties within NSAAs networks.

Focusing solely on coercion, which would be the other extreme option, would arguably also be an inadequate tool in isolation as it would require constant application of force or the credible threat of the use of force. It can therefore be argued that targeted incentives should remain the focal point of DDR efforts but that incentives should be paired with a credible set of disincentives in order for DDR to succeed in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the success of DDR or SSR in Afghanistan, or in any other context for that matter, relies on a consensus among local actors on how to construct a proper mix of incentives and coercion tailored to the context in question (Sedra 2004:220). The appropriate mix would preferably be coupled with the effort to create a security buffer to fill the vacuum that in Afghanistan has proven to occur in post-disarmament situations. The Afghanistan case demonstrates a clear lack of consensus on the choice of strategy for approaching NSAAs, a lack of awareness of the need of such a strategy and, a comprehension of how different strategies impact on the future of NSAAs in Afghanistan.

The empirical findings of this thesis demonstrate that the DDR efforts in Afghanistan have focused mainly on the disarmament and demobilization of NSAAs and to a lesser extent on reintegration into society, thereby supporting Strands (2008) findings. The long-term benefits of the program have consequently suffered, as reintegration is vital to the permanent disengagement of NSAAs from conflict. The Afghan economy offered few opportunities of employment for disarmed combatants. With unemployment, humanitarian needs follows, underlining the need for a broader focus also on reintegration as a part of the economic and political process in Afghanistan. It can be argued that DDR should emphasize reintegration in order for DDR to become more than just a symbolic and measurable act. Reintegration, in other words, is essential in ensuring long-term disengagement of NSAAs from armed actions. As
Strand (2008) argues the DDR planning and implementation should be “demilitarized”, meaning that there should be more emphasis on the demobilization and reintegration and not mainly on disarmament. Focusing on reintegration does not mean reintegrating all former combatants into the ANA or ANP. This may be an appropriate temporary measure, but goes against the aim of downsizing the national military after war.

Even though there were clear flaws with the DDR process, the ANBP did arguably mark a breakthrough in the SSR. It was a large scale and important program initiated to improve the security situation, even though it may not have been sufficient to turn the tide. The case of DDR in Afghanistan seems to demonstrate a rush for progress, disallowing the proper implementation of all aspects of DDR. According to Isezaki (2009), short-term benefits were prioritized over long-term objectives, as demonstrated by President Bush’s premature call for elections in Afghanistan and fast track implementation of premature DDR efforts deemed necessary to hold these elections.

As Strand (2008:239) finds, one of the lessons learned from the DDR process in Afghanistan is the notion that armed actors should be “regarded as possible agent of change”, not only as spoilers, and that the program of disarmament needs to be linked to the wider efforts of peace building to increase recognition and impact. This lesson learned leads us to the conclusion that the underlying realist assumption that local actors are not actors of peace is misleading and that the realist approach of coercion is unsustainable and insufficient when applied alone.

### 5.1.1 Summary

The above analysis suggests four main weaknesses in the Afghan process of DDR. First, the security vacuum emerging in the aftermath of the disarmament of commanders was filled by other NSAAs, thus largely cancelling out the initial positive effects of disarmament. Second, DDR efforts in Afghanistan have for a number of reasons neglected the reintegration aspect, and thus undermined the long-term effects of DDR. Third, Afghan DDR demonstrates a clear unwillingness to apply
disincentives for non-compliance, enabling NSAAs to benefit from economic incentives while failing to adhere to their responsibilities. Fourth, in failing to deal with mid-level commanders, DDR in Afghanistan failed to sever patronage links and the networks of NSAAs.

Despite these signs of weakness, DDR in Afghanistan also demonstrates some achievements. The large amount of weapons collected represents DDR’s main achievement along with meeting the DDR benchmark that allowed the electoral process to proceed. However, the failure of Afghan DDR in breaking up NSAA networks, the security vacuum filled by NSAAs, along with insufficient efforts of reintegration represents the primary legacy of ANBP.

5.2 Outcomes of the institutionalist approach

Institutionalism as a strategy to address NSAAs builds on the notion that states and non-state actors have some concurrent interests (Nee 2003:31). Institutionalism in the Afghan case is demonstrated by the states’ desire to control the warlords by offering governmental positions, and that the warlords are attracted to the offer based on a perception of that doing so would strengthen their power. The state and the warlords’ interests are concurrent in the sense that they are both potentially attracted to the same idea of co-optation, despite their diverging motivations for seeking co-optation. According to Mitrany (1975) the functionalist interpretation of the institutionalist approach suggests that external actors, in this case the NATO and its allies in Afghanistan, can shape local actors preferences by offering incentives like well-paid and influential governmental positions. The external party serves in this sense to facilitate co-optation by for instance negotiating an agreement or mediating between the state and the NSAAs. In Afghanistan, the international community has the power to serve as such an external actor in applying pressure on or mediating in co-optation processes.
The formation and management of a network of relationships with commanders, local leader and warlords characterize the institutionalist approach to NSAAs. The institutionalist theory presented by Schneckener (2009) predicts that co-optation of warlords will change their motivation and behaviour. The institutionalist approach thus builds on an underlying conviction of that NSAAs are not motivated by ideology. The institutionalist approach suggests that they are rather motivated by political demands and economic desires. Institutionalism moreover builds on the underlying perception that armed actors are important agents in peace- and state-building processes. Warlords are viewed as powerful and potentially essential actors in state building efforts as they have earlier functioned as proto-states within their territory.

President Karzai confirmed the power of local power brokers by including many of them in the interim administration, giving them political positions after the Emergency Jirga in 2002. Karzai chose to build his power basis on local warlords by offering them access to formal power structures. The Karzai administration largely avoided armed confrontation with warlords and criminally linked strongmen by accommodating them and including them into the central government. Karzai argued that the co-optation of warlords would advance national reconciliation. However, it may be argued that the decision was driven by concerns of alienating power brokers. Several provincial governors were transferred to similar posts in other provinces if they had performed inadequately, rather than being removed from office (Marten 2009; Middlebrook and Sedra 2005). This empirical evidence implies that the fear of a violent reaction superseded the imperative of good governance.

The inclusion of warlords largely served to expand their political and financial control from their provincial basis to also including access to the formal power structures in Kabul. This thesis has found that warlords have managed to retain many of their former illegal connections even after they were included into the central government, which has given them the opportunity to manipulate both formal and informal power structures to serve their individual interests (Lister 2007; Strand 2008). For instance, the processing and smuggling of opium is largely controlled by powerful strongmen
with close connections to the government. This suggests that the co-optation of warlords has led to a consolidation of organized crime (Blanchard 2004; Shaw 2006). The increasingly influential warlords and the consolidation of crime suggest that the co-optation of warlords into the Afghan government has not produced the desired effect. Most sources seem to agree that it may initially have been necessary to co-opt warlords in order to control them but that co-optation not necessarily represents a sustainable long-term solution for peace and stability.

As Abelsen (2010) argues, it is necessary to adapt SSR-initiatives to the real power structures that are present on the ground. In Afghanitan, societal structures are constructed across informal relations, ethnic affiliations, and corruption. Warlords play a significant role in this society, and it would appear natural to somehow incorporate them into the official state structures. According to Abelsen, Dostum has for instance been rendered harmless by being co-opted into the government. The local Afghan system based on personal relations between powerful men and strategic personal alignments is an intricate political game that can be difficult to comprehend for foreigners, but failing to relate to this pre-existing system will prevent the creation of a lasting solution for stability (Abelsen 2010). However, the notion of that the co-optation of warlords into the government may strengthen their criminal networks and lead to a loss of legitimacy for the central government presents a dilemma in the co-optation of warlords. The institutionalist approach does however predict that warlords by virtue of socialization will demonstrate a change in motivation and behaviour, and as a consequence will seize to be warlords (Schneckener 2009:24). The co-optation of warlords can in this sense in the long run transform warlords into representatives for the state possessing political legitimacy (Giustozzi 2009:8).

A challenge in the institutionalist approach is the creation of loyalty between NSAAs and the central government. Even though warlords and commanders are included into

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18 Personal Interview in Oslo on 17th of June 2010
the government, socialization does not take place automatically. The loyalty of NSAAs to the central government that emerge as a result of co-optation is merely superficial, and based on the economic incentives offered to the NSAAs. However, alignments are known to change swiftly in the Afghan society, and loyalty goes in layers first to the Afghan himself, secondly to his family, clan, and lastly to Afghanistan as nation (Abelsen 2010: Dahl 2010). Afghan commanders change loyalty as a matter of convenience, as has been illustrated historically by the numerous warlords changing sides with the turn of events. Loyalty is to Afghan warlords a matter of accessing benefits, and loyalty ties lasts only until someone offers superior benefits. Economic incentives can create loyalty, even though it may only be temporarily as it risks to be outbid by a more appealing offer. The risk in the Afghanistan case is that when the international community withdraws, the Afghan government will appear weak and warlords will again shift alliance out of convenience.

As illustrated in this thesis, to co-opt power brokers may seem as rational and even inevitable. However, the process of co-opting warlords will always run the risk of including actors that undermine the efforts of the government. Furthermore, the local population may not react positively to what they perceive as illegitimate people being given high-ranking positions in the central government. This may in turn contribute to weakening the legitimacy and public support of the government. However, when it comes to who is considered legitimate representatives or not, an important aspect is that it is difficult to find anybody that is untouched by the war that has ravaged Afghanistan for the past 30 years. Most actors, through their shifting alliances, have participated in larger or smaller operations where they have acted in ways that are perceived as illegitimate by one party or another (Knotten 2010). Unveiling the history of each warlord and satisfying everybody regarding their perception of legitimacy is in this respect an impossible task. The result is a situation in which what

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19 Personal Interview in Oslo on 18th of June 2010
20 Telephonic Interview on 22nd of June 2010
some perceive as illegitimate represent the government. Karzai’s power basis was built on the accommodation of warlords, and he would most likely not have been able to position himself as he has if he had not struck deals with the most powerful warlords. It may be difficult to comprehend the significance of such deals for non-Afghans, as co-opting warlords into the government may have been unavoidable in order to keep them under control. As Dahl (2010) notes “a bandit is better when he is your bandit”, a point certainly demonstrated by the Karzai government.

Informal power and informal networks matter in Afghanistan. Formal institutions has largely been absent at both provincial and district levels, increasing the importance and influence of the informal system of the Afghan society. In order to deliver progress on security, reconstruction and counternarcotics the Afghan society requires an ability to manage relationships, resources and influence beyond the formal structures of the state. In many cases, warlords has employed informal power and rules as well as their personal networks to control their respective provinces. Some warlords have in fact proven quite successful in the provision of security and reconstruction by such informal channels, as for instance Atta Mohammad Noor (Mukhopadhyay 2009:20). However, these informal system structures stands exposed to a range of problems such as corruption, inefficiencies and human right abuses. The success of warlords such as Noor is in this respect the exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless, the Noor-case illustrates that warlords do have potential as governance actors.

The former UN Secretary General’s Special Representative, Lakhdar Brahimi, has argued that the power possessed by warlords made it impossible to eliminate them during the initial period of the international engagement and that steps that could conceivable alienate them should be avoided (Sedra 2003b:14). Brahimi suggests that actions on transitional justice and on weeding out warlords should be delayed until the government is strong enough to handle it. However, ignoring the crimes committed by warlords and keeping incompetent warlords in the government may ultimately serve to exacerbate the Afghan security situation and undermine the legitimacy of the government (ibid). Co-optation appears in this respect as a conceivable option in the
initial phases of state consolidation, as warlords may be too powerful for the government to handle by other means. However, although this analysis suggest that co-optation of warlords may be necessary in the initial phases of state building as a matter of gaining control over the informal societal structures, the co-optation of warlords in the long run may undermine the legitimacy of the government by the manipulation of formal power structures.

5.2.1 Summary

Institutionalist theory suggests that NSAAs are in fact potential actors of security governance, and that NSAAs by a process of co-optation will undertake a motivational and behavioural change. However, in Afghanistan the result predicted along the lines of this logic has only marginally proven to be the case. This indicates that the institutionalist approach does not necessarily produce the behavioural and motivational change predicted by institutionalist theory. Co-opted warlords appear to have been able to manipulate formal and informal power structures, which has led to a consolidation of organized crime. Even though some warlords has proven able to provide services and security this has been the exception rather than the rule, as most co-opted warlords has left the government with a stained reputation. However, the fact that some warlords has been able to gain political legitimacy through their provision of security and services supports the notion of that NSAAs can potentially contribute constructively in the provision of security.

This analysis has illustrated that the co-optation of warlords in the initial phases of state consolidation and SSR may be difficult to avoid, as warlords often are powerful actors with considerable impact on the much important informal societal structures. However, unless warlords undergo a process of motivational and behavioural change they are likely to maintain their military legitimacy while failing to develop political legitimacy. Maintaining illegitimate actors in high-ranking positions of the government will undoubtfully in the long run severely undermine the states quest for legitimacy and good governance.
5.3 Outcomes of the constructivist approach

The constructivist approach to NSAAAs emphasizes social interaction, and is based on the concept of learning through cooperation. The process of learning is reciprocal and develops into the institutionalization of a set of common values shared by both parties involved in the cooperation. The constructivist approach is based on the notion that interaction leads to the shaping of a common identity and interest of the involved actors (Adler 2002; Jackson 2007; Schneckener 2009).

By founding an emerging security system on the traditional providers of security, this approach believes that the system will be tailored to the local context and thereby standing the best chance of sustainability. Accordingly, the government will strengthen its capacity by being able to provide security in the provinces, and the ANA and ANP will have the opportunity to become stronger and more capable. Through cooperation and interaction the security agents on both levels, local and national, would become more intertwined, more adapted and functional. Like the institutionalist approach, the constructivist does also build on an underlying conviction that NSAAAs are potential governance actors and not solely spoilers in SSR.

In Afghanistan, the constructivist approach has been implemented through the attempt of supporting local armed groups to fight the Taliban, and of creating security forces that are based on the model of a pre-existing security system, namely the Arbakai. These initiatives would, according to the logic of constructivism, create a security system based on pre-existing structures. This system would represent a bottom-up approach, and would according to theory in the long run develop into a common normative foundation shared by the government and the NSAAAs. The pre-existing security structure in Afghanistan is based on NSAAAs providing security to the population in their respective communities. It appears logical in this respect for the government to build security systems based on the local security system of NSAAAs. However, efforts of building security on local structures in Afghanistan, such as the ALP program, do not appear to have been motivated by a conviction of that bottom-up approaches produce more sustainable security structures. Rather, these initiatives
appear to have been motivated out of necessity, as the ANA and ANP have proved incapable of providing security throughout the country (Isezaki 2009; Thompson 2010). This has caused the Afghan government to pursue such a constructivist approach only in most insecure parts of the country, and thus failing to acknowledge the possible positive spillover effects of pursuing similar approaches also in the less insecure parts of the country.

In Pashtun areas, many villages have based its security on the *shura*-controlled *Arbakai* structure. Today, many traditional policing institutions such as the *Arbakai* still exist and have the potential of being engaged to fight the Taliban. As we have seen, local militias have not only been engaged in the fight against the Taliban; the government has also thrown its support behind the construction and maintenance of similar local militia structures throughout the country. Some of these attempts have been unsuccessful and discontinued, such as the ANAP. The ANAP armed and requested local groups to fight the Taliban, and thus undermined the previous efforts of DDR. Other programs have however been successful. According to Kilcullen (2010), examples of successful initiatives have been the APPP and the LDI. However, in spite of improving the security situation in some areas, the challenges appear to arise when the programs are transferred to new areas.

According to Jones (2010), local militia programs have been particularly beneficial in the South, by helping local leaders secure their areas, while it in other areas has had not positive effects at all. This suggests that the Afghan diversity makes it difficult to find and initiate one single solution throughout the country. Different provinces have different needs, calling for different strategies that are each tailored to their respective provinces. It appears as if the creation of militias resembling the *Arbakai* has proved effective in areas operating with *shuras* and *jirgas*, such as the Pashtun areas of Afghanistan. This again suggests that the constructivist approach has had some positive impact in Afghanistan, but that building local militias face better prospects in areas who have characteristics that resemble the *Arbakai*-structure. In Afghanistan,
there is no *one size fits all*, and the successful implementation of local militias’ initiatives demands a custom fit approach, tailored to the local needs and conditions.

Successful implementation of the constructivist approach relies on the ability to tailor the initiatives to the local conditions on the ground. In order to engage local actors they must be convinced that the engagement benefits the NSAAs themselves and in some cases their local communities (Strand 2008:258). An essential aspect of the constructivist approach is accordingly the government’s ability to address local grievances. Engagement with local actors can facilitate the identification of the needs and desires of the population, and the constructivist approach can in this respect be essential in the identification of an appropriate model that is tailored to the conditions on the ground, and that adequately addresses the needs of the people.

Some of the local defence programs, such as the ANAP, sent a dangerous political message: the program was inspired by a pashtun security structure, the *Arbakai*, and many of the actors participating in the program were pashtuns. The government, supported by NATO and its allies, was rearming local actors in the pashtun areas while simultaneously executing disarmament efforts of DDR in the north (Isezaki 2009). As Sedra notes “this served to factionalise the SSR process along ethnic lines” (Sedra 2004:220).

Most sources seem to agree that local militia programs could have negative effects in the long run as it could possible serve to empower old leaders or create new commanders. Furthermore, it is questionable whether the Afghan tradition of shifting loyalty out of convenience is compatible with the local militia programs, as these local militias could easily end up turning against the international forces and the Afghan government. It is also conceivable that an Afghan system based on local security militias would be particularly vulnerable to swift and unwanted changes. If the Afghan government and the international forces are perceived as weak, as they may well be when the international troops start to withdraw, local leaders may choose to shift their loyalty away from the central government (Barfield 2010). Many local leaders still have strong ties to their old structures and could easily withdraw from the
governmentally created system and return to their pre-2001 systems (ibid). To prevent such an outcome efforts must be made either to dismantle local militias after their objectives have been completed, and ANA and ANP has become stronger and more capable to serve its mandate, or to construct control mechanisms to prevent local militias from disengaging from governmental control. There are currently no strategies or control mechanisms for dealing with local militias in the aftermath of such programs.

The most recent program, the ALP, has improved its design through the lessons learned from similar programs. However, the concept of the ALP appears to be quite different from what the US Special Forces had in mind. The community militia program that was suggested by the US was based on the idea of a bottom-up approach, meaning that the militias would enjoy some degree of independence from the central government (rather relying on the Shuras). Karzai did however not approve this bottom-up and decentralized design, as he feared it would entail losing control over the militia. Karzai insisted that the leaders within the program would be chosen by the Ministry of Defense (MoI) rather than by the Shura (Rubin and Oppel 2010). MoI control of the ALP could be seen as a step in the right direction with regards to improving governmental control, or as a mechanism of state control. However, this centralization could expose the program to the risks of government inefficiencies and corruption. For instance, the selection of leaders could be based on nepotism and bribe instead of proficiency and suitability.

The constructivist approach reflects an underlying belief that SSR and peace building efforts should be based on bottom-up approaches. Such approach would by providing mechanisms and programs tailored to local circumstances be beneficial to a sustainable end result. Bottom-up approaches are known to be successful.21 Successful cases of centralized and top-down efforts, coming from governments supported by

21 For example, Uganda has sought to rebuild itself from the bottom up by empowering local councils and Somaliland has experienced a relatively successful bottom-up process of state-building (Kaplan 2009).
weak institutions, is much harder to find. Top-down approaches suffer from the risk of neglecting crucial characteristics and determining factors of local realities. It can be argued that the USSR and in more recent times the US and the international community initially tried to bring about changes in Afghanistan based on a top-down approach (Fange 2010:2ff). This US and international top-down approach was characterized by efforts to strengthen the government in Kabul while fighting insurgents in the provinces. These efforts have neglected to acknowledge that the Taliban in many cases gained the upper hand by operating based on local dynamics. The Taliban remained in close contact with local communities and managed in many cases to gain the support of local communities by acknowledging and addressing their local grievances (Jones 2009). As Cordman notes, “like politics, all counterinsurgencies are local” (Cordsman et al. 2008:129). Considering this statement, in addition to the limits of the ANA and the ANP, it is not surprising that US commanders and the Afghan government has tried to find alternative ways of reducing the pressure on the formal troops. By realizing how the Taliban profited from its ability to operate on local dynamics and the value of engaging local actors, the US has by local militia programs replaced the centralized strategy with a strategy of decentralized security efforts. The Afghan government has however been unwilling to adopt this decentralized strategy unconditionally, as illustrated by the Karzai’s unwillingness to decentralize security responsibility under the ALP.

Bottom-up approaches and cooperation with local actors may give the government the ability to address local grievances and to prevent communities from turning against the governmental efforts to stabilize the country. Despite the challenges and perils of engaging local security forces it might be the only path to provide security until the ANA and the ANP are strong and effective enough to do the job on its own. Until the Afghan government and the justice system are functioning at a proficient level, risking some militias turning into threats may be worth taking in the long run, as failing to address security vacuums on one side and relying on the weak security institutions on the other may prove to undermine any efforts of stabilizing or securing the Afghan society. Attempts of creating local security forces are however not absent significant
risks, and as Bhatia argues “when considering employing or utilizing these local militias, both international and national initiatives and programmes need to be evaluated in terms of whether these actions will transform community militias into strongmen militias” (Bhatia 2008:91). Creating local militias could cause unwanted effects, such as militias shifting loyalty after having been trained and equipped or the empowerment of old commanders. Such unwanted outcomes would seriously undermine the SSR process in Afghanistan.

As illustrated in this thesis, the Arbakai system is common only in some parts of Afghanistan. Duplicating such structures throughout the country may therefore prove to be a time-consuming affair. Furthermore, creating local militias based on Arbakai structure may prove unsuitable for non-pasthun areas, as people may be unaccustomed to communicating with and relying on local control mechanisms such as the jirga. The Arbakai structure appears effective mainly in areas demonstrating strong tribal characteristics, as is the case in Southeastern Afghanistan (Jones 2010). This again underlined the importance of adopting security efforts that are tailored to local circumstances, conditions and security systems. Duplicating Arbakai-type security systems to parts of the country unfamiliar with tribal structures may prove to undermine SSR in empowering warlords and their militias.

5.3.1 Summary

The constructivist approach addresses NSAAs by creating security models similar to those within which NSAAs operate, and aims to create security strategies based on a bottom-up approach. Constructivist theory predicts that involved actors will intertwine and develop a set of common values through a process of interaction and cooperation. In Afghanistan, the constructivist approach has been pursued by the creation of local militias based on the Arbakai-model. Such initiatives has been successful in some cases, and can enable the government to map local grievances and to address them accordingly. Until the ANA and the ANP develops adequate capacity to provide security throughout all of Afghanistan, the creation of local militias may very well be
the only option. However, relying on a *one-size fits all* in a diverse case such as Afghanistan appears to be counterproductive in some instances, as largely different conditions on the ground requires strategies and programs that are each tailored to the specific conditions to which they are applied. The constructivist approach has largely proven to be a double-edged sword. On one hand, local militia programs have proven useful in filling security gaps left by the inabilities of the ANA and the ANP. On the other hand, local militia programs are exposed to the risk of empowering militia leaders who in turn may use the militias for their own self-interest. This analysis finds that in order to counter such unwanted outcomes, control mechanism should be implement or strategies to dismantle the local militias after they have served their purpose should be developed. The efforts to engage tribes and local security structures should not come at the expense of fragile government structures rather they should serve to strengthen them.

5.4 To what extent can NSAAs contribute constructively in SSR?

This chapter has so far presented the outcomes of three differing strategies in dealing with NSAAs. The previous analysis has illustrated that the realist approach created a security vacuum that the government was unable to fill due to institutional weakness, and that the DDR efforts were insufficient to target all combatants and to follow up the disarmament with reintegration. The findings from the institutionalist approach suggests that co-optation in the initial phase of state consolidation may be inevitable in Afghanistan. However, the fact that NSAAs has not necessarily undergone the motivational and behavioural change that theory predicted, has resulted in NSAAs being able to manipulate formal state structures, which has led to a consolidation of organized crime. The findings from the constructivist approach suggest that NSAAs may have the potential in contributing constructively to the provision of security, and that the local engagement allows the government to map local grievances and to address them accordingly. However, such initiatives as the one presented within the constructivist approach is not without jeopardy, as they risk empowering local leaders.
The findings also suggest that in complex societies as Afghanistan, constructivist approaches must be tailored to the conditions on the ground.

The outcome of these three strategies implemented in Afghanistan suggests that there is no obvious answer to whether NSAAs are mere spoilers or potential contributors in the process of SSR. However, the analysis of the outcomes presented in this thesis suggests that NSAAs do have the potential to contribute constructively to SSR in Afghanistan. It does so however on a set of contextual preconditions.

The findings of this analysis suggest that NSAAs may have the potential of contributing constructively in SSR if they are subject to checks and balances through governmental or local control mechanisms. For instance, as demonstrated by the institutionalist approach in Afghanistan, NSAAs may continue their illegitimate activities after being co-opted into the central government, and they have demonstrated a will and ability to manipulate the formal structures to serve their self-interests (Lister 2007; Strand 2008). Such manipulation of formal structures takes undermines the legitimacy of the central government. Furthermore, if an accommodating framework is constructed based on incentives to address NSAAs, the evidence presented in this thesis suggests that incentives should be balanced with coercion. Adhering to this, if NSAAs would perform inadequately according to the goals of SSR, mechanisms should be created to remove NSAAs from power or to dismantle their security providing abilities. The outcomes of the constructivist approach in Afghanistan appear to support this view. In order to prevent old leaders from being empowered and to prevent local militias from turning against the government, control mechanisms should be implemented and strategies to dissolve militias after their have served their purpose should be developed. Developing control mechanisms could also be useful in altering the challenge of creating loyalty between the state and the NSAA. In sum, both the constructivist and the institutionalist initiatives suggests that the constructive potential of NSAAs in security governance presupposes that effective control mechanisms are in place.
Both the constructivist and the institutionalist approach both perceive NSAAAs as potential contributors in SSR. Both approaches also emphasize that a motivational and behavioural change is required to produce the desired effects. Absent such changes, warlords fail to gain political legitimacy and will consequently remain warlords, and the local security structures would not become intertwined and produce a set of norms and values common for both warlords and the central governing agencies and institutions. The findings of this thesis suggest that behavioural and motivational change and the merging of norms and values are not necessarily required preconditions for short-term benefits. However, in the long run, failing to change the nature of warlords would most likely undermine the stability and sustainability of the system in undermining the legitimacy of the state. In other words, to ensure the constructive long-term role of warlords in security governance, appropriate control mechanisms should be developed and applied to warlords failing to pass through the behavioural and motivational transformation institutional and constructivist theory predicts. Furthermore, strategies to disengage warlords that would not perform adequately should be developed.

The realist approach failed in Afghanistan to address NSAAAs efficiently. Many commanders resisted the governmental efforts to disarm the country, undermining the process by handing in old low-quality weapons, and by sending their least loyal combatants (Sedra 2008; Isezaki 2009). Failing to target incentives to the requirements on the ground and failing to apply disincentives for non-compliance may have undermined the opportunity to engage NSAAAs effectively. Another finding when analysing the outcome of the realist approach was the inability to address the security vacuum emerging after the disarmament efforts, which was related to the institutional weakness of the Afghan government and the international community’s lack of focus on the consequences such vacuum could cause (Isezaki 2009). This finding suggests that when the government and its security institutions are weak, addressing NSAAAs as mere spoilers may be challenging. It may be challenging for the government to disarm NSAAAs and in presenting itself as a credible actor that will provide security after local commanders have handed in their weapons. Furthermore, by ruling out the possibility
that NSAAs may have a potential as local governance actors the government may be risking a lost opportunity to create a viable security system while taking advantage of potential resources on the ground. In sum, it may be more favourable for the government to deal with NSAAs as potential governance actors, particularly in an initial period while strengthening the capacity of the ANA and the ANP.

As illustrated above, DDR processes are difficult to implement for weak governments. However, weak governments can successfully implement a realist approach if NSAAs undergoing a process of DDR see the clear linkage to the overall peace building process. NSAAs need to have enough trust in the process and in the actors implementing the disarmament to give up their arms and influence. In the Afghan case, neither trust nor understanding has been generated (Strand 2008:258).

Even if an implementation of a realist approach would be successful, with a subsequent creation of a centralized security system that would become strong and stable, it would not necessarily be adequate in Afghanistan. Such centralized system could arguably reinforce the gap between de jure and de facto state. Jones (2010) argues for a combination of centralized and decentralised security efforts in Afghanistan:

“During Afghanistan’s most recent stable period, that of the Musahiban dynasty (1929-78) the Afghan rulers Nadir Shah, Zahir Shah, and Daoud Khan – who established a republic in 1973 – used a combination of centralized and decentralized strategies that are worth emulating today” (Jones 2010:125).

During the Musahiban dynasty, Kabul provided security in the urban areas and along main roads, while local communities established and maintained security in the rural areas with the assistance of the central government. As Giustozzi (2009a) argues, a long-lasting stability will likely involve a combination of top-down institutionalization and bottom-up co-optation and socialization of local leaders. Having a de jure centralized system and a de facto decentralized system only reinforces illegitimate power structures rather than reinforcing the elected government in Kabul. Therefore, it may be argued that it would be beneficial to take advantage of NSAAs in SSR. Focusing exclusively on top-down strategies would be efficient in countries that have a
history of strong central institutions, while it in countries like Afghanistan may not produce the intended outcome (Jones 2010).22

Giustozzi (2009b) describes how bottom-up strategies are implemented by the Taliban, who aims at co-opting and socializing local leaders by playing on their grievance against the Afghan government and the international forces, and by offering economic incentives. Such bottom-up approaches implemented by the Taliban, illustrate how the Taliban has been able to reach out to the population by ways of many of the same strategies that are available to the government and the international forces. Through these bottom-up efforts, the Taliban has in many areas been able to gain the upper hand, suggesting that bottom-up strategies are an important aspect of Afghan security governance (Jones 2010). This implies that the international community would benefit from revising the strategy for managing NSAAs to match the effectiveness of Taliban’s bottom up-strategy. Revising the strategy would mean to expand the initiatives and programs within the constructivist and institutionalist approach to include other efforts than today. Such initiatives could also be implemented in relatively secure parts of the country in hopes of producing positive spillover effects into less secure parts of Afghanistan. It appears as if the Afghan fragmented society makes it difficult to neglect the impact of local security providers. Warlords and militias have throughout history largely ruled Afghanistan in a decentralized manner. This thesis suggests that in order for the Afghan government to provide security to the state and its population, ways must be found to bring aspects of these traditional structures into SSR in order to foster linkage between the traditional and modern security structures.

Berman (2010) draws a parallel between the state building efforts in Afghanistan and those undertaken by Louis XIV’s during his reign of France in the 17th century, where responsibility for security lay with local nobility that would today have been

22 Countries with a history of strong central institutions that has undergone top-down strategies of state building includes Japan after the Second World War and Iraq after 2003
characterized as warlords and militias. As part of the French state building, the King put the local power brokers at service for the French state. They were offered benefits and positions in the administrative centre of Versailles, enabling Louis XIV to watch over them while separating them from their respective power bases. Their economic advantages and their social status were in this manner taken care of. In Afghanistan, the challenge is how to deal with warlords and militias, and the example and parallel drawn by Berman (ibid) suggests that co-optation through the offering of incentives is sufficient in dealing with NSAAs. However, this thesis has found that the co-optation of warlords in Afghanistan has led warlords to gain influence over formal structures while continuing to retain their informal connections, leading to a consolidation of crime (Blanchard 2004; Shaw 2006).

Furthermore, this thesis suggests that the fear of a violent reaction has superseded the imperative of good governance, consequently leading to the loss of legitimacy for the government. Incentives alone may lead NSAAs to behave in ways that impact negatively on government legitimacy, as illustrated by the co-optation of warlords in Afghanistan. Coercion alone will in the long run become costly and will lead to chaos if not paired with efforts of stabilization and the rebuilding of authority. This implies that both carrots and sticks have to be used in dealing with NSAAs. By offering social and economic benefits that are targeted and carefully designed for its intent as dispense for NSAAs to stop fighting, with the threat of being crushed in war if they do not accept, they can be integrated in the government.

Central security institutions, such as the ANA and the ANP should be strengthened in order to be able to provide security. Such strengthening and capacity building takes time, and it may therefore in the short-run prove productive to utilize the potential in decentralized security structures (NSAAs). Taking advantage of the potential in NSAAs to provide security may not only be costly in financial terms for the government, but also in terms of honour and principle as NSAAs often have a record of human right abuses and shady business. However, it may be a cost worth paying, at least initially, while in the long-run warlords that fail to perform should arguably be
addressed to emphasize good governance and legitimacy. Accordingly, one may claim that acknowledging that there is a need to exploit the constructive potential in warlords and militias would be necessary, and that NSAAs are important actors in SSR.

The international community tend to assume that power in Afghanistan ought to be exercised from Kabul. Yet the real influence in Afghanistan has traditionally rested on tribal leaders and warlords (Bacevich 2009). NSAAs can arguably contribute to accomplish the objectives of SSR in a cheaper and more effective manner than US and international forces can achieve in isolation. One may therefore claim that the basis of the strategy towards NSAAs in Afghanistan should adopt strategies of decentralization and outsourcing of security provision, by offering the right mix of incentives and disincentives to local leaders who will collaborate with the government in keeping terrorists out of their territory. NSAAs contribution can go a long ways in peace and security processes if carefully planned, designed and supervised by control mechanisms. The task may simply be to find the appropriate ways to foster synergy between traditional and untraditional security actors.

What do these findings say about how to deal with NSAAs? The realist, institutionalist and constructivist approaches are not mutually exclusive, and they can and have been employed alongside each other as strategies for dealing with NSAAs. However, the objectives of these strategies have been severely obstructed by the lack of coherent strategy, awareness and understanding of how the three strategies impact on NSAAs. Successful handling of NSAAs relies on that the characteristics and motivation of NSAAs are closely mapped, and that the appropriate strategy for approaching the NSAA is chosen. Diagnosing the problem, so to speak, is crucial yet difficult in a complex landscape such as in Afghanistan. Choosing the appropriate strategy is a matter of identifying the type of actor, either a spoiler or a potential governance actor.
If an armed actor is, in Stedman’s (1997) terms, a *total spoiler*, a realistic approach of coercion appears to be the only viable option.\(^{23}\) Co-optation or attempts of socialization would in such cases be useless, making defeat the only way to hinder them from damaging the efforts of bringing security to a country. However, as found in this thesis, after defeating or disarming spoilers, reintegration still remains important in order to prevent them from falling back into their previous patterns. Reintegration would be possible after disarmament as they *per se* would seize to be an armed actors, nonetheless, reintegration should preferably take place in non-security occupations. An armed actor who has become a part of an armed group as a matter of financial motivations can be brought into settlement, either by co-optation or through a long-term strategy of socialization. In most instances, a combination of these strategies is probably beneficial. Most importantly, awareness about which strategy is used and what outcomes the strategy chosen can entail is required for successfully dealing with NSAAAs.

In addition to the choice of strategy itself, a number of other factors influence the outcomes of the initiatives aiming to deal with NSAAAs. First, it matters whether the initiative is implemented either before conflict erupts, during its course, or in the aftermath. Second, the characteristics of the actors in charge of the initiative matter, whether it is the government, its army, or international institutions. Third, the characteristics of the NSAA itself and the resources such as outside support and capable leadership it possesses matters (Schneckener 2009: 24).

The findings of this thesis suggest that scientific engagement with NSAA still faces several challenges that have been neglected in predominant strategies. Furthermore, that external actors and governments often lack knowledge about the armed groups

\(^{23}\) “Total spoilers pursue total power and exclusive recognition of authority and hold immutable preferences: that is, their goals are not subject to change. Total spoilers are led by individuals who see the world in all-or-nothing terms and often suffer from pathological tendencies that prevent the pragmatism necessary for compromise settlements of conflict. Total spoilers often espouse radical ideologies; total power is a means for achieving such goals as the violent transformation of society” (Stedman 1997:10)
they are dealing with, the range of options they have at their disposal, and the possible outcomes and consequences of each approach. Improving the knowledge about such issues would assist governments and international actors in making the most of the potential in NSAAs as constructive contributors in SSR.

This paper has explored NSAAs potential in serving as constructive contributors in SSR, finding that NSAAs may play an important role in the state-led provision of security. As illustrated in this thesis, this perspective emphasises efficiency rather than legitimacy, as many NSAAs has proven to influence the governments’ reputation negatively. However, creating a security system that builds on local security structures may in the eyes of many be perceived as legitimate, as it would reflect a bottom up approach based on the realities on the ground. Nevertheless, efficiency may initially be what is most important in Afghanistan in the short run to stabilize the country, while the long run may require a reformation of the security sector, placing emphasis on values such as legitimacy and good governance. As argued by Strand (2008), the opportunity of using local communities and actors has been missed in Afghanistan. The embedded option has not been recognized. Rather, the fear of NSAAs as spoilers of the efforts of create peace and stability has outshined a deeper understanding of the mechanisms at play in the Afghan society (Strand 2008:258). The findings of this thesis support this argument, and claims that there is a potential in NSAAs to contribute constructively in the provision of security. This is particularly the case in societies such as Afghanistan, consisting of weak security institutions incapable of providing security to the state and its people, and with a history of complex local security systems made up of powerful local leaders. It may be challenging to make NSAAs security actors serving the state. However, they could at a minimum serve as security guarantors – providing a guarantee for law and order. Such role would utilize the potential in NSAAs to contribute constructively in the provision of security.

This thesis asks about the extent to which NSAAs can contribute constructively in SSR. The short answer to this question is that NSAA are in fact potential constructive contributors to SSR processes, but that this potential is conditional. It is conditional in
the sense that not all NSAAs have this potential. In sum, NSAAs can be categorized in three broad categories:

The first category are those NSAAs who are unwilling to participate in SSR regardless of the incentives and disincentives presented by the state or other external actors, often as a matter of ideological convictions and motivation. These NSAAs are, by definition, total spoilers who undermine both the legitimacy of the state and its monopoly on the use of force, thus representing a major challenge to peace and security. Total spoilers warrant and require powerful means, best suited for realist approaches such as coercive disarmament.

The second category of NSAAs is those who are willing to participate in SSR as a matter of gaining access to the incentives offered by the state, but who are unable or unwilling to undergo the behavioural and motivational change predicted by institutionalist and constructivist theory. By granting NSAAs who fail to discontinue illegitimate activities, such as drug trade, access to formal state structures, state legitimacy may suffer as a result. Despite this obvious barrier to their constructive potential in SSR the inclusion of such NSAAs may in fact provide a range of short-term benefits to SSR. First, including such NSAAs allows the state to refocus its resources to cope with the total spoilers-category, which have no potential whatsoever. Second, including such NSAAs precludes their insurgency against the state. Third, including such NSAAs allows the state to monitor their actions and behaviour. As this second category of NSAAs simultaneously contributes to security through SSR and challenge the legitimacy of the state, the central government must develop and implement control mechanisms and strategies for neutralizing the challenge these NSAAs represent.

The third category of NSAAs is those who are both able and willing to participate in SSR, and who undergo the behavioural and motivational change predicted by constructivist and institutionalist theory. By gaining political legitimacy such NSAAs demonstrate substantial long-term potential as constructive contributors to the
provision of security while challenging neither the legitimacy of the state nor its monopoly on the use of force.

5.5 Summary

This thesis finds that NSAAs have the potential to contribute constructively in the provision of security. Using traditional structures in state building appear to be particularly useful when governments lack the ability to provide security throughout the country. Even though NSAAs would not undergo the motivational and behavioural change predicted by theory, NSAAs would in the short run still be benefactors in the provision of security. To profit from the security potential in NSAAs control mechanisms would have to be implemented or long-term strategies developed to disengage NSAAs if they complete their purpose or if they should not perform adequately. Engaging NSAAs in stabilizing the country could lead to synergy effect between traditional and centralized security structures, allowing an improved governmental capacity to provide security in a security system tailored to the Afghan context. Such system would also be more efficient in mapping local grievances and concerns, to be able to address them accordingly. As illustrated in this thesis, employing the potential in NSAAs as constructive contributor in the provision of security would entail, in the short run, to ignore the effect co-optation or socialization could have on the governments’ legitimacy, rather prioritizing efficiency in providing security. Taking advantage of the potential in NSAAs as providers of security may stain the governments’ reputation. However, it may be a cost worth paying, at least initially, while the formal security structures are strengthening. Accordingly, one may claim that an acknowledgement that NSAAs have the potential of contributing constructively in SSR would be necessary.
6. Conclusion – implications for theory and practice

The objective of this study has been to explore the extent to which NSAAs can contribute constructively in SSR by analyzing and drawing lessons from different approaches to NSAAs in Afghanistan. This thesis has investigated the outcomes of three specific cases of SSR-initiatives within the case of Afghanistan, each representing a different strategy for coping with NSAAs as they are presented by Stedman (1997). These three strategies are in turn affiliated with a particular strand of international relations theory, which provides a logical and theoretical foundation for analyzing and understanding how each strategy and its associated initiatives are intended to impact on NSAAs and the security situation in Afghanistan. The three theories presented diverge on the issue of whether or not NSAAs have the potential to play constructive roles in the provision of security. Realism declines this notion and suggests that national government must develop strategies for neutralizing NSAAs. Both institutionalism and constructivism, on the other hand, embraces the notion of NSAAs as potential benefactors that can and should to some extent be integrated into security processes and SSR.

Chapter 2 of this thesis presented the methodological considerations and challenges related to this research project. Chapter 3 served two purposes. First, it outlined a theoretical framework that explains the underlying logics of the three strategies for handling NSAAs in Afghanistan. Second, it defined the key concepts of this study. Chapter 4 presented the empirical substance of this study. It briefly describes and discusses the characteristics of two types of NSAAs in Afghanistan, namely warlords and militias. Further, it presents how three initiatives for handling NSAAs have been implemented in Afghanistan, each representing its respective theoretical logic. Chapter 5 analysed the outcomes of the three initiatives presented in Chapter 4, upon which the following discussion on the extent to which NSAAs can contribute constructively in SSR was based.
Two main conclusions can be derived from the analysis presented in this thesis:

1. NSAAs are potential constructive contributors in SSR. This potential relies first and foremost on the NSAAs will and ability to contribute, and secondly on whether or not it in contributing undergoes a behavioural and motivational change.

This thesis has demonstrated that NSAAs can yield significant benefits in SSR. The potential in NSAAs would be rendered useful only if the NSAA would be willing to contribute to the state-led efforts to enhance security within the given territory. This willingness could be influenced by applying incentives and disincentives for non-compliance. Both institutionalism and constructivism suggest that NSAAs would undergo a process of motivational and behavioural change by virtue of co-optation and socialization respectively. This analysis has however proven that this change may not always occur. NSAAs that are subject to socialization or co-optation but that fail to undergo a behavioural and motivational change may nevertheless serve the overall purpose of SSR, as it by providing security allows the state to focus its resources on the crucial strengthening of key security institutions. The strengthening of security institutions can thus in the short run take precedence over concerns of legitimacy. However, a set of control mechanisms and strategies for removing those NSAAs who have outplayed their benefactor role or who are unable to commit to the process must be established. Those NSAAs that would undergo the motivational and behavioural change that theory predicts could be constructive contributors in the long run by gaining political legitimacy.

2. Institutional weakness in post-conflict societies presents significant barriers to the successful implementation of realist strategies towards NSAAs. The Afghan case of DDR illustrates in this respect the need for developing alternative and complementary strategies for handling NSAAs.

This thesis has found that the realist approach, represented by coercive disarmament in DDR, produced a security vacuum that the government due to its institutional weaknesses was unable to fill. This implies that formal governmental institutions,
especially those pertaining to security such as police and armed forces, must be at a
certain operational level in order for the government to be able to provide security
after NSAAs has given up their weapons. Furthermore, the government must come
across as a credible security actor in order for targeted incentives and disincentives to
be effective. All in all, the DDR processes in Afghanistan demonstrate that weak
security structures of states seriously challenges the objectives of DDR, and thus
suggest that alternative strategies for handling NSAAs should be developed and
implemented. The findings of this thesis does not in any manner minimize the
importance of DDR in post-conflict societies, rather it suggest that the benefactor role
of NSAAs should not be underestimated.

I sum, exploiting the potential of NSAAs in providing security allows for a bottom-up
and decentralized approach to security governance. Including NSAAs could be vital in
the initial period of state consolidation, as it allows the government to strengthen its
capacity for providing security to the state and its people. Moreover, engaging with
NSAAs allows the government to address local grievances, to monitor their activities,
and to create a security system reflecting the conditions on the ground.

6.1 Theoretical implications

International relations theories have proven useful for understanding the underlying
logic and perceptions within the different strategies in dealing with NSAAs. The
combination of realism, institutionalism and constructivism provides a fruitful
theoretical framework for explaining the strategies available in addressing NSAAs
either as spoilers or as potential providers of security. The analytical framework
proposed in this study provides a way to facilitate an understanding about how to
address NSAAs and why to address them in such manner, and predicts a certain
outcome of each approach. The findings of this thesis suggest that realist, institutional
and constructivist theories are complementary concerning NSAAs, a comprehensive
approach to NSAAs requires lending bits and pieces from all three theories. The
theoretical framework gives an example of how international relations theories can be
used to assist scholars in studying strategies in dealing with NSAAs within SSR in a more precise and systematic manner.

### 6.2 Political implications

SSR programs must recognize the presence of NSAAs in the earliest stages of planning and program design, and develop strategies for addressing NSAAs in SSR activities. Management of NSAAs requires awareness about and a nuanced understanding of their characteristics, dynamics and structures in order to determine the appropriate mix of approaches. Essential to successful handling of NSAAs in SSR is a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches, and a tailored mix of coercive disarmament, co-optation and socialisation. The realist, constructivist and the institutionalist approaches are arguably all measures that could have contributed to shifting the “rules of the game” in Afghanistan if applied within a coherent strategy based on knowledge and understanding of the local context. Such coherent and knowledge based strategies could contribute to a more efficient security by bridging the gap between *de jure* and *de facto* security structures and by creating synergy effects between traditional and modern systems of governance. By exploring the strengths and weaknesses of realist, institutionalist and constructivist approaches to NSAAs in Afghanistan this thesis provides insight useful to future development of strategies for managing NSAAs in post-conflict SSR.

### 6.3 Future prospects

This research has offered a contribution to the important debate on the role of NSAAs within peace building and security sector reform. It has contributed to the increased knowledge about NSAAs as constructive contributors in the provision of security and on how to develop strategies to deal with NSAAs within SSR. The study should therefore provide a good foundation for further research on NSAAs within peace and state building. However, several interesting questions still remains unanswered: how to create effective and viable control mechanisms, for instance, remains an important
issue. In order to further increase the knowledge on how to handle NSAAAs in SSR one could either perform a similar analysis on a different case, or perform a comparative analysis for instance between Afghanistan and another NSAA-troubled state such as Sudan.
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Appendix I – List of Interviewees

**Bjørn Robert Dahl**, Colonel, Senior Staff Officer for lessons learned in the Norwegian Armed Forces, and former Senior Mentor for 1st Brigade 209 ANA Corps, ISAF. *Personal Interview 18.6.2010*

**Ivar Knotten**, Lieutenant Colonel, Former PRT Commander (des 2009-june 2010). *Telephonic interview on 22.06.10*


**Mark Sedra**, Senior Fellow at the *Centre for International Governance Innovation* (CIGI) with extensive experience on security issues in Afghanistan. *Telephonic interview on 17.7.2009*

**Roy Abelsen**, Colonel, former Senior Mentor in OMLT 1st Brigade, 209th. *Personal Interview in Oslo on 17.06.2010*

**Shinichi Kobayashi**, Assistant Director, Afghanistan Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan. *Personal Interview in Tokyo on 09.12.2009*

**Dr. Thomas Barfield**, president of the American Institute for Afghanistan Studies. *Telephonic Interview on 21.06.10*