Losers of Peace: Assessing the Role of the Crime-Terror Nexus in War-to-Peace Transitions: A Case Study of Afghanistan

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Abstract

The threat posed to the fragile security environment of post-conflict zones by criminal and terrorist groups have been a serious concern of peacebuilding for the last two decades. Through technological advancement and globalization, academia has started to put more emphasis on the possibility of convergence between these groups. The convergence threat has been particularly salient throughout the Afghan peace process. As the stage of a destructive and enduring conflict, and a peace mission that has been ongoing for more than a decade, Afghanistan has been the perfect host of crime and terror groups, the biggest example of which is the Taliban. Using the "Crime-Terror Continuum Theory" of Makarenko (2004), this research assesses how crime-terror groups have been affecting the success and failure of the Afghan post-conflict transitions to peace. The processes of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR) are taken as the focal point of post-conflict transitions. The crime-terror continuum in practice is analyzed through a case study of the Taliban in Afghanistan. By conducting a content analysis of various official UN documents, NATO statements, articles by the Afghan Analysts Network and think-tank reports from the Afghan Institute of Strategic Studies, the study finds that the gradual evolution of the Taliban into a hybrid/convergent crime-terror organization has undermined the effectivity of the Afghan peace process, especially with regards to the reintegration phase.

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Introduction

On 6 August 2020, the Executive-Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Ghada Waly gave a speech introducing a recent UN Security Council Secretary-General report. The report, compiling information from 50 member-states and several different UN bodies, was the result of a long-standing effort to understand and combat the linkages between organized crime and terrorism. It read:

> *"Terrorism and organized crime undermine the rule of law and human rights as the foundations of peaceful, inclusive and prosperous societies. The ability of terrorists to draw on organized crime, whether domestic or transnational, online or offline, can exacerbate the threat posed by terrorism to international peace and security."* (UNSC, 2020, p. 16).

At a time when the COVID-19 pandemic was topping agendas, this report demonstrated how serious a concern the crime-terror nexus could be for deteriorating security conditions in vulnerable regions.

Among the many conflict regions in the world right now, this threat can be best observed in the case of Afghanistan. As the stage of one of the lengthiest international interventions in history, Afghanistan harbors numerous criminal, terrorist, insurgent and extremist groups who constant interact with each other (Peters & Rassler, 2010). Continuous war conditions have left the population and infrastructure in detriment -the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project reports that there have been approximately 6000 civilian casualties just in the last 5 years- a factor which has allowed the aforementioned groups to benefit from further conflict. As Afghanistan has entered a transition period with ceasefire efforts and peace negotiations between the Taliban, the U.S and the Afghan government, the threat of crime and terror groups to the fragile environment has grown.

To investigate the linkages between terrorism and organized crime, these concepts must first be defined. While organized crime was a stand-alone concept until the 19th century, it gradually became merged with transnational crime. This broad, connected understanding of transnational organized crime (TOC) was catalyzed by softening norms of borders, sovereignty and international cooperation. Three core elements can be found in contemporary definitions of TOC that international organizations like the UN now work with: (1) profit motivation, (2) provision of illicit goods and services, (3) involvement of multiple states in the execution, planning or impact of the crime (Albanese, 2012, p. 2; UNODC, 2002 September, p. 4). TOC

is thus defined as "serious profit-motivated criminal actions of an international nature where more than one country is involved" (UNODC, n. d)

Delineating terrorism is difficult considering the amount of political and ideological subjectivity associated with the term, and wide disagreement between states and scholars (Bakker & Pinkse, 2015, p. 44). Nevertheless, research has continuously identified shared qualities among 'terrorist' groups. This is exemplified by the work of Alex Schmid, who had executed a mass review of terrorism literature and identified key attributes of terrorist activity that had 'academic consensus': spreading fear, employing violence, operating covertly, political motives, symbolic and random targeting of civilians etc. In 2004, Schmid gave an aggregated definition incorporating these attributes:

> *"Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby - in contrast to assassination - the direct targets of violence are not the main targets."* (Schmid, 2004, p. 382).

Worries of an evolutionary or instrumental relationship between TOC and terrorism are not new, and have been present in domestic and international security policy circles for the last two to three decades. The multipolar global power dynamics left behind by the end of the Cold War and the ensuing globalization of the world economy led to these groups becoming more transnational and acquiring more power (Albanese, 2012). Crime or terror groups supported and used by states as proxies during the Cold War needed to reexamine their operational capabilities and find new sources of finance (Makarenko, 2004, p. 134). 9/11 then brought unprecedented attention to malicious non-state actors, particularly terrorist groups, as potential global threats (O'Connell, 2005, p. 436). Finally, the contemporary advance of technology and cyberspace gave organized criminals and terrorists access to each other, and the ability to diversify their functions and methods. For instance, it is now easier for terrorist groups, for whom the state crackdown is normally much harsher, to acquire illicit funding and weapons covertly through the internet (UNODC, 2012; Makarenko, 2004, p. 130).

These developments have created enormously increased academic literature on a joint threat posed by crime-terror groups. The foundations of this literature were laid by Makarenko (2004) who developed the "crime-terror continuum theory". This continuum positions four potential types of relationship between TOC and terrorism on a spectrum, ranging from alliance to 'convergence' [Figure 1]. At this point of convergence, a clear distinction between a criminal and a terrorist group no longer exists; a convergent entity "initially displays characteristics of both groups simultaneously, but has the potential to transform itself into an entity situated at

the opposite end of the continuum from which it began." (p. 135) According to Makarenko, convergence is particularly likely to occur for crime and terror groups operating in post-conflict transitioning environments, owing to the concept of 'black holes': "situations in which weak or failed states foster the convergence between transnational organized crime and terrorism, and ultimately create a safe haven for the continued operations of convergent groups." (p. 138).

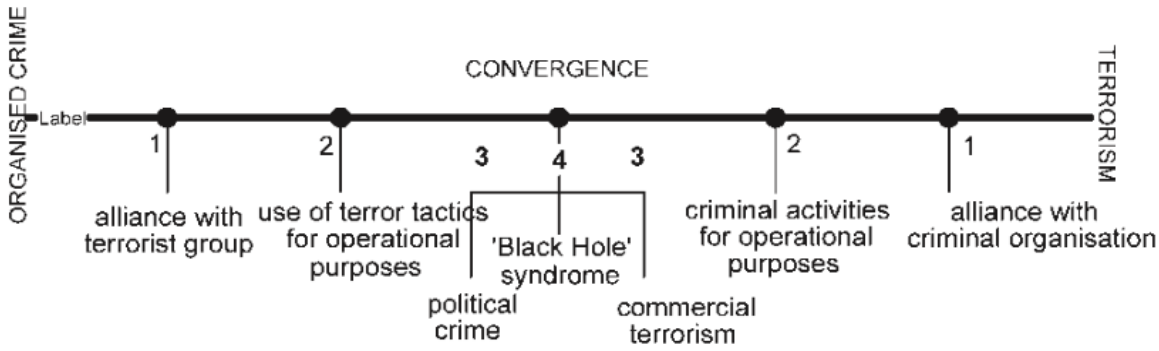

Figure 1: Makarenko's (2004) Crime-Terror Continuum

Using the example of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, de Wijk (2014) illustrates how terrorist groups can use safe havens as a stage or a resource pool even when their main base of operations is elsewhere. This cross-border activity is a definitional characteristic of TOC groups, suggesting the verity of a crime-terror continuum. The 'black hole' thesis demonstrates that the crime-terror nexus can become a self-reinforcing threat during and after conflicts: "[…] the consequent threat to security constituted by the crime-terror nexus is a 'black hole' country in which a single organization involved in organized crime and terrorism can affect the flourishing propagation circumstances without fear of consequences from governmental authorities." (Mirdad, 2020, p. 267). According to Phillips and Kamen (2014), not many contemporary examples of 'black hole' countries exist, except for Afghanistan which possesses the preconditions of one. The authors argue that Afghanistan has become a "sanctuary […]to a number of terrorist groups and transnational organized criminal groups." (p. 43) Their work, and that of scholars like de Wijk, have shown that the 'black hole' is not merely a theoretical trope, but a rapidly emerging reality for post-conflict transitioning regions, particularly Afghanistan.

The presence of terrorists or criminal organizations in active or transitioning conflicts means there are more parties interested in keeping the violence and division alive. Criminal organizations are profit-motivated, and conflicts provide excellent environments for these organizations to flourish (Mirdad, 2020, p. 273). Weakened or contested state borders lower the risks and costs of smuggling or illegal trade (Peters & Rassler, 2010, p. 26). Wartime conditions leave populations desperate for money or protection, creating a pool of recruits and,

if the weakened state cannot provide for citizens, an opportunity for groups to legitimize and heroize their activities in the public eye. Due to the diversion and decreased checks on government, public officials are bribed more easily. There is also increased demand for firearms or soldiers, which criminal groups can provide illegally.

The crime-terror nexus evolves when conditions offer such convenience. As Makarenko (2004) notes: "[…] it is in the interest of criminal and terrorist groups -invariably within unstable regions- to form alliances to ensure that an environment conducive to both their needs is sustained." To fund or legitimize themselves, organizations form inter-group relationships that can eventually progress into convergence. Even after active conflict ends, the increased number and resources of crime-terror organizations can impede the post-war peace process. This is especially true for countries experiencing difficult or volatile transitioning periods. In a seminal work arguing that the proliferation of TOC could threaten the survival of the nation-state if left unregulated, Shelley (1995) wrote: "These groups are often more successful when their efforts are conducted in nation-states that are in political transition […]" (p. 468). Whereas organized crime networks alone can have this effect, hybrid crime-terror organizations can potentially reverse the fragile war-to-peace transformation.

War-to-peace transitioning is a broad and complex process with multiple stages, and the establishment complete peace after active conflicts may take decades. Nevertheless, two vital peace and security-building practices can be highlighted: DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration) and SSR (security sector reform). According to McFate (2010), DDR constitutes "the processes that safely transition combatants back to civilian life" and SSR ensures the "reconstitution and professionalization of security institutions and actors" (p. 2). In post-conflict zones with weak or failed states, DDR & SSR mainly aim to ensure that the state can regain monopoly on the use of force (Von Dyck, 2016). Scholars like Von Dyck (2016) who have investigated DDR and SSR practices in real-life war-to-peace transitions (e. g Mali, Sierra Leone, Liberia) have argued that a crucial part of DDR is "political bargaining processes that occur between state and non-state actors vying for power." (p. 16). The non-state actors herein discussed are a variety of criminal, terrorist, insurgent and guerilla organizations who have directly or indirectly perpetuated the conflict. The way crime-terror groups engage in or influence political bargaining is thus a vital determinant of whether DDR and SSR will advance.

Many scholars have used empirical cases to discern the added value of the crime-terror continuum in explaining why post-conflict peace procedures can fail. Proof of evolution, convergence or instrumental alliances between criminal and terrorist groups have been found by studies on the Hezbollah network in the U. S, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, the civil

war in Sierra Leone and other countries in Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa (Belli et. al, 2015; Rosato, 2016; Alda & Sala, 2014; Leggett et. al, 2005). However, further literature, such as the case studies of Jupp & Garrod (2019) on the Provisional IRA during The Troubles in Ireland and the comparative study by Clarke & Lee (2008) on the Indian crime syndicate D-Company, have revealed that Makarenko's model may not be so universal, or have significantly more explanatory power than models looking at crime and terror separately. One reason this debate exists is the difficulty of investigating the real-life effects of the crime-terror continuum, given the fact that international peace-building missions often acknowledge and combat crime and terror as separate threats in the first place.

This research aims to address these debates and understand whether the crime-terror continuum theory can help in assessing the threat of terrorism and TOC in post-conflict transitions. In doing so, it focuses particularly on the role of crime-terror organizations as potential spoilers of DDR and SSR, and takes Afghanistan -a failed state by many accounts- as an illustrative case wherein both crime-terror organizations and post-conflict peace processes are abundantly present. Hence, the research question is outlined: "What is the effect of the nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism on DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration) and SSR (security sector reform) processes in Afghanistan?"

Theoretical Framework

In studying how the crime-terror nexus affects DDR and SSR in war-to-peace transitions, the research employs several theories and concepts. The first is Makarenko's (2004) crime-terror continuum theory. As Figure 1 shows, organized crime and terrorism are situated on opposite ends of a line, at which point they have entirely separate goals, methods and capabilities. Moving from these opposite points towards the center, an alliance that organized crime groups form with terrorists, or vice versa, is encountered first. Makarenko posits that alliances may have different purposes such as desire for operational expertise or support, giving "access to smuggling routes" as an example. Next, and closer to the central convergence point, is the use of organized crime or terror tactics for the converse organization. Crime and terror groups favor developing internal capabilities instead of 'outsourcing' operations via alliances, and this stage indicates that a group has started to adapt tactics normally associated with the opposite actor.

The final point of the continuum constitutes three concepts: political crime, commercial terrorism and the 'black hole'. Political crime and commercial terrorism refer to groups who use their original methods for opposite motives at a smaller scale, while black holes present an

instance of complete convergence. Following Makarenko's argument, convergent groups continue to use terrorist methods to perpetuate their existence even as the purpose of that existence is purely criminal profit, but are capable of changing this dynamic and evolving again anytime. This in turn reinforces the transformation of a vulnerable post-war state into a black-hole state. The threat of convergence in transitioning states is the main area for concern in peace-building, which is why the analysis will pay attention to convergent organizations the most.

Several scholars have modified Makarenko's model; Shelley & Picarelli (2005), for example, used empirical case studies and the PIE (preparation of the intelligence environment) method based on intelligence reports to assess the likely areas of cooperation for criminal and terrorist groups. The authors then created another evolutionary relationship spectrum called the "terror-crime interaction spectrum" (p. 53). The spectrum starts with 'activity appropriation' (i.e groups borrowing some techniques from other groups), resembling Makarenko's second stage: 'use of terror/crime tactics for operational purposes'. Next, groups start buying and selling goods and services from each other, or 'outsourcing'. This interaction eventually develops towards a 'symbiotic relationship', mirroring Makarenko's idea of 'alliance'. According to Shelley and Picarelli, as symbiotic groups move closer, they become hybrid, meaning a singular actor is simultaneously a criminal and a terrorist group. Lastly, this group may 'transform', dropping one characteristic and once again becoming one or the other.

Despite the different ordering, the "interaction spectrum" closely resembles the crime-terror continuum, and does little to constructively amend or replace it especially in relation to the concept of convergence. The detailed distinction between Makarenko's seven levels allows a more nuanced analysis compared to models with less categories like Shelley & Picarelli's. In the authors' words: "The true utility of the terror-crime interaction spectrum is to suggest the possibilities to investigators and analysts and to ensure that they understand the use of terms like "nexus" and "hybrid"" (p. 54). The crime-terror continuum theory thus has higher theoretical power.

Based on the extant literature, the research preliminarily assumes that the crime-terror nexus harms the success of post-conflict peace transitions, and investigates the ways in which this damage can occur. Following the 'black hole' thesis, the second concept the research builds on is 'spoilers', which is well-established in security and peace-building literature. Notable work was done on this subject by Stedman (1997), who wrote that spoilers are actors "who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview, and interests, and use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it", and who pose great risks for peace processes (p.

5). Although Stedman only briefly discusses organized crime groups, other scholars such as Garzón-Vergara (2015) and Williams (2009) have written extensively on how criminal organizations or profit-motivated terror groups are prime examples of spoilers. Williams (2009) argued, for example, that:

> *"[…] organized crime proved to be the unrecognized joker in the pack, or to use Steven Stedman's term, 'spoilers'. Though Stedman focused narrowly on such spoilers in the negotiations to end conflict, his concept has much broader applicability: spoilers have an impact well beyond hindering or derailing peace negotiations; they can also inhibit reconstruction and development and become major obstacles to state-building."* (p. 1).

A group positioned anywhere within the crime-terror continuum fits this definition of a spoiler and can pose risks for post-conflict peace as such. Building on Stedman's (1997) theory, it can be argued that these groups can spoil post-conflict peace processes, namely the processes of DDR & SSR, just as they may spoil peace negotiations. Since DDR and SSR aim to establish security and stability in post-conflict environments, they are instrumental for a peaceful transition (McFate, 2010). These processes are also inherently linked; achieving DDR is not sufficient for successful transition without comprehensive security sector reform, and vice versa. While SSR should logically follow from effective DDR, reintegration is the linking phase. Consequently, the security sector should already be partially reconstituted and professionalized for former fighters to be reintegrated into society (McFate, 2010, p. 1).

Due to their benefit from ongoing conflict and their *modus operandi*, organized criminal groups pose an obvious threat and challenge for DDR & SSR. The same can be true for terror groups, particularly if the group is concerned more with organizational survival than the achievement of their political motives. As Fortna (2015) argues, "terrorism driven by spoiling thus contributes to survival but does nothing to help a group achieve its political goals." (p. 530). Per the definition of terrorism given by Schmid, having political goals is a vital tenet of terrorism. Terrorists reliant on spoiling the peace process, especially one they are already a party to, have likely abandoned or neglected political objectives as a solitary or primary motive. This argument can be applied in the context of the crime-terror continuum as well. When terrorism evolves into or adapts the methods of organized crime groups, their interests shift. They no longer have political concessions as an end goal, and are instead concerned most with profit and organizational survival (Peters & Rassler, 2010, p. 92). They can leverage their existent means and status to become richer and more powerful through criminal activity. Successful DDR & SSR threaten this prospect. Hence, terrorist groups who start to move on

the crime-terror spectrum towards a more organized criminal character will have an increasingly larger interest in spoiling DDR & SSR.

Research Design and Methodology

This research aims to observe whether the crime-terror continuum can contribute to the understanding of why DDR and SSR efforts may fail in certain post-conflict peace transitions. For this purpose, an explanatory small-N case study design is employed. Case studies are a comparative method allowing researchers to explore both the detailed background of a given case and its position within a wider empirical reality (Halperin & Heath, 2017, p. 214). Due to the complex nature of the crime-terror continuum, the best observation of the individual stages can be made with such an in-depth investigation. For the research to succeed, the analysis of the case must have both internal and external validity; it must say something meaningful about a wider theoretical framework based on findings from its specific context.

The research focuses on the war-to-peace transition of Afghanistan, or failure thereof, and investigates the role of the Taliban in this context. This is a critical case selection, for many reasons. The Afghan peace process is an immensely relevant topic, as 2021 saw renewed vigor in the UN-mediated negotiations between the U.S government and the Taliban. There is not yet a fully implemented ceasefire, and smaller-scale urban violence by armed groups continues despite the presence of a UN peace mission for the last two decades. Moreover, Afghanistan not only constitutes a failed state, but one with extensive terrorism and TOC. Mirdad (2020) states: "Afghanistan is a war-torn country and weak governance, terrorism, narcotics, illegal mining, poor border control, and widespread corruption provide the perfect opportunity for convergence of the Taliban with organized criminal and insurgent groups in the region." (p. 266). USA's commitment to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan, and the ensuing power vacuum, could exacerbate these conditions, transforming the country into a full safe haven for said groups. Aside from the Taliban which allegedly controls approximately 70% of Afghan territory, countless terror and crime groups are still active in Afghanistan, such as Al-Qaeda and the Haqqani crime-insurgency network. Presently, these factors make Afghanistan one of the biggest 'black hole' states in the world (Phillips & Kamen, 2014, p. 43; Makarenko, 2004, p. 138). Lastly, research has shown that the failure of the Afghan war-to-peace transition can partly be attributed to the shortcomings of effective DDR and SSR. McFate (2010) observes: "In some parts of Afghanistan where the reach of national law enforcement is limited, Afghans have turned to tribal authorities or the Taliban to provide security and justice." (p. 2-3).

The research uses qualitative content analysis to account for historical, political and social elements that factor into the findings. Qualitative research designs work primarily with non-numerical data, and different types of qualitative research use different materials: interviews, historical documents, recordings, first-hand observations etc. Qualitative content analysis "involves the systematic analysis of textual information" in a way that allows researchers to assess deeper meaning, beyond the frequency or order of words (Halperin & Heath, 2017, p. 345-346). For this research, content analysis is used to understand how the DDR & SSR processes unfolded in Afghanistan and to capture the position of the Taliban during these processes. Contextuality is important for the research question and theory at hand, because a quantitative data analysis would eclipse the configuration of Taliban's activities, which determine its position on the crime-terror continuum. It would also obscure the Afghan population's lived experience of crime and terror.

Content analysis can use official, cultural or personal documents for textual information, which reduces the chances of an inherent bias in the analysis compared to other methods like interviews. This study combines secondary and primary sources in a broad interconnected selection of official documents: UNAMA (UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) mission reports, reports by the UNSC Secretary-General on Afghanistan, UNSC Afghanistan Resolutions, UN Sanctions Committee documents, NATO Joint Statements, articles by the Afghan Analysts Network (non-governmental research organization) and reports from the Afghan Institute of Strategic Studies (think-tank). Except confidential correspondence between UN ground officers, all these sources can be found online. The purposive sampling of documents produced by the UN is based on its role in initiating and facilitating DDR and SSR processes in Afghanistan. It is important to note, however, that official UN documents often use vague language to describe incidents or individuals related to the Afghan peace process. This may be because said information had not been fully declassified at the time of writing, or because the author wanted to provide a concise summary without specific details. For example, passages may mention 'criminal-related incidents' but leave the nature of the crime unexplained. There is also a tendency in policy circles and the literature on crime in Afghanistan to put heavy focus on the field of counter-narcotics and not the full scope of illicit activities (Bewley-Taylor, 2013, p. 6-7).

Think tank and NGO documents are included to prevent these factors from introducing a bias to the research and to make the analysis more comprehensive. This helps to discern the experience of the Afghan population with the Taliban, from a local perspective. The analysis is limited to sources produced in an after 2014 which marks the start of the "Transformation

Decade": a period wherein the Afghan peace process is shifted from a solely UN-led approach to an Afghan-led one, planned to last until 2024. This shift is important for the analysis as it catalyzed the inclusion of Taliban in the peace negotiations, and likely contributed to the evolution of many organizations in the Afghan security environment (Dudgeon, 2014).

The recording unit for the content analysis is sentences and paragraphs. These units are coded according to various categories, sub-categories and indicators relevant to the research question using Dedoose, a qualitative research software. Table 1 (Appendix A) illustrates these codes and indicators, which were either based on literature or extracted upon initial inspection of the sources. The interaction between indicators from different categories provides important insight in answering the research question. If a unit contains an indicator from the Actors in Afghanistan category is simultaneously coded with Spoiler and DDR/SSR, it can be observed that said actor (i.e terror or TOC group) is spoiling the DDR or SSR process. If, additionally, the same unit contains the Crime-Terror Continuum code, the spoiler can be placed on the continuum. Finally, if the passage also mentions the Taliban, the group is in a certain stage of the crime-terror continuum and is spoiling the war-to-peace transition with its actions at that stage.

Findings & Analysis

The frequent appearance of the DDR and SSR code in the sources showcases that neither DDR nor SSR processes have been neglected in planning from the Afghan war-to-peace transition. In practice, specific challenges have curbed the possibility of achieving effective DDR and SSR and resulted in the peace process dragging out. The following analysis discusses these challenges in each step of the DDR and SSR processes, exploring how the Taliban has benefitted from and exacerbated these challenges.

Demobilization and Disarmament

The distribution of codes depicts a clear focus on the first two phases of DDR in Afghanistan. Insofar as demobilization and disarmament are key to prevent further civilian casualties, international peace missions prioritize these efforts. The experience of demobilization and disarmament in Afghanistan mainly involves external troop and the Taliban. While many other insurgent, terrorists or criminal groups are active in the conflict, the analysis does not extend to these as they have minimal influence compared to the Taliban or the foreign militaries. As the largest military involved in terms of troops and arms, the U. S's

promise to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan -reiterated since the Obama administration- signals a commitment to demobilization and disarmament. The timing, motive and benefit of this move have been widely debated, as the withdrawal will leave a large power vacuum and destabilize the region again if not done properly (Ruttig, 2021, p. 1). Nevertheless, it is a step towards demobilization. A similar commitment by the wider international arena has been the termination of combat by ISAF (International Security Assistance Force), which left in its place NATO's non-combat Resolute Support Mission. According to an interview conducted by the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS), "there was no intention for NATO to return to a combat role." (AISS, 2017, p. 36)

Demobilization and disarmament of the Taliban have presented the biggest challenge in the Afghan war-to-peace transition. Over the last few decades, The Taliban has evolved significantly in terms of its methods, motives, operational capabilities and international reception. The clearest sign of this is that after decades of actively taking part in the war, harboring and aiding violent organizations like Al-Qaeda and disrupting the peace process; the Taliban finally agreed to have peace negotiations with the US after 2014. In several reports by the UN Secretary-General and UN Resolutions, a cross-reference of the codes "Taliban" and "War-to-Peace Transition" yields many references to the partial demobilization and disarmament agreements between the UN-US and the Taliban, for example: "Mr. Khalilzad met with Mr. Baradar, Mr. Hakim and other Taliban officials in Doha on various occasions in October and November to discuss adherence to the agreement between the United States and the Taliban, and announced on 15 October that a "reset" had been agreed to, aimed at decreasing military activity and violence and strengthening compliance with the agreement." (UNSC, 2020 December 9, p. 4).

Nevertheless, the participation of Taliban in negotiations has not changed their use of terror tactics. In fact, the frequency of active conflict and violence by the Taliban has only minimally decreased over the past years, contradicting the hopes of its commitment to demobilization and disarmament: "Taliban launched a complex attack against the Bagram military air base by detonating a large suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device. This attack coincided with resumed talks between the United States and the Taliban. The Taliban also deployed suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices against Afghan National Defense and Security Forces" (UNSC, 2020 March 17, p. 6) Terrorism is a political tool and terrorist groups often ask for concessions from the existing political powers in return for stopping their extremist actions. The Taliban uses small-scale agreements to demobilize or disarm its forces to get concessions from external actors or the Afghan government (like the release of prisoners).

Yet, it has not abandoned the actions that give it the terrorist label. Targeting civilians is among the biggest definitional characteristics of terrorist groups, and following excerpts from the sources that are coded under "Taliban" and "terrorism", it is found that the Taliban is still responsible for 45% of civilian casualties and is attacking schools and hospitals (UNSC, 2021 March 12, p. 7).

The Taliban's evolution has not been linear. In addition to its terrorist identity, the Taliban has adapted many tactics and behavior typically not associated with terrorism. It is important to note here that the Taliban was started as an organization with the primary objective of stopping the civil war and reinstating law and order (albeit an extremist Sharia one) in Afghanistan after the fall of the communist regime. This meant that ever since its inception, the Taliban has endeavored to take control of the Afghan territory, and succeeded in some parts at certain time periods. Gradually, the Taliban's desire to control territory has become less of a political objective and more of an economic one. From its strongholds in Afghanistan, the Taliban has gradually established and extended a network of illicit activity that even transcends the Afghan borders. This is best illustrated by the illegal arms trade perpetrated by the Taliban, which directly undermines the disarmament process: "concern about the security situation in Afghanistan, in particular the ongoing violent and terrorist activities by the Taliban, […] involved in terrorism and the illicit brokering in arms and related material and arms trafficking" (UNSC, 2014 June 17, p. 2). In addition, the analysis has found that sources refer frequently to "three major Taliban finance streams in the country: narcotics, extortion from the local economy and illegal exploitation of natural resources." (UNSC, 2014 June 10, p. 18).

A recent report by the Monitoring Team of the 1988 Taliban Sanctions Committee reads: "these activities increasingly change the character of parts of the movement from a group based on religiously couched ideology to a coalition of increasingly criminalized networks, guided by the profit motive." (UNSC, 2014 June 10, p. 18) Another report by the Afghanistan Analysts Network shows a different tactic the group has been using: "The Taliban had consistently pursued a double strategy of fighting and talking at the same time." (Ruttig, 2021, p. 4). Separately, these lateral definitions are not sufficient to describe the Taliban, because they neglect the fact that the Taliban acts in several capacities simultaneously. It uses the *trifecta* of terrorism, organized crime and peace negotiations such that each of these are a method and a motive reinforcing each other.

When an entity is listed as a terror organization by international actors, it is much harder for said actors to justify sitting down to negotiate with them to the public (AISS, 2016, p. 22). The Taliban's involvement in the peace negotiations and previous commitments to ceasefires

or reduction of violence has established it as an important element of the war-to-peace transition, insofar as international forces do not view and combat it only as a terrorist group anymore. Indeed, Afghanistan Analysts Network reports that the intra-Afghan peace talks in Doha "have enhanced [Taliban's] diplomatic standing." (Ruttig, 2021, p. 12). This has led to a settlement whereby complete demobilization and disarmament by the Taliban is not expected, and cannot be enforced. There is an understanding that in exchange for its participation in the peace process, the Taliban can have transitional authority over some of the territories it operates out of. This can be seen where the Afghanistan Analysts Network reports about "the Taliban apparently having been given a free hand in the rural areas by the Doha agreement and a US-designed strategy to concentrate government forces on a more limited number of areas" (Ruttig, 2021, p. 5). As Dobbins et al. (2020) also observed:

> *"Because the Taliban already maintains control over some territory, the initial step might be for both sides to remain in clearly designated areas and establish some means of coordination. Each side could retain responsibility for security in areas it already controls and might arrange for joint patrols and parallel cooperating structures for contested areas."* (p. 5)

Reintegration

The final phase of DDR, reintegration of ex-militants into the post-war security structures, has seen fewer concrete achievements in Afghanistan. One of the biggest challenges to reintegration is the provision of support and employment for former fighters. Two particular groups, women and ex-members of the Afghan Local Police (ALP), tend to face the most struggle with securing support, and reintegrating into civilian life. Due to the strict shariatic religious and ideological beliefs of a majority of those in power, women in Afghanistan may find it harder to obtain basic humanitarian needs, let alone return to civilian lives as ex-combatants. As they are denied these opportunities, women tend to be less likely to be educated, trained or experienced, making it harder for them to find employment and be self-sustaining upon release (UNODC, 2007 March, pp. 65-66). Having acted as combatants and/or having been incarcerated for long periods of time significantly lowers women's chances of returning to their families and livelihoods as they may have been displaced, shunned, or have lost family members who would normally provide for them (UNSC, 2020 June 17, p. 9). There also seems to be major dissatisfaction with the absence of government support for former members of the ALP who face similar difficulties. According to the Afghan Analysts Network, demobilizing

the police forces without sufficient support or immediate reintegration can leave former members and their families vulnerable and in great peril.

The problems with the Afghan peace process are deeply tied to economic concerns and insecurity (AISS, 2016, p. 30). The severe lack of money, jobs and food not only burdens the local population but also complicates the reintegration of vulnerable groups and ALP officers (Clark, 2018, pp. 5-10). For instance, reports by the UNSC Secretary General on Afghanistan dated June and August 2020 recount that thousands of prisoners had to be released prematurely, before the official end of their terms, due to overcrowding and concerns of fast-spreading Covid-19 in prisons (UNSC, 2020 June 17, p. 9). Resulting from agreements between the UN-US forces and the Taliban, premature releases had been made before, in exchange for a reduction of violence and with the condition that these ex-combatants do not return to violence. However, neither of these endeavors had the desired effect; a significant reduction of violence was not seen, and a lack of facilities and resources meant that there was limited oversight on whether ex-combatants returned to fighting, and overcrowding or the spread of Covid-19 could not effectively be mitigated (UNSC, 2020 June 17, p. 19; UNSC, 2020 August 18, p. 1). The same trend can be observed throughout the disbanding and reintegration process of ALP officers. Afghanistan Analysts Network reported that "the transition may have left several dozen ex-ALP now unemployed" and that "there was a fear some could just re-hat as Taliban or criminal gangs. This has happened before" (Clark, 2021, p. 2-4).

Despite the threat of ex-combatants returning to conflict under the Taliban, the group itself was, and indeed had to be, entrusted with parts of the reintegration process by the UN. A commitment was agreed upon by the Taliban wherein the group would match the release of prisoners by the Afghan Government by releasing 1,000 pro-government prisoners of their own. While the group did carry out releases, reports by both the UN and the Afghanistan Analysts Network found that the group had abducted people only to release them shortly, thus reaching the agreed-upon number of prisoners (Ruttig, 2021 February 25, p. 2). The fact that the external peace mission had to rely on and trust the commitment of the Taliban was another result of the lack of resources and means to develop an effective mechanism for DDR as a whole. As a report from the Afghan Analysts Network argued, there needs to be "a mechanism through which fighters renounce the use of violence and possibly give up their arms. Only the Taliban could do this in the current situation and it would be difficult to monitor even if there was a mechanism." (Ruttig, 2021, p. 9)

When there is such lack of support and available resources for combatants who need to be reintegrated into civilian life, it is important to ensure that these individuals do not take up arms

again. Hundreds of ex-combatants relapsed into active conflict under the Taliban, nullifying an important part of the reintegration process, because the organization provides ample opportunity for ex-combatants to remobilize (Ruttig, 2021 February 25, p. 2). Due to its criminal activities, like the prolific narcotic trade and illegal mining, the Taliban enjoys abundant profit. This wealth can be an attractive recruitment 'benefit' for ex-combatants who have lost their income (Clark, 2018, p. 3). This is true especially for women. The widespread assumption is that the Taliban would never allow women among their ranks, due to the Shariatic ideology and the regime's heavy persecution of women during its rule. On the contrary, the Taliban has been recruiting and strategically using female combatants in terror operations frequently. The fact that female agency is largely overlooked and women are perceived as "less prone to violence", allows female combatants to approach targets unnoticed and recruit more effectively (De Leede, 2014, p. 1). This makes employing women marginally more attractive for the Taliban. In turn, returning to combat under a large and wealthy organization like the Taliban can present women with opportunities they might otherwise struggle to get.

It is important to note that the reintegration process in Afghanistan was commenced before demobilization and disarmament were sufficiently established. The ongoing mass fighting and proliferation of arms presented opportunities for combatants who could not secure employment or funds to return to violence under groups like the Taliban. Consequently, a temporal challenge emerged in the linking of DDR processes to security sector reform. As McFate (2010) argues, reintegration is the phase linking DDR to SSR. In order for former combatants to be placed and oriented into civilian lives or new roles in the emerging security order, there already ought to be a partly reformed security environment for them to reintegrate into (p. 3). The findings show that this transition in Afghanistan has been extremely volatile, giving way to potential spoilers (UNSC, 2021 March 12, p. 7).

Security Sector Reform

Mission reports and Security Council resolutions by the UN frequently cite "capacity-building, in particular of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) including the Afghan National Police (ANP) in securing their country and in their fight against terrorism" as an important goal. (UNSC, 2020 September 15, p. 2). NATO's Resolute Support Mission has a similar mandate to "train, advise and assist the Afghan forces at the invitation of the Afghan government" (NATO, 2018 July 12, p. 1). The Mission works in tandem with the Afghan government and supports its SSR initiatives, such as the Major Crimes Task Force and

the Anti-Corruption Justice Center tasked with combatting corruption in the Afghan government and security sector.

Corruption is one of the largest problems facing the Afghan war-to-peace transition. Corrupt officials vary from high-ranking government members to police chiefs and investigators (UNSC, 2020 March 17, p. 14). These individuals who collude with criminal or terrorist groups greatly jeopardize the SSR efforts, as they undermine the trust in the security and government structures as well as the rule of law. The Taliban has particularly benefitted from this corruption in the higher ranks of the Afghan military and government. The criminal activities of the Taliban bring in a high revenue, and by bribing government and military officials with a portion of this revenue, the Taliban can ensure that its illegal trade or mining activities go uninvestigated. The group has an incentive to keep this status quo, that is to keep corrupt officials in positions of power, which clashes with the agenda to re-establish the rule of law. Another reason the Taliban benefits from government corruption is the fact that decreasing trust in the government can lead to increasing legitimacy for the Taliban- at least in the public eye. Insofar as growing anti-government sentiment may return to the Taliban as higher membership or funding, it also helps their terrorist agenda.

Owing to the current power dynamic between the Taliban and the external forces, the Taliban has managed to openly amass wealth and influence in certain parts of Afghanistan. This territorial arrangement overestimates the motives and willingness that the Taliban has to establish security structures of these territories, or coordinate with the peace forces on DDR and SSR efforts. While there are some elements in the group who likely believe in the merit of the political settlement and are lenient towards future negotiations, a majority of Taliban adherents view this arrangement as an opportunity to continue running terror and crime operations (UNSC, 2014 June 10, pp. 9-10). A majority of the data cites the Helmand Province in Afghanistan, which is one of the territories with large Taliban control and influence, as a stage of countless terror attacks perpetrated by the group, as well as a base of operations for its illicit activities (UNSC, 2014 June 10, p. 18). UNSC reports:

> *"Owing to the widespread availability of marble in the southern districts of the province, in which the Taliban are able to control the countryside outside the population centers, illegal mining in Helmand forms a second major finance stream for the Taliban. Most of these illegal mining operations are close to the border with Pakistan (Deshu District), enabling the illegal miners to quickly and easily smuggle the illegally mined stone out of Afghanistan and on to the international market […]."* (UNSC, 2014 June 10, p. 20)

Helmand Province thus offers the perfect medium to observe the trifecta of Taliban's identities. Due to its geographical proximity to the Pakistani and Iranian borders, the region is used as a launching board for illegal operations. Moreover, the environment of fear created through the use of terror tactics gives the Taliban a grip over the local population, such that the Taliban can threaten and tax farmers in the region to work towards their illegal opium poppy cultivation (Afghan Analysts Network, 2021, p. 5). Lastly, it is difficult for both the external forces and the Afghan government to intervene in the region; the former not wanting to risk the Taliban's fragile commitment to the peace negotiations and the latter not having the capacity to do so owing to the gaps in development in SSR (UNSC, 2014 June 10, p. 5).

As explored throughout the analysis, what makes the Taliban a dangerous spoiler is this three-fold strategy of organized crime, terrorism and virtual commitment to peace negotiations, which allows the group to remain relevant and somewhat legitimate while continuing to make profit using violence. This makes the Taliban an example of the hybrid, convergent organization Makarenko theorizes about in the crime-terror continuum. The Taliban takes advantages of the power it has regained through this hybrid activity to threaten the possibility of establishing effective security structures in Afghanistan in the near future.

Conclusion and Implications

Just as they make some actors rich and powerful, crime and terrorism can damage the prospect of peace and security for others. Particularly in countries where the security environment is fragile and undergoing development, crime and terrorism too can evolve - towards each other. This is the core tenet of the Crime-Terror Continuum Theory by Tamara Makarenko (2004). This theory provides a tool with which to assess the level of relation between criminal and terrorist organization, the highest of which is convergence. Convergent organizations no longer possess motives, methods or operational capacities that can singularly be identified as criminal or terrorist. As they move towards the point of convergence, organizations also pose a gradually increasing threat as potential 'spoilers' to peace and security. The idea of spoilers, most prominent in the work of Stedman (1997), are often at the top of the agenda for scholars and policymakers in the field of security and peacemaking. The case of the Afghan peace process has been no exception to this.

The Afghan war-to-peace transition has been and continues to be a very complex process. Fragmentation of forces throughout consecutive wars, different ideologies, external actors' involvement, lack of resources and infrastructure to support local populations etc., have all been factors steering the transition. Power, influence and wealth accumulated by crime and terror

groups can also significantly impact the success of war-to-peace transition. The Taliban is a clear example of a group that has managed to survive and prosper through crime and terror despite international and local combat against it. The current territorial control and wealth enjoyed by the Taliban is a result of how the group acts in a *trifecta*; engaging simultaneously in transnational organized crime, terrorism and negotiating peace. It employs terror tactics to maintain their gain from organized crime, and vice versa. Yet, its role in the transition to peace has inevitably been cemented, leaving the process vulnerable. It has become increasingly difficult to identify which goal the Taliban sees as ultimate: profit, politics, peace, or survival. This configuration makes the Taliban a "convergent" group on Makarenko's (2004) crime-terror continuum.

This research has shown how the Taliban's evolving position as a convergent crime-terror group is a significant threat to the already fragile processes of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration in Afghanistan, and to the potential success of security sector reform. The shortcomings of the DDR process, especially in the reintegration phase, and the consequent limitations on SSR produce an ideal environment and incentives for other groups to evolve towards convergence. Although this threat has been acknowledged on several occasions by various actors including the UN, neither the UN nor other actors have paid enough attention to how this nexus is evolving in Afghanistan. For instance, it must be recognized that sanctions against Taliban officials freezing their assets can only be partial solution, as they keep funding themselves through covert TOC methods. The ongoing peace negotiations between the Taliban and the U.S government may be a good start for drawing the longest war to an end, but it was conducted without proper attention and wariness of the hybrid nature that the Taliban has adopted in recent years. This should be one of the main points to address in the future of the peace process. On a brighter note, it should be remembered that Makarenko's crime-terror continuum asserts that convergent organizations may undergo complete shifts in operation and behavior, evolving again towards either direction on the continuum. This presents an opportunity to reduce the threat posed by the Taliban to the Afghan war-to-peace transition in the coming years.

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Appendix A: Codebook

Categories	**Sub-Categories**	**Indicators**
Actors in Afghanistan	Terrorism	Suicide attack, targeted killing, civilian targeting, car bomb, inducing fear
	Organized crime	Illicit trade/trafficking (drugs, human, refugees, sex, artifacts, natural resources), corruption, financing/profit/revenue, embezzlement, extortion, illegal mining
Crime-Terror Continuum	Alliance	cooperation
	Black hole	-
	Commercial terrorism	profit-motivation
	Political crime	public figure assassinations
	Safe Haven	-
	Convergence	-
	Use of organized crime tactics	-
	Use of terror tactics	-
War-to-Peace Transition	DDR	Demobilization, disarmament, peacebuilding troops, reintegration, ceasefire
	SSR	Capacity-building, national police/law enforcement, reform, regional security cooperation, prison system/prisoners, elimination of torture, training, assistance
	Peace	-
	Security	-
	Spoiler	-
	Stability	-
	Transition	(Peace) negotiations
Taliban	-	-

Appendix B: Coded Excerpts

Source	**Text**	**Codes & Interpretation**
Ruttig, T. (2021, February 25). A deal in the mist: How much of the US-Taliban Doha agreement has been implemented?. *Afghanistan Analysts Network.*	"*Troop withdrawal on schedule, by 1 May 2021. This grievously weakens the Afghan government, risking its collapse and an attempted takeover by the Taleban. […] The US-Taleban agreement was an example of "America-First" foreign policy, which conceded ground to the Taleban from the outset because of US haste to have it signed."* (p. 1)	**Taliban, safe haven, DDR, demobilization, peacebuilding troops**
Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (2017, October). Herat security dialogue VI: The future of nation states. *[Conference report]*	"*Under the post-2014 Resolute Support mission the NATO mission transformed into training, advising and assisting Afghan security forces rather than having an active combat role. Mr. Armstrong noted that there was no intention for NATO to return to a combat role."* (p. 36)	**SSR, capacity-building, training, assistance, national police/law enforcement, transition**
UN Security Council (2020, December 9), Report of the Secretary-General: The situation in Afghanistan and its implications on peace and security.	*"Mr. Khalilzad met with Mr. Baradar, Mr. Hakim and other Taliban officials in Doha on various occasions in October and November to discuss adherence to the agreement between the United States and the Taliban, and announced on 15 October that a "reset" had been agreed to, aimed at decreasing military activity and violence and strengthening compliance with the agreement."* (p. 4)	**Taliban, War-to-Peace Transition, demobilization (DDR)**
UN Security Council (2020, March 17), Report of the Secretary-General: The situation in Afghanistan and its implications on peace and security.	*"On 11 December, the Taliban launched a complex attack against the Bagram military air base by detonating a large suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device. This attack coincided with resumed talks between the United States and the Taliban. The Taliban also deployed suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices against Afghan National Defence and Security Forces installations in Kandahar, Helmand and Balkh Provinces."* (p. 6)	**Actors in Afghanistan, terrorism, Taliban, suicide attack, DDR, disarmament, demobilization, spoiler, transition, national police/law-enforcement**

UN Security Council (2021, March 12), Report of the Secretary-General: The situation in Afghanistan and its implications on peace and security.	*"In 2020, the majority of civilian casualties were caused by anti-government elements (62 per cent), mainly by the Taliban (45 per cent) […]"* (p. 7)	**Spoilers, terrorism, Taliban, civilian casualties**
UN Security Council (2014, June 17), Resolution 2160 adopted by the Security Council at its 7198th meeting	"*Reiterating its concern about the security situation in Afghanistan, in particular the ongoing violent and terrorist activities by the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other violent and extremist groups, illegal armed groups, criminals and those involved in terrorism and the illicit brokering in arms and related material and arms trafficking in the production, trafficking or trade of illicit drugs, and the strong links between terrorism and insurgency activities and illicit drugs, resulting in threats to the local population, including women, children, national security forces and international military and civilian personnel, including humanitarian and development workers […]" (p. 2)*	**Actors in Afghanistan, terrorism, Taliban, organized crime, DDR, disarmament, illicit trade/trafficking, Crime-Terror Continuum**
Letter from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council. (2014, June 10)	*"Taliban revenue generation in Helmand incorporates all three major Taliban finance streams in the country: narcotics, extortion from the local economy and illegal exploitation of natural resources."* (p. 18)	**Actors in Afghanistan, organized crime, illicit trade/trafficking, extortion, illegal mining**
Letter from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council. (2014, June 10)	*"Taliban have established a fairly sophisticated system to generate resources inside the country. Increasingly Taliban finances also rely on abductions of wealthy businessmen for ransom. Executions of civilians and aid workers serve to assert their power and to deny the delivery of security and economic development. This exploits the strengths of the Taliban network and creates new funding channels. However, these activities increasingly change the character of parts of the movement from a group based on religiously couched ideology to a coalition of increasingly criminalized networks, guided by the profit motive."* (p. 18)	**Actors in Afghanistan, organized crime, Taliban, Crime-Terror Continuum, commercial terrorism, convergence, use of organized crime tactics**

Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (2016, October). Herat security dialogue V *[Conference report]*	*"But I really have not known the real meaning of terrorism till now. So I know one thing they call those groups terrorists who are reacting against the US interests. If we thing like this about terrorist, there is no need of negotiations with them they should be removed from the earth."* (p. 22)	**Actors in Afghanistan, terrorism, War-To-Peace Transition, peace negotiations**
Ruttig, T. (2021, February 25). A deal in the mist: How much of the US-Taliban Doha agreement has been implemented?. *Afghanistan Analysts Network.*	*"The agreement's design played into the hands of the Taleban, sidelined the Afghan government, denying it a place in its own right at the negotiating table. It also encouraged the Taleban to maintain high military pressure on the government forces and gave them extra leverage over the delegation facing them in the (long-faltering) intra-Afghan talks in Doha. […] the Taleban have enhanced their diplomatic standing."* (p. 12)	**War-To-Peace Transition, peace negotiations, Taliban, safe haven**
Ruttig, T. (2021, February 25). A deal in the mist: How much of the US-Taliban Doha agreement has been implemented?. *Afghanistan Analysts Network.*	*"The overall trend is one of Taleban buoyancy which is the result of a mix of factors: the Taleban apparently having been given a free hand in the rural areas by the Doha agreement and a US-designed strategy to concentrate government forces on a more limited number of areas of strategic significance combined with the Afghan government's inability to supply all remaining bases."* (p. 5)	**War-To-Peace Transition, peace negotiations, Taliban, safe haven, SSR, capacity-building, national police/law-enforcement**
UN Security Council (2020, June 17), Report of the Secretary-General: The situation in Afghanistan and its implications on peace and security.	*"The number of female prisoners released appears to be low. In addition, the lack of support for female prisoners after release, including for those who may not be able to return to their families, presents another challenge."* (p. 9)	**War-to-peace transition, DDR, reintegration**
Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (2016, October). Herat security dialogue V *[Conference report]*	*"Root of insecurity in Afghanistan is multidimensional and cross cuttings. Poverty, migration, energy, organizing criminal groups are all issues which influence and complicate the wave of insecurity."* (p. 30)	**Actors in Afghanistan, organized crime, black hole, safe haven**
UN Security Council (2020, June 17), Report of the Secretary-General: The situation in Afghanistan and its implications on peace and security.	*"As at 14 May, approximately 9,700 detainees and prisoners had been released under the two presidential decrees. Given that the estimated number of prisoners and detainees as at 26 March, when the first decree was issued, was 41,000, the impact of the releases to ease overcrowding in prisons and contribute to preventing the spread of COVID-19 remains limited"* (p. 9)	**War-to-peace transition, DDR, reintegration**

Clark, K. (2021, April 15). Disbanding the ALP - An update: Major transition of security forces achieved during wartime, but at a cost. *Afghanistan Analysts Network.*	*"Given ALP were mobilized as units of commanders and men loyal to them, there was a fear some could just 're-hat' as Taleban or criminal gangs. This has happened before. […] In some of the districts under study, the transition may have le several dozen ex-ALP now unemployed."* (p. 2-4)	**Taliban, SSR, national police/law-enforcement, DDR, reintegration, spoilers**
Ruttig, T. (2021, February 25). A deal in the mist: How much of the US-Taliban Doha agreement has been implemented?. *Afghanistan Analysts Network.*	*"The Taleban met their commitment to release 1,000 pro-government prisoners, though there were reports that they abducted people in order to have enough prisoners to release. They have also been accused of allowing up to 600 Taleban released prisoners to return to the battlefield."* (p. 2)	**Taliban, SSR, prisoners, DDR, reintegration, spoilers, terrorism, use of organized crime tactics**
Ruttig, T. (2021, February 25). A deal in the mist: How much of the US-Taliban Doha agreement has been implemented?. *Afghanistan Analysts Network.*	"*There is also no provision that commits the Taliban to hand over or expel foreign fighters, and the provision to make sure that "those seeking asylum or residence in Afghanistan... do not pose a threat" seems to indicate that such (former?) fighters could be allowed to stay if they refrain from violence (and seems to contradict the stipulation that they "have no place in Afghanistan"). This would also require a mechanism through which fighters renounce the use of violence and possibly give up their arms. Only the Taliban could do this in the current situation and it would be difficult to monitor even if there was a mechanism."* (p. 9)	**SSR, reintegration, Actors in Afghanistan, Taliban, capacity-building**
Clark, K. (2018, July 12). Graft and remilitarization: A look back at efforts to disarm, demobilize, reconcile and reintegrate. *Afghanistan Analysts Network.*	"*Secondly, for fighters and commanders who actually existed there were various paths through DDR. Those who were DDR-ed tended to be the weaker commanders. "Many second-tier commanders who were reintegrated under DDR," wrote Waldman, "were deeply dissatisfied with the process and considering remobilization. They not only lost income, but also their former authority, status, and public respect derived from the resistance." Derksen wrote that such commanders "...often kept their networks, which instead of being disbanded were simply pushed underground. In the southwest, they either joined the Taliban or remobilized as anti-insurgent militia. In the northeast, they o en pursued criminal activities until they remobilized later, when the insurgency spread there after 2007." (p. 3)*	**DDR, reintegration, demobilization, SSR spoilers, Taliban, Actors in Afghanistan, organized crime**

UN Security Council (2021, March 12), Report of the Secretary-General: The situation in Afghanistan and its implications on peace and security.	*"UNAMA documented increases in civilian casualties from targeted killings by anti-government elements, Taliban pressure-plate improvised explosive devices, and Afghan Air Force air strikes."* (p. 7)	**Spoilers, disarmament, use of terror tactics, civilian casualties, Taliban, Actors in Afghanistan**
UN Security Council (2020, June 17), Report of the Secretary-General: The situation in Afghanistan and its implications on peace and security.	*"On 11 March 2020, the President of Afghanistan signed a decree for the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners, in two phases. The first 1,500 prisoners would be released based on age, health and remaining sentence. The remaining 3,500 Taliban prisoners would be released conditionally on progress in intra-Afghan negotiations and further reductions in Taliban violence. All releases required guarantees that the prisoners would not return to combat."* (p. 19)	**War-to-peace transition, DDR, demobilization, reintegration, Taliban**
UN Security Council (2020, August 18), Report of the Secretary-General: The situation in Afghanistan and its implications on peace and security.	*"The continued release of prisoners and the observation of two ceasefires over Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha gave momentum to intra-Afghan negotiations, but attacks continued."* (p. 1)	**War-to-peace transition, DDR, demobilization, reintegration, security, spoilers**
UN Security Council (2020, September 15), Resolution 2543 adopted by the Security Council at its 8759th meeting	*"Emphasizing the importance of supporting the Government of Afghanistan in capacity building, in particular of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) including the Afghan National Police (ANP) in securing their country and in their fight against terrorism,"* (p. 2)	**SSR, capacity-building, national police/law-enforcement, Actors in Aghanistan, terrorism**

NATO (2018, July 12). Joint statement on the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan.	*"Our shared aim remains a stable and secure Afghanistan that will never again serve as a safe haven for terrorists who threaten our shared security. Allies and Operational Partners reaffirm their commitment to the Resolute Support Mission, which trains, advises and assists the Afghan forces at the invitation of the Afghan government and with the support of the International Community as noted in UN Security Council Resolution 2189. Effective, professional, and self-sustaining Afghan forces will be better able to provide security for the country, create the conditions for a negotiated resolution of the conflict through an Afghan- led and Afghan-owned peace process, and demonstrate to the Taliban that it cannot prevail through force."* (p. 1)	**War-to-Peace transition, stability, transition, peace negotations, security, Crime-Terror Continuum, safe haven, SSR, training, assistance, Taliban, spoilers**
UN Security Council (2020, March 17), Report of the Secretary-General: The situation in Afghanistan and its implications on peace and security.	*"On 13 February, the Office of the Attorney General reported that the Chief and the Director of Investigation of the Kabul Counter-Narcotics Police were sentenced to over 17 years and 7 and half years of prison, respectively, for collusion with drug smugglers. Two other counter-narcotics officials received sentences of one and a half year on similar charges."* (p. 14)	**Organized crime, illicit trade/trafficking, corruption**

Letter from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council. (2014, June 10)	*"Afghan as well as international officials and observers agree that key members of the Taliban leadership remain unpersuaded that the Afghan Government security forces will continue to perform well after 2014. These Taliban leaders are ready to sacrifice more Taliban fighters and other Afghans in the course of the coming year to maintain the current status quo. While one explanation of this may be political, that the senior Taliban leadership conclude that the Government of Afghanistan will become weaker and the Taliban position stronger, the other explanation rests with the political economy. The past year has been a bumper year for Taliban revenues, boosted by booming narcotics income, revenue from corruption and extortion, and increasingly drawing on revenue from the illegal exploitation of natural resources. Parts of the Taliban are experiencing a "resource curse", for as Taliban finances have grown, the Taliban have become more of an economic actor, with incentives to preserve this income and less potential incentive to negotiate with the Government."* (p. 9-10)	**Actors in Afghanistan, organized crime, Taliban, illicit trade/trafficking, corruption, extortion, spoilers**
Letter from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council. (2014, June 10)	"*Owing to the widespread availability of marble in the southern districts of the province, in which the Taliban are able to control the countryside outside the population centres, illegal mining in Helmand forms a second major finance stream for the Taliban. The illegal and unlicensed mining sector in the province appears to be several times larger than the legal mining sector. The Team has currently identified from 25 to 30 illegal mining operations in southern Helmand. Most of these illegal mining operations are close to the border with Pakistan (Deshu District), enabling the illegal miners to quickly and easily smuggle the illegally mined stone out of Afghanistan and on to the international market, accompanied by forged documents identifying the onyx marble as having been mined in a neighbouring country."* (p. 20)	**Taliban, Actors in Afghanistan, organized crime, revenue, illicit trade/trafficking, illegal mining, commercial terrorism, profit-motivation, use of organized crime tactics**

Afghan Analysts Network (2021, January 18). Living with the Taleban (2): Local experiences in Nad Ali district, Helmand Province.	*"Yet, interviewees said, is not only the rate of ushr that varies according to the crop grown, but also the enforcement of the ushr tax. With poppy, they said the Taleban are always very strict, assiduously collecting opium from each farmer, even those with the smallest plots of land. There are some exemptions for people who have family members in the Taleban or have lost family members fighting in the ranks of the Taleban are not required to pay this tax." (p. 5)*	**Taliban, organized crime illicit trade/trafficking, revenue, Crime-Terror Continuum, black hole, safe haven, convergence, use of organized crime tactics**
Letter from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council. (2014, June 10)	*"However, the capacity of the Afghan forces to hold these outlying areas over time has not yet developed. This hinders their ability to strike at one of the key funding sources for the Taliban, the illegal exploitation of natural resources in remote areas."* (p. 5)	**Organized crime, illicit trade/trafficking, Taliban, capacity-building, SSR**
Letter from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council. (2014, June 10)	*"A complex suicide attack targeted the Lebanese restaurant La Taverna du Liban in Kabul on 17 February 2014. Twenty-one people were killed, including four United Nations staff members. The Taliban immediately claimed responsibility for the attack."* (p. 7)	**Terrorism, Actors in Afghanistan, Taliban, civilian casualties, use of terror tactics, spoilers, demobilization, disarmament, DDR**
UN Security Council (2020, December 9), Report of the Secretary-General: The situation in Afghanistan and its implications on peace and security.	*"Attacks on hospitals decreased during the reporting period, with 13 verified attacks against hospitals and protected health personnel, compared with 18 attacks verified in the previous reporting period. Of the 13 incidents, 8 were attributed to the Taliban"* (p. 9)	**Actors in Afghanistan, Taliban, terrorism, spoilers, demobilization, DDR**
Ruttig, T. (2021, February 25). A deal in the mist: How much of the US-Taliban Doha agreement has been implemented?. *Afghanistan Analysts Network.*	*"As the 31 January 2021 joint statement by the EU, 13 embassies and NATO made plain, they disagree with the Taliban about the wave of targeted killings and put the "responsibility for the majority" of those incidents on them. The Economist's description is likely the correct take on the situation and shared by a number of independent observers and media (see also AP here): "No single group is likely to have conducted all the attacks. A variety of bomb designs has been used. Personal rivalries and organized crime may be behind some, as may*	**Civilian targeting, Actors in Afghanistan, Taliban, DDR, demobilization, disarmament, organized crime**

	other militant groups. But the Taliban are almost certainly the main perpetrators." (p. 9)	
Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (2017, October). Herat security dialogue VI: The future of nation states. *[Conference report]*	"*He mentioned how approximately 40% of the territory is out of the government's control. The Taliban, whose government was dismantled in 2001, still control significant parts of the Afghan territory." (p. 14)*	**Actors in Afghanistan, Taliban, Crime-Terror continuum, safe haven, black hole**