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Direttore Ranieri Razzante

Michele Turzi

The effects of Private Military and Security Companies on local populations in Afghanistan

A case-study based analysis on the impact of the large presence of private firms on Afghans

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TURZI, Michele

Table of contents

Table of contents ..... **i**

Summary ..... **ii**

List of Abbreviations ..... **iii**

1. Introduction and Background **1**

1.1 Introduction 1

1.2 Structure of the thesis 2

1.3 The Private Military and Security Industry 3

1.4 The Afghan case 8

2. Methodology and Theoretical Framework **12**

2.1 Methodology 12

2.2 Theoretical Framework 13

3. PMSCs in Afghanistan **19**

3.1 The Private Industry in numbers 19

3.2 A wide variety of PMSCs 22

3.3 The Afghan Affair 26

4. The impact of PMSCs on Afghans **31**

4.1 Destabilizing Consequences: direct and indirect effects 31

4.2 Abuses and violations increase the distrust of PMSCs 33

4.3 Concerns for the lack of the governmental presence 37

5. Conclusion **40**

References **43**

Summary

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze whether the large presence of Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) has affected the local populations and how it has impacted on Afghans. Becoming major players of the global security structure after the end of the Cold War, these companies have been massively involved in the intervention in Afghanistan for the provision of military-related activities and security services.

In this context, most of the PMSCs were hired in support of the coalition military forces that had entered the country in 2001, providing a myriad of different services. From logistical and base support activities to military and operational roles, including even demining and intelligence tasks, quickly private companies pervaded Afghanistan not without raising questions. The way in which PMSCs have emerged as crucial players of the security governance in Afghanistan show the existence of a hybrid structure where varied actors combine at multiple levels to supply security-related services.

What emerges is not just how commercial military and security practices have been generated, but the thesis deals with the consequences of the practices and the impact suffered by the civilian population.

Illustrating the cases of incidents and violations involving the personnel of some PMSCs and Afghans, makes it possible to show the direct implications of contractors that have affected the lives of local people with a negative impact on their perception of security. In addition, a sense of destabilization was produced by the apparent impunity of PMSCs, that through a complex system of interlinkages with economic and political elites could challenge the government of Afghanistan creating a parallel structure of control. Distrust towards both the companies and the state was thus the most noteworthy result of the destabilizing effect of the vast use of PMSCs in Afghanistan.

List of Abbreviations

ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National security Forces
APPF	Afghan Public Protection Force
APSC	Armed Private Security Company
ASG	Armed Support Group
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DOD	Department of Defense
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
IR	International Relations
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MPRI	Military Professional Resources Inc.
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
PD62	Presidential Decree 62
PMC	Private Military Company
PMF	Private Military Firm
PMS	Private Security Company
PMSC	Private Military and Security Company
QRF	Quick Reaction Force
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNWG	United Nations working Group
USCENTCOM	United States Central Command
USPI	United States Protection and Investigation

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction
1.2 Structure of the thesis
1.3 The Private Military and Security Industry
1.4 The Afghan case

1.1 Introduction

"The end of the Cold War left a huge vacuum and I identified a niche in the market".[1]
This quote of EO's founder Eben Barlow well illustrates the phenomenon of the rise of private military industry in the contemporary context, where private actors have found a great business as being crucial players in the security field.

Private Military and Security Companies (henceforth PMSCs), as the South African Executive Outcomes founded in 1989 by Barlow and involved in the conflicts in Angola and Sierra Leone, form a growing industry that since the end of the Cold War has influenced most of the recent international conflicts providing military and security commodities on all continents all over the world. The demand for PMSCs' services has increased incredibly in the last thirty years, reaching the peak with the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. And it is precisely the conflict that took place in Afghanistan the case study for this dissertation, in which I sought to inquire into the impact of PMSCs on civil population.

The process of globalization exploded in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse, added to the growing influence of economic neoliberal models that inspired most of the governments, led to a new trend that broadened the classic concept of warfare. The privatization of the military and security profession, that for the last two centuries has been seen as a monopoly in the hands of national states, is now challenging many of the old rules of the warfare. Outsourcing military and security programs became a priority in the strategies of most of the countries involved in the post-9/11 intervention in Afghanistan, where even the president Hamid Karzai was protected by the personnel of the US private firm DynCorp.

1 Schreier, Fred and Marina Caparini, Privatising Security: Law, Practice and Governance of Private Military and Security Companies, DCAF Occasional Paper 6, 2005, p.19.

Previous studies on the emergence of the privatized military industry have focused on a multitude of different aspects, but my intention is to explore the consequences of the use of PMSCs on Afghanistan after 2001. The thesis aims to explore how the large use of PMSCs has affected and influenced the life of Afghans, with a special consideration given to the importance of the legitimacy and sovereignty of the Afghan government which is in charge of the control over the territory. The impact of these private actors on the civilians is the main question due to the willingness to clarify their role and implication in the field of security provision in Afghanistan. Finding out whether the presence of PMSCs has affected Afghanistan is important in order to deal with the literature of the topic which predominantly focuses on the negative impact of private firms in weak states, eroding state power and diminishing the monopoly on the legitimate use of force.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

This chapter offers an introduction and a brief outline of the thesis, with a first definition of PMSCs in a section explaining the phenomenon of the emergence of these actors after the end of the Cold War. Then a paragraph is dedicated to some background informations about Afghanistan and its recent history with the US-led intervention of 2001 as part of the new strategy of the global war on terror in response to the 9/11 attacks. The brief summary of the recent Afghan history is fundamental to get a better understanding of the current situation of the country, regarded as belonging to that group of fragile, weak or failed states in a process of post-conflict resolution.

Chapter 2 explains the methodology applied and the theoretical framework chosen. In the first paragraph the focus is the explication of the case study approach, which has been privileged because the most valid to study a particular situation that needs to be treated following a comprehensive perspective able to include also the global trend of security and military privatization. In the second one the theoretical framework is accounted for: a justification of the choice of the Global Security Assemblages is provided after a short overview of the main approaches and theories of International Relations in the domain of the security provision.

Chapter 3 is devoted to the different activities and roles of PMSCs in Afghanistan. A clear and broad explanation of the huge variety of private firms operating in the country in order to un-

derstand their degree of control and the powers acquired in the complex and hybrid structure of security governance.

Chapter 4 seeks to answer the question about the real impact of PMSCs in the life of Afghans. The problems raised by foreign and local contractors and the incidents involving private companies, together with the consequences of their use on the Afghan environment and the perception of security actors and governmental control, are the main topics of this section.

Finally, Chapter 5 provides some concluding remarks where I offer my conclusions for the study.

1.3 The Private Military and Security Industry

Mercenaries, contractors, war dogs, corporate warriors and private military firms are all different terms used to cover the same phenomenon: the Private Military and Security Companies. The complexity and the heterogeneity of these private actors, their history and even their multiple uses on the ground make it necessary to dedicate an entire paragraph to the PMSCs.

The global private military and security industry is a complex phenomenon with historical roots but with modern patterns and peculiarities. From a traditional perspective we can easily assume that the use of mercenaries in battle is old as war itself, considering it as one of the oldest professions in the world. Indeed in the past centuries the hire of troops to fight wars was the norm rather than an exceptional event and the fact that their goal was the private profit was not an issue. The history of humanity has always been accompanied by the constant pre- sence of for-profit private actors; according to some scholars, privatization can be seen as an historical phenomenon because "the private provision of violence was a routine aspect of international relations before the twentieth century".[2]

The history of private actors in warfare makes evident that the monopoly of state over violence and use of force is a recent exception linked to the appearance of the state in the last four centuries. The post-Westphalian international system led to a process of broadening of the pu-

[2] Herbst Jeffrey, The Regulation of Private Security Forces, in Gregg Mills and John Stremlau, The Privatization of Security in Africa, Pretoria: South Africa Institute of International Affairs, 1997

blic functions that took over the military market of the previous centuries. Hired troops were still present through the seventeenth century but in this period wars definitely evolved into the celebrated wars of people. The experience of the Thirty Years' War persuaded the leaders of all sides gathered for the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 to end up with an open market for force and to replace it with the new-born public armies, which according to Peter Singer constitute "a historical anomaly" (Singer 2008: 39).

Using the categorization presented by the American political scientist and scholar in his book, there are four evident patterns of the private militaries through history. Firstly the fact that the demand for hired troops has been linked to whatever is the prevalent nature of warfare; the second pattern is the complementary relationship of military demobilization in a zone to new wars in weaker zones that shows a prevalence of a supply and demand dynamic of warfare over the centuries; the third is the flourishing of private militaries in areas of weak governance sustaining and benefiting from violent conflicts; the final one is the importance of frequent synergies between private military actors and other business ventures that resulted in military successes and greater profits (Singer 2008: 38). In sum, the nationalization of the military activities planned at the conclusion of the peace treaties in 1648 was a turning point because "The contemporary organization of global violence is neither timeless nor natural. It is distinctively modern".[3]

Tracing the long and prosperous history of the private military organizations we can now observe that the trend of the last two decades is nothing exceptional: just the re-emergence of a phenomenon intentionally suppressed some centuries ago. Since the end of the Cold War the private military industry has witnessed a huge growth due to a progressive process of reconfiguration of the state and its functions, to a spreading of the neoliberal imperative and to the wake of globalization.

The fall of the Berlin Wall gave the opportunity for the PMSCs to re-flourish in a context where international stability was jeopardized and the conflicts spreading around the globe. The collapse of the Soviet Union, one of the two superpowers that ordered the international politics of the second half of the 1900s, resulted in a security gap that the private industry ru-

[3] Thomson, Janice, Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns: State-building and Extraterritorial Violence in Early Modern Europe, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

shed to fill (Singer 2008: 49). The confluence of this event and other trends reopened the market for military and security provisions at the end of the 20th century with a redefinition of the roles and purposes of states. The outbreak of new nationalist tensions produced a phenomenon of state weakening that resulted in new areas of instability, requiring adequate and rapid responses. The global threats changed and multiplied, transforming the nature of warfare itself and the military reactions to them. All these various transformations that redesigned the new world order drove the '90s massive increase of the number of PMSCs.

A new reality in the modern warfare re-emerged: the private industry; a crucial player in a context where the concept of the nation state as the only possessor of the monopoly of the legitimate use of force is being challenged. Some functions, that were previously inherently state functions, from this moment forward are starting to be outsourced to private organizations that provide states with more and more services even for military operations.

Influenced by the fall of the Soviet Union, the ongoing process of globalization alongside the influence of the neoliberal theory let PMSCs to flourish and to rapidly increase in number. Indeed, as shown in figure 1, since the end of the Cold War the number of private actors offering military and security services has enormously increased.

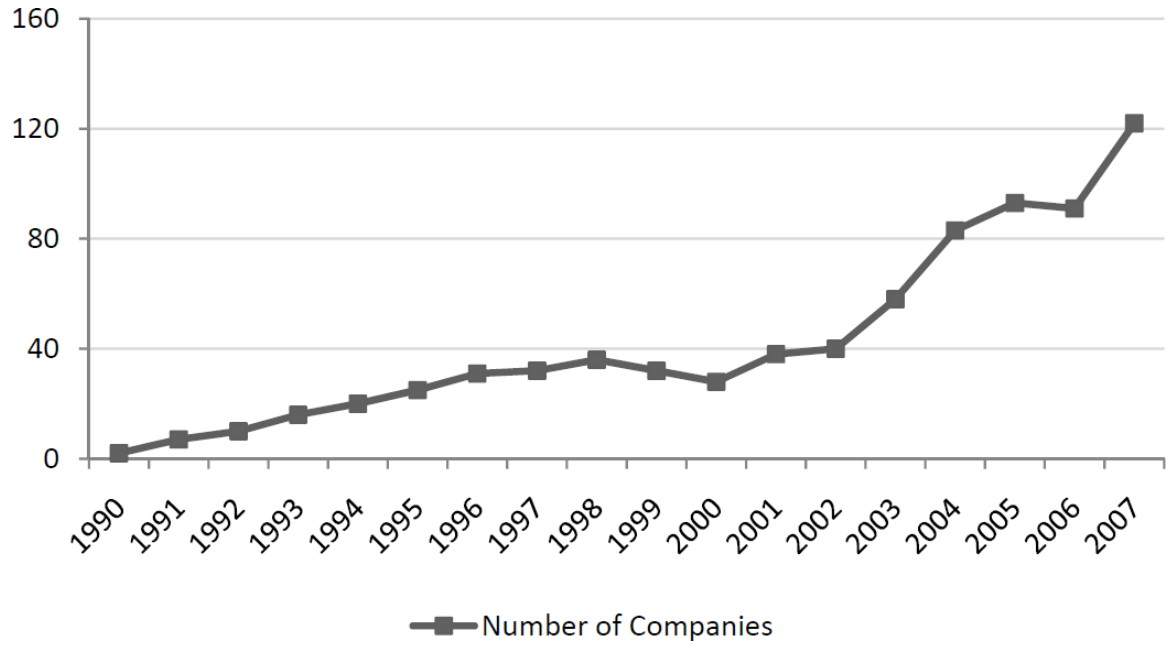

Figure 1: Number of PMSCs per year since 1990 [4]

[4] Source: Branović Ž.,The Privatisation of Security in Failing States: A Quantitative Assessment. Occasional Paper - No 24. Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) 2011

After the Cold War a double trend appeared simultaneously: a number of skilled personnel available due to the military downsizing and an increasing demand for military skills in conflict areas. “Military downsizing led to a flood of experienced personnel available for contracting” and since the 1990s we are witnessing the development of a Market for Force where a Private Military Industry is offering services on a global market (Avant 2005: 31).

Within the previous academic literature there are various ways of classifying the galaxy of organizations providing military and security services, but the thesis will use the term PMSCs in order to cover a wide range of private companies, including both the defensive and offensive ones. One of the most common, contractor, is very popular particularly due to the bad reputation gained through the medias in the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq where private personnel was involved in multiple scandals, including the case of abuse of prisoners in the prison of Abu Ghraib in 2004 that scandalized the public opinion around the world. This definition may be considered as the simple evolution of the traditional figure of the *Condottiero*, as a modern-day mercenary that decides to sell his services to the highest biller purely on the basis of the market.

Most of the scholars on the contrary have made different choices concerning the term, for instance Peter Singer coined PMFs, Privatized Military Firms, to indicate the “private business entities that deliver to consumers a wide spectrum of military and security services, once generally assumed to be exclusively inside the public context”.[5] According to Singer, private firms are more than a simple version of modern mercenaries because of their complex organization and the variety of services that they offer in order to cover a wide range of military and security provisions.

The United Nations regulated the conduct of mercenaries in 1989 with the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries, a convention entered into force in 2001 that gives this definition:

[5] Singer, Peter W. Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, updated paperback edition, 2008.

A mercenary is any person who: (a) Is specially recruited locally or abroad in order to fight in an armed conflict; (b) Is motivated to take part in the hostilities essentially by the desire for private gain and, in fact, is promised, by or on behalf of a party to the conflict, material compensation substantially in excess of that promised or paid to combatants of similar rank and functions in the armed forces of that party; (c) Is neither a national of a party to the conflict nor a resident of territory controlled by a party to the conflict; (d) Is not a member of the armed forces of a party to the conflict; and (e) Has not been sent by a State which is not a party to the conflict on official duty as a member of its armed forces. [6]

But there are a number of criticisms about the Convention with scholars arguing that it does not apply to the majority of the current PMSCs which are unlike the freelance individual mercenaries active today around the globe. Private companies shall be regarded as complex structures led by business for profit, rather than individual, with a legal status guaranteed to their employees which have recognized contracts. In sum while mercenaries act as individuals, contractors are organized in corporate business structures (Krahmann 2009, Singer 2008, Stinnett 2005, Østensen 2011).

The terminology usually depends upon the context, with the medias preferring terms with negative or impressive connotations such mercenaries, dogs of war or soldiers of fortune and the academics using PSCs, PMCs, PMFs or PMSCs. The definitions vary between authors, in particular on the basis of the slightly different interpretations given to the services supplied, security or military- related. Moreover, it is fundamental to underline the distinction with the category of mercenaries, that should be treated as comprising a separate category of private actors that is conceptually linked to PMSCs (O'Brien 2007).

Academically the is no general consensus about how to define the private actors operating for the provision of military and security services, a distinction may be misleading and an imprecise terminology could undermine the case study; for these reasons the thesis will use the term PMSCs which in my opinion is more comprehensive and the most adequate for the operatio-

6 International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries Archived February 9, 2008, at the Wayback Machine. A/RES/44/34 72nd plenary meeting 4 December 1989

nal context of the Afghan war. This thesis will thus use the definition of PMSCs included in the Montreux Document:

> *PMSCs are private business entities that provide military and/or security services, irrespective of how they describe themselves. Military and security services include, in particular, armed guarding and protection of persons and objects, such as convoys, buildings and other places; maintenance and operation of weapons systems; prisoner detention; and advice to or training of local forces and security personnel.* [7]

1.4 The Afghan case

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, respectively in 2001 and 2003, initiated a new important phase for PMSCs with an increasing use of private services becoming crucial players for the solution of the ongoing and probably for the future conflicts, suggesting a growing reliance of states on these companies. Considering the number of workers hired for the US military operations, it is evident the impressive growth; the table below underlines the trend showing the differences in the ratio of contractor to military personnel, with a peak of 1.5:1 reached in Afghanistan (Kruck 2013: 122).

Conflict	*Contractor personnel (Thousands)*	*Public military personnel (Thousands)*	*Ratio of contractor to military personnel*
Revolutionary War	2	9	1:6
War of 1812	n.a.	38	n.a.
Mexican–American War	6	33	1:6
Civil War	200	1,000	1:5
Spanish–American War	n.a.	35	n.a.
World War I	85	2,000	1:24
World War II	734	5,400	1:7
Korea	156	393	1:2.5
Vietnam	70	359	1:5
Gulf War	9	500	1:55
Balkans	20	20	1:1
Iraq Theatre	190	200	1:1
Afghanistan	100	65	1.5:1

Figure 2: Contractor and military personnel [8]

[7] The Montreux Document on pertinent international legal obligations and good practices for States related to operations of private military and security companies during armed conflict, Montreux, 17 September 2008

[8] Source: Kruck A., Theorising the use of private military and security companies: a synthetic perspective, Journal of International Relations and Development 17, pp.112–141, 2014

The Afghan conflict broke out in the months following the Al Qaeda attacks occurred in the United States the 11 September 2001, when the US Administration decided to invade Afghanistan in response to the alleged protection afforded by the Taliban regime to the terrorists responsible for the terrorist attacks. Officially on 7 October 2001 the United States launched their military operations in the country.

Prior to a summary of the military intervention started in 2001, it is necessary to give a brief overview of the unique context that Afghanistan provides for many reasons. Above all, the heterogeneity and fragmentation of the country, both culturally and geographically, represent the first key aspect to better understand Afghan system along with its myriad actors and conditions. The fragmented, tribal, diverse and locally based nature of this country indeed has traditionally showed a set of rules which have their crucial focus in the local nature of Afghanistan (Slaughter 2010).

Afghanistan is a fragmented country where local entities have a fundamental role in the control of the territory; indeed the composition of the population reflects society, divided into many tribes, clans and smaller groups, on the basis of ethnicity. The figure below shows that there are several national minorities in Afghanistan, with the Pashtuns representing the majority group.

	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
POPULATION (millions)	32.7	16.8 (51%)	15.9 (49%)
ETHNICITY			
Pashtun	13.7 (42%)		
Tajik	8.8 (27%)		
Hazara	2.9 (9%)		
Uzbek	2.9 (9%)		
Aimak	1.3 (4%)		
Turkmen	1.0 (3%)		
Baloch	0.7 (2%)		
Other	1.3 (4%)		

Figure 3: Afghanistan population and demographic composition [9]

[9] Source: Livingston I. S. and O'Hanlon M. Afghanistan Index Also including selected data on Pakistan, Brookings Institution, March 31, 2016.

The country has experienced a long history of wars and conflicts over the last forty years with a wide variety of actors involved. In 1978 the Saur Revolution brought the communist regime to the power with the support of the Soviet Union, but the government had to fight against the resistance of various mujahideen parties until their final victory in 1992, when the Soviet-backed government of Najibullah had to resign. At that time the winning factions could not find a solution to who had to lead the country and fought over the power until the Taliban forces came into power after some years of a bitter civil war. The Taliban ruled the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, not without internal struggles because of the Northern Alliance controlling a portion of the territory in the North with the support of the international community, until the end of 2001 when the regime was overthrown by the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).

In order to combat Al Qaeda and prevent the regime to harbor its members, the Bush administration decided to invade the country and, with the help of the Northern Alliance militia forces, to replace the Taliban with a new Afghan government. Sustained by the UK and Canada in the first steps, the OEF was subsequently replaced by the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

ISAF was established by the UNSC in late 2001 when at the Bonn Conference Hamid Karzai was designated to head the Afghan administration in the ongoing process of transition of the country. Elected President in the elections of 2004, after almost ten years of Presidency, Karzai ended to serve Afghanistan in 2014 when Ashraf Ghani won the elections and was declared President.

The coalition of international forces present in Afghanistan is supposed to assist the local government as a stabilization force in the process of *Inteqal*, transition in Dari and Pashtun, and eradicate the threats posed by the Taliban, Al Qaeda and other insurgents present in the country. The Afghan conflict therefore represents the culmination of the global war on terrorism, with the invasion of a state operated by the US and its allies; a war that could not be possible without the services provided by the myriad of PMSCs that had entered the country alongside the international military forces.

PMSCs have played a crucial role in the process of securitization of Afghanistan, with the Afghan government and international forces assisted on a wide spectrum of military and security functions. Providing a number of services including consulting, escorting, guarding, protection and training these companies represented a critical player in the country where they are still present, surviving the foreign military withdrawal (Armendáriz 2013).

2. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Methodology

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Methodology

The scope of this thesis is to get an overview of the range of PMSCs working in Afghanistan and their direct impact on the everyday life of Afghan populations. I have chosen an approach focused on explanatory research based on secondary sources from the previous research and literature focused on the impact of private firms in Afghanistan. The study will benefit from the choice of multiple sources, most of all academic, in order to study a case which covers a broad range of topics; the scholars that have investigated the privatization of war in the international arena come from different disciplines and showed various perspectives.

The qualitative methodology is preferable, even if it was not possible to collect informations directly through interviews or personal observations, due to the limitedness and unavailability of data for the country; nonetheless I also used few quantitative informations in order to analyze some figures of PMSCs impact. A quantitative study should be considered as a statistical analysis where the data collected are interpreted in order to provide a connection between the phenomenon observed and its mathematical or statistical expression (Given 2008). Even if it is possible to benefit from preexistent researches, including interviews and personal observation on the field about the Afghans' perception of PMSCs, the research is mainly focused on desk study with access to written material.

The pre-existing literature, considered that the subject is still young and represents a contemporary phenomenon which is ongoing, provides a good overview of the main activities of Private Military and Security Companies. Scholars have focused their researches most of all on the history of mercenaries, on the legal framework and the accountability of these actors or on the main case studies of some African states, the Balkans and Iraq. There is little to find specifically on Afghanistan, but in any case, I rely on these academic contributions, publications and research but also on data available from media or official reports.

The methodological approach chosen, the case study, seems to be the most valid because "the aim is particularization – to present a rich portrayal of a single setting to inform practice, establish the value of the case and/or add to knowledge of a specific topic".[10]

Indeed, it enables a focus on the particularity and complexity of a single case, and it is exactly what I needed in order to answer the research question. The complexity of the current world and therefore of the market for private security needs a comprehensive perspective suited to encompass all the different and multiple methods essential to case study research. Another fundamental aspect of this approach is the relationship between the particular and the global, necessary to figure out the impact of the use of PMSCs -private actors usually hired by foreign states in the global market- on civilians in local communities of Afghanistan.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

To study the privatization of war, there are various approaches that are useful to understand the emergence of Private Military and Security Companies in the post-cold war era; some of which are proponents while others critics of the use of PMSCs. This thesis seeks to examine the consequences of these private companies and their relationship with states, so it is useful to start outlining briefly the major theories of I.R. which have developed a study over the role of state's authority in the provision of military and security services.

This section is dedicated to an overview of the most prominent perspectives on the role of state and the existence of an eradication of statehood in the context of globalization. In any case, the starting point for the analysis of this phenomenon is certainly the realist theory in which we can find a state-centered approach based on the monopoly of the use of force. Studying the role of state in providing security, one of the most prominent theory is the Weberian conception of the monopoly of state over the control of force. Asserting that states still have the monopoly of legitimate use of violence, playing their traditional role in the international arena, is the basis of one of the theories used in the literature concerning the international security. In this regard, the most common reference is Max Weber's definition of state which

[10] Simons, Helen, Case Study Research in Practice. London: Sage, 2009.

maintains the exclusive "monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force" (Weber 1946:78). So, in the early 20th century the German political theorist gave his definition of the modern concept of state, which is to be considered the sole and only source of legitimate violence adapting to a context where the stability of state-nations relies on the relationship between state and violence. But in meeting the new challenges of the 21st century it is important to focus on different aspects that apply today in the complexity of the relationships between states and military activities.

The first perspective I will present, in order to complete a brief elucidation of the topic, is Realism and its modern evolution known as Neorealism. One of the key planks of the theory, even the most relevant, is the recognition of the state as the primary unit of the international arena. Realism according to professor John J. Mearsheimer is based on five assumptions about the relationship between states and the international system, which is first of all anarchic. A system where states possess military capabilities and are able to hurt or destroy, simply because they can't be sure about others' intentions. Considering that, the most important factor for states is the maintenance of their sovereignty and this is why they only think strategically how to survive (Mearsheimer 1994:10). The fundamental assumption of the realist paradigm is mainly focused on the prominent, and in case of its modern incarnation quasi-exclusive, role of nation states as "the ultimate point of reference for contemporary foreign policy".[11]

Historically the 19th century is the turning point for this transformation of sovereignty, as states centralized the control of the use of force and started to extend it also to control an international sphere of influence. According to Thomson's study, prior to the 1856 Paris Treaty that outlawed the private use of force states had no responsibility in the international sphere; indeed they used and benefited from private violence. The authority over the use of force was placed into state authority, which claimed its responsibility even for transborder violence (Thomson 1994: 11 and 19). In this regard the state has the authority to control its territory and to exercise its monopoly on the use of coercive force, but after two centuries of state authority, on the international stage we have recently re-assisted a phenomenon of outsourcing that risks to undermine state's monopoly.

[11] Morgenthau, Hans J., Politics among Nations, University of Chicago Press, 1948.

The commercialization of security simply implies the possibility for a private entity, notably a non-state actor, to take control over an activity embed of statehood: the legitimate use of force. In this respect it is useful to underline that Realism is not just a single theory; conversely it consists of multiple subsets with different focuses and variants considering the nature and role of non-state actors in different manners. But the main dominant unit in the contemporary international arena for realists still remains the state, at most their interest concerns its behaviors, relations and interactions. Indeed, the assumptions of unity and rationality of state are the most relevant in the theoretical proposition of realists, leaving little or no place for the study for non-state actors, like Private Military and Security Companies.

One of these strands, known as Neorealism, has provided some space for the analysis of PMSCs in the process of war decision-making. Following a recent study, these private companies could be seen either as dependent or independent variables explaining military strategies and interventions (Cusmano 2012). In the post-cold war system, a number of critics raised asserting the inability of Realism to take into consideration the growing number and role of private actors. Actors whose powers, according to the new theories that came on the scene in a globalized and multi polar world, are undermining the sovereignty of states. Two factors are believed to have stimulated the emergence of the PMSCs as important players in the security sector: the changes consequent on the end of the Cold War and the adoption of neoliberal ideas by the policy elites within democracies.

Indeed, Neoliberalism is the second approach considered for the overview of the theories concerning PMSCs. The question of who has the authority to decide over the defense strategy can be answered through an explanation of the shifts to the use of market-oriented actors in order to provide security within and outside the borders of a national state.

The neoliberal approach is used to understand the trend started in the ‘70s, when most of the public sector suffered a decentralization and private actors began their increasing and ongoing involvement in affairs like the use of force. The consolidation of the so-called “market civilisation” made possible a rapid growth of the international, or global, markets that started to be perceived as more effective than public forces (Leander 2006: 45). The theory of neoliberalism is strictly interconnected with the ongoing process of globalization and had a huge in-

fluence in triggering the growing process of privatization of state functions, through the idea that economic models could be applied even to security functions in armed conflicts. Indeed, one of the most driving forces behind the emergence of private actors in the provision of security services is the reliance on the efficiency and effectiveness of market-led forces which are at the core of the neoliberal decentralization of government responsibilities. The preference for the *laissez-faire* model, essentially the establishment of market-based solutions to public policy problems, aims to leave as much as possible to the private sector.

Liberalism and its evolutions in the I.R. are not just an economic approach, but starting from the turn-of-the-century Wilsonian principles it has been promoted a new vision of the international system as a complex and diverse reality where non-state actors are progressively gaining a foothold.

The emergence of non-state actors in the international arena is without any doubt addressed the most in a third approach: Transnationalism. This concept appeared for the first time in the studies of the European integration in the mid-20th century, when some scholars were attracted in their researches by that unprecedented shift in the structure of the international politics. Evolving from the study of the process of the European integration in the 20th century, this theory advances with the assumption of the erosion of the sovereignty of the state due to a rise of new forces in world politics (Hollis and Smith 1990: 34). Thus, transnationalists believe that the state is susceptible to infiltrations and the state sovereignty could suffer from a weakening process carried out by a growing number of new autonomous non-state actors.

PMSCs would represent a fully-fledged case of this erosion, where new business interests become the main driver in providing security commodities for actors that compete with sovereign states. Indeed, according to transnationalist theorists, following private commercial strategies an ever-increasing number of powerful globalized non-state actors is affecting states in terms of erosion of sovereign control over the use of violence. Recent studies, mainly conducted by Deborah Avant, have argued that a large use of PMSCs constitutes a threat to the traditional authority of states as the sole and only legitimate providers of force (Avant 2005, Avant and de Nevers 2011).

In sum while the realist-inspired approaches assume that state is the only provider of violence in the international system, others at least introduced the possibility for more actors, moved by private interests, capable to provide the same commodities at a transnational stage. Theories that only focus on state behavior are no longer able to give a complete picture of the complexity of 21st century.

The emergence of privatized actors in the security sector indeed makes a remarkable turning point in the field of military provisions and the recourse of the use of force, because in a neoliberal economic context military resources are now available on the open market: basically now coercive capabilities are accessible to all with money (Singer 2008: 171). In this view, according to Singer, globalism and capitalism should not be seen as diminishing incentives to resort to violence; instead, the emergence of Private Companies providing military services around the world does not follow this assumption countering this liberalist principle (Singer 2008: 174).

Due to the difficulties of the approaches exclusively based on the power of states that miss some important aspects of the modernity as the emergence of independent private security providers and to the fact that codependence and common economic interests in a market-led conception of international relations may give rise to misunderstandings of the neoliberal assumptions, I decided to apply one specific strand of assemblage thinking proposed by Rita Abrahamsen and Michael C. Williams: the Global Security Assemblages.

To understand the global phenomenon of security privatization, it is necessary to apply an approach that reflects the contemporary transformations of the security and military sector in a broader process of re-articulation of the role of state. In this regard it is useful what the two authors have called Global Security Assemblages, a new complex hybrid structure of actors and practices that, stretching across national boundaries and operating in specific sites, are simultaneously public and private as well as global and local (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011: 153). Through these, the security governance in Afghanistan can be explained connecting the process of hybridization of the structures active in the country to the simultaneous reconfiguration of the state power in the provision of security.

An approach of this kind can explain at the same time the global growth of commercial security and its operations and impacts in specific settings; in this particular case study the consequences for the civilian populations of Afghanistan. The main reason for giving preference to such assemblages is the fact that these are particularly functional in connecting practices in different parties of the world in complex relations, exercising important impacts on the security of specific sites. And directing the attention towards a specific site can support the analysis of the consequences of the large use of PMSCs in Afghanistan, where global and local dimensions are intertwined and privates seem to have replaced the public authority to some extent.

Indeed, Abrahamsen and Williams evoke the emergence of private actors as important players in the global security sector stressing that the recent proliferation of PMSCs rather than eroding the power of state, which in their view is not disappearing nor fading away, is part of a process of partial disassembling of functions and authority that are redistributed at the global level in the context of global market and liberalist imperatives. This process of decentralization, denationalization, depoliticization and re-articulation has led to the formation of new practices and structures of security governance (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011).

Addressing the question of how the Afghan context has been reconfigured through hybrid networks of security assemblages enables to present a form of governance such that certain powers are exercised in parallel to the Afghan state, legitimating some actors, others than the military or the police forces, in a process of shifts in governance. And this process gives rise also to a commodification of security, that becomes a mere commodity to be bought or sold in a global marketplace where the public and the private compete and the former can even be transformed into a consumer in the search for services that used to monopolize.

Another important factor in the choice of the Global Security Assemblages approach is undoubtably the need, for a proper study on the emergence of PMSCs, to pay attention both to local specificity and its interaction with global dynamics because the impact of this shift towards security commercialization can vary from place to place. Therefore, this analysis of PMSCs in Afghanistan seeks to answer whether a large range of different military and security providers, both public and private, through interactions, cooperation and competitions has affected local people.

3. PMSCs in Afghanistan

3.1 The Private Industry in numbers
3.2 A wide variety of PMSCs
3.3 The Afghan affair

3.1 The Private Industry in numbers

The presence of international PMSCs in Afghanistan is simultaneous to the arrival of the US-led coalition forces in late 2001; there is no references to prior activities of such actors in the country. Companies proving security and military services in Afghanistan indeed were requested to accompany the military forces engaged in the conflict, mainly the US military at the forefront. The United States, which has the largest military and diplomatic presence in Afghanistan, is the largest employer of private security in the country. PMSCs have supported the military operations of the United States-led Operation Enduring Freedom and then the United Nations-mandated International Security Assistance Force since its inception (UNWGM Report 2010). During the conflict the scale of their use, the degree of implication and the variety of services rendered by PMSCs grew exponentially with the highest estimation of 140 companies working actively in Afghanistan (Joras and Schuster 2008).

The range of services provided by these companies during years have changed, adapting to the context and the necessities of the costumers, from the initial use for logistical and base support services to the expansion even into the realm of intelligence (Armendariz 2013).

Considering the magnitude of the phenomenon, the data collected since 2001 show an increasing presence of the contractors, reaching the highest peak in 2012 approximately around 120.000 employees of which 28.000 security contractors. All the estimate numbers provided in the chapter are from different sources, which are combined to determine an overall figure of the industry.

As illustrated in the figure below, during the first few years of the military presence, the number of private contractors was stable but in 2009 it increased sharply as a consequence of the Obama doctrine which had planned a new strategy of counterinsurgency in Afghanistan. In-

deed the major client in Afghanistan is the US DoD, which employs the majority of the PMSC.

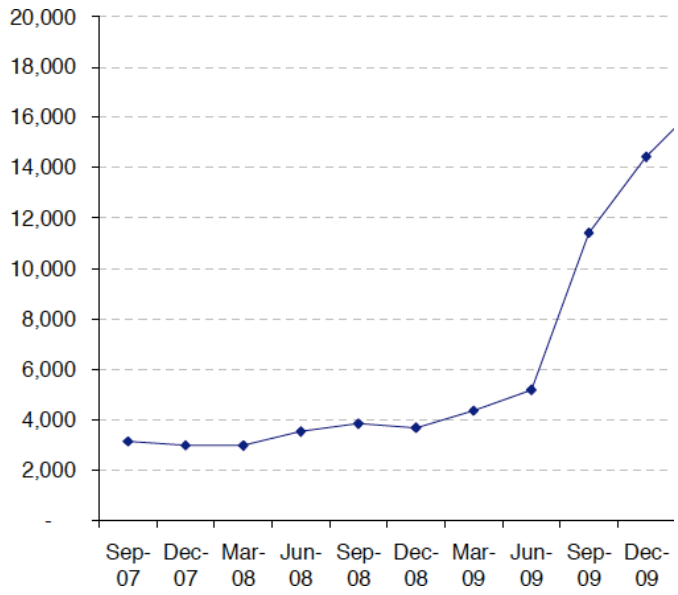

Figure 4: USCENTCOM Quarter Contractor Census report [12]

According to the US Department of Defense, from December 2008 to March 2011, the number of US troops and DoD security personnel in Afghanistan increased, with the latter at a rate of 414% instead of the 207% for the troops and the 26% for the total contractors (Schwartz 2011: 8). USCENTCOM reported, as of its 4th Quarter 2008 census, a total of 3847 DoD PSCs employees in Afghanistan while the second 2011 Report counted 18971 private security contractors employed on contracts providing security (USCENTCOM Report 2008 and USCENTCOM Report 2011).

Following the phases of the Afghan conflict, the urgent need to gain the initiative in the counterinsurgency operation was clear when Obama decided in 2009 to approve the deployment of additional troops. The decision to fill up the US contingent was consequently followed by an exponential increase in the total number of contractor personnel supporting the troops replacing uniform non-combat personnel (Kinsey and Erbel, 2011).

[12] Source: Past Contractor Support of U.S. Operations in USCENTCOM AOR, Iraq, and Afghanistan available at http://www.acq.osd.mil/log/PS/CENTCOM_reports.html

However numerally speaking, an accurate number of PMSCs personnel working in Afghanistan is difficult to estimate but the Regulation approved in February 2008 registered 39 companies. Of these, 18 were Afghan owned and 21 international (Schmeidl 2011).

Country of origin	*Name of company*
Afghan (18)	ARGS, Asia Security Group (ASG), Burhan Security Service, Commercial Security Group (Guards Service) CSG, Good Knight Security Services, IDG Security, ISS (also known as SSI) – International Specialized Services, Kabul Balkh Security Services, Khorasan Security, NCL Holdings LLC., PAGE Associates, Pride Security Services, Shield, Siddiqi Security, SOC – Afg, Tundra SCA, WATAN Risk Management, White Eagle Security Services
UK (10)	Aegis Defense Services Ltd, ArmorGroup Services, Blue Hackle, Control Risks (CR), Edinburgh International, Global Risk Group, Hart Security, Olive Group, Saladin Security Afghanistan, TOR
US (8)	Xe Services/Blackwater USA, DynCorp International, EODT Technologies Inc./GSC, Four Horsemen/ARC, REED Inc., RONCO, Strategic Security Solution International Afghanistan (SSSI), US Protection and Investigations (USPI)
Other (3)	Australia: Compass Canada: GardaWorld (as Kroll) Dubai: UNITY-OSG

Figure 5: PMSCs licensed under the 2008 Regulation [13]

The first official regulation process of the Afghan Minister of Interior in 2008 imposed a cap of 500 employees per registered company leading to licensing 39 PMSCs, later extended to 52 in 2009 with 27 national and 25 international owned companies. These numbers fail in giving an accurate overview on the real width of this phenomenon because, through the legal restrictions imposed, a number of companies continued to operate in the country without license or maintained more personnel than the registration. In addiction military services such as training and intelligence are usually excluded from statistics, which neither include irregular forces nor militias (Armendariz 2013).

In August 2010 President Karzai decided to dismantle the private industry operating in Afghanistan and with presidential decree 62 established that all the PMSCs had to close down

[13] Source: Schmeidl, Susanne, "The Good the Bad and the Ugly": the Privatized Security Sector in Afghanistan, in Afghanistan's Security Sector Governance Challenges, DCAF Regional Programmes Series no.10, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2011.

by the end of the year, generating distemper and placing the companies concerned in a difficult position. After few months of negotiations, Afghan and US authorities agreed upon a "bridging strategy" establishing that embassies should not be concerned by the decree, that some companies could operate as Risk Management Companies and that the others existing before could be transferred to the Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF), a brand-new state-owned enterprise directly contracting with companies (Olsson 2016). Thus, APPF is a good representation of the process of hybridization of the security governance where, in this specific case, private firms with particular interest for their own business are expected to converge on a state-owned enterprise subordinate to the Ministry of Interior.

President Karzai's initial ban and subsequent attempt to regulate the PMSCs sector in reality didn't succeed because private companies providing military and security services in Afghanistan continue to operate as illicit actors, diplomatic PMSCs or Quick Reaction Force (QRF). The ambiguity of the decree and the indefinite exemptions provided by the bridging strategy finally led to a multitude of new possibilities at the disposal of the companies. Rather than banning them from the country, PD62 diversified PMSCs operating in Afghanistan and introduced a for-profit public structure which appears to be emblematic of the hybrid security structures where the governance is achieved through complex networks of corporate and state actors.

3.2 A wide variety of PMSCs

Governments and organizations contracting PMSCs for support of military operations in Afghanistan showed that the role of private contractors is not a marginal activity, actually a key and permanent feature of modern military's structure. Adopting a new strategy, notably the counterinsurgency in the Afghan theatre instead of conventional warfare, in the practice demands new means carried out by the introduction of contractors onto the battlefield (Kinsey and Erbel 2011).

PMSCs operating in Afghanistan since 2001 have experienced a growing trend considering the scale in their use and the diversity in the services implemented. Various classifications can be accorded to the phenomenon; first of all according to Joras and Schuster's working paper, companies working in Afghanistan can be placed into 4 categories: exclusive Afghan owner-

ship and management, holding a domestic investment license; Afghan co-ownership and management with foreign PMSCs, with a domestic investment license; foreign ownership with Afghan partners involved in management, with an international investment license; exclusive foreign ownership and management, holding an international investment license (Joras and Schuster 2008: 11).

The overview of PMSCs operating in Afghanistan can illustrate a highly diverse reality where transnational along with local and licensed as well as irregular actors coexist, cooperating but even competing, for the provision of services in the realm of Afghan security. Hence a high level of interpenetration between international and local processes characterizes the presence of commercial security providers in the country (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011).

In this context a hybridization of the companies arose, with Afghan companies emerging out of the encounter between exclusive international actors supported by the coalition forces and irregular militias in the hands of Afghan commanders. Despite uncertainty and unclarity about the process of formation of these companies, with indirect links between locals and foreigners, private operators starting from military basis pervaded also the emerging Afghan institutions (Olsson 2016). Local PMSCs in Afghanistan are under the control of powerful individuals and although they are numerous, the number of powerbrokers ultimately controlling and influencing the sector is very limited (Forsberg 2010).

Despite the evolution that took place in the Afghan security market just mentioned, the first firms entering the country came in the aftermath of the military intervention and were hired by the coalition forces. US, UK, Australian and South-African PMSCs were the first operators working with the contracts of western governments for the provision of logistic and base support services to the coalition. Since the first months of conflict the range of activities guaranteed started to be extended to other areas, including traditional military or intelligence operations. Their role in the country was progressively broadened covering almost every military and security service for an ever-increasing number of clients looking for protection (Armendariz 2013 and Olsson 2016).

Due to the magnitude and variety of the activities carried out by PMSCs in Afghanistan, I propose a brief and schematic summary using the categories of Susanne Schmeidl. Military

and security companies thus have offered more and more services throughout the years, operating diverse roles:

- Static (offices, residences, embassies, banks, military compounds, checkpoints and protection of civilian, convoys and VIPs);
- Consulting/Advice (assisting MoI for internal reforms and election support for the UN);
- Training and instruction (the emerging Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police);
- Logistic support (military support operations, maintenance and operation of weapons and combat-related goods);
- Intelligence and Risk Management Services (surveillance sector, reconnaissance, interrogation and collection of information and data analysis);
- De-mining and eradication of poppy fields.[14]

From traditional guarding to more technological activities, PMSCs operating on the Afghan soil played a crucial role in the reconstruction of the country as the main providers of security. A number of different clients addressed the private industry, outsourcing functions and responsibilities; for example PMSCs were hired for protection and security-related services by "public customers such as international military forces, diplomatic missions, reconstruction agencies, and international organizations like the UN, as well as private entities and individuals like journalists, reconstruction implementing partners, NGOs, commercial enterprises, foreigners and Afghans".[15]

Outsourcing militaries capabilities in order to wage war has been a regular recurrence for centuries, in this regard the case of the war in Afghanistan seems to have launched a new phase for the re-emergence of contractors supplying military operations. The roles played by PMSCs throughout the conflict allowed the international coalition forces to concentrate on their core functions, without having to deal with ordinary services. The support that contractors guaranteed to the military forces in Afghanistan, combined with their experience and pool of

[14] ibid.

[15] Armendáriz, Leticia, Corporate Private Armies in Afghanistan. Regulating Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) in a Territorial State, NOVACT, 2013.

knowledge, made their services strategic to the success of the military operations (Kinsey and Erbel 2011).

The arrival of coalition forces, international NGOs and diplomatic corps for the reopening of the embassies in the country required a number of skilled and qualified personnel capable of providing security services in the midst of the war without an official Afghan army. Important transnational firms such Aegis Defense Services, Blackwater Worldwide, DynCorp International, MPRI, USPI were quick to seize the opportunity of a new market for private security, signing immediately million-dollar deals with the US DoD.

In Afghanistan what some scholars have called "The market for force" (Avant 2005) is characterized by a variety of different entities, from international to local level, offering a wide range of lethal and nonlethal security services that have evolved during time. During their operations in the country, US and ISAF forces, however, have employed a huge range of PMSCs and in some locations they contracted the services of unregistered companies and illegal armed groups with little accountability (Sherman 2015). Illegal security providers, also known as Armed Support Groups (ASGs), were quite commonly employed by the coalition forces due to the elevated presence in the country; according to some estimates of the United Nations around 5,000 militias were active in 2005 and between 1,000 and 1,500 were armed, employed or trained by the coalition forces (Sherman and DiDomenico 2009).

The counterinsurgency strategy required a number of competences and services that neither foreign troops nor local security forces, wherever active, could provide. For this reason, the initial presence of western companies with transnational traits were gradually accompanied by local providers. The number of local contract personnel has increased until reaching the largest proportion of the contractors' support of the military operations in the country. Irregular armed groups were part of this practice, distinctive of the Afghan conflict, of hiring locals for the provision of security services. As PMSCs became a business, Afghan elites wanted to enter a market that quickly turned into an industry with a strong local component: commanders, politicians and power brokers affiliated to militias engendering the creation of a private-irregular symbiosis of Afghan nature.

3.3 The Afghan Affair

"When arriving in the country, this industry, which was eminently foreign in nature and concept, progressively became a business with a strong national component".[16] At that time there was no afghan army capable of controlling the territory and ensuring security services, so the big vendors of the international market for force started to collaborate with locals for manpower. This initial partnership between international PMSCs, mainly from US and UK, made possible for a handful of influential and powerful warlords to build their own empire of Afghan PMSCs working in service of and receiving their payments from the coalition forces. Warlords and powerbrokers in Afghanistan play an influential role for the society, giving them such a high source of revenue has led them to lead their private militias until enjoying the important place of security providers.

The emergence of a commercialized security industry in the hands of few powerful commanders, whose militias represented *de facto* the sector of the Afghan-owned PMSCs, resulted in a complex structure that has created a number of difficulties for the government at the regional, provincial and local levels. A local security structure, parallel and out of the state's control, gave even a sort of legitimacy to the local commanders in charge of militias and armed groups (Armendariz 2013: 14).

While the appearance of a structure of this nature for the governance of the security in Afghanistan may appear unusual, on the contrary the categories of Global Security Assemblages, first proposed by Rita Abrahamsen and Michael C. Williams in their study about the emergence of hybrid forms of security governance in different parts of the world, focus on the reconfiguration of power at the local level. Indeed this process that blurs the lines between public and private just much as between local, national and international can be identified as a source of tensions, causing a chain reaction of effects even beyond the control of the Afghan government.

According to Ulrich Petersohn, the commercialized security industry in Afghanistan may also be seen as a "racketeer market", where the 44 per cent of the firms are local and the personnel

[16]ibid.

are mainly Afghans (Ulrich Petersohn: 17). This configuration of the Afghan security assemblage with registered transnational companies but also militias, strongmen and warlords is hence a peculiarity to which particular attention should be drawn when studying the afghan context. Due to the difficulty, even for the biggest PMSCs, to hire high-skilled personnel and to acquire the armaments needed, the majority of PMSCs active in the country had to rely on former militias members to fulfill their obligations (Joras and Schuster 2008). Additionally, "some estimate that about 80% of PSC staff in Afghanistan have a militia background".[17]

Studying this particular structure with complex and intricate system of ambiguous networks, where the boundaries between the public and the private spheres seem to be nebulous and blurred, some have argued the emergence of a subcategory of PMSCs, the armed private security companies (APSCs). These companies, and especially their subcontractors, were operated by local strongmen with influential roles in the control of the territory and close to militias and even the Taliban (Krahmann 2016). Influential Afghan families thus created and supported APSCs for their own protection, indeed the lack of the security forces of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) in controlling the territory is a major issue even for local strongmen, to frighten adversaries and to exercise their power and influence. PMSCs contracting directly ex-militia fighters in a close relationship between the former armed groups and the newly established firms was a success for the local commanders in maintaining a strong power and making money. In addiction, this controversial practice seems to be a convenient way to obtain trained personnel and weaponry (Schmeidl 2008).

A small number of power brokers with unclear backgrounds handles the lucrative sector of the Afghan security providers; for instance, the extended Karzai family owns the biggest companies in the country, Asia Security Group and Watan Risk Management, which have a near monopoly of the private security in Eastern and Southern Afghanistan. Indeed, Ahmad and Rashid Popal, two cousins of President Karzai own Watan Risk Management and another cousin, Hashmat Karzai, runs the former one (Forsberg and Kagan 2010).

[17] Schmeidl, Susanne, profile of the private security sector in Afghanistan, in Joras, Ulrike and Schuster, Adrian (eds), Private Security Companies and Local Populations: An Exploratory Study of Afghanistan and Angola, swisspeace Working Paper I, 2008.

Indeed, the leading member of the Karzai family, Ahmad, extended his influence over the province of Kandahar in Southern Afghanistan, establishing a powerful control over PMSCs and contracting firms through an extensive network of alliances and deals with local strongmen. Thanks to his access to the central administration he could control the government in the provinces, with the result that locals perceived the government as an oligarchic institution linked to the international forces and concerned only for its own interests. In so doing, the US and its allies part of the coalition legitimized warlords financially and politically posing a potential threat to long-term peace and stability process in Afghanistan (SIGAR 2016: 19).

This example is just one of many, but well illustrates the complex inter-linkages between economic, political and coercive power where the market for force can't be detached from its inherently ambiguous position between the public and the private sphere. The security governance in Afghanistan was thus achieved through hybrid assemblages of private actors, legally or illegally associated with the Afghan men of power, and the public structures of the Afghan state. But the transition to this procedure, through which new practices and structures of the security governance that operate in specific sites are simultaneously public and private, had negative repercussions for the perception of security in the country.

Peculiar to the private security market in Afghanistan is also the predominant role of the Afghans over the foreign employees of PMSCs; differently from the Iraqi case, which is often compared to the Afghan conflict when considering the role of private contractors in the modern times, international, foreign and local companies here prefer to recruit indigenous workers rather than third-countries nationals. The resort to the Afghan workforce can be justified also through economic reasons; PMSCs hired local personnel by direct negotiations because lowly paid militia-men provided merely a competitive advantage (Olsson 2016). But this trend is also part of a wider global process of decentralization and re-articulation of the state power, which is locally redistributed in a manner that enables locals to become strategic players of multilevel governance structures (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011).

Looking at the figure below, it is noticeable that the large number and high ratio of the locally employed contractors compared to the overall number of contracted personnel has been a feature of all the contracts signed in Afghanistan, even those for the US DoD.

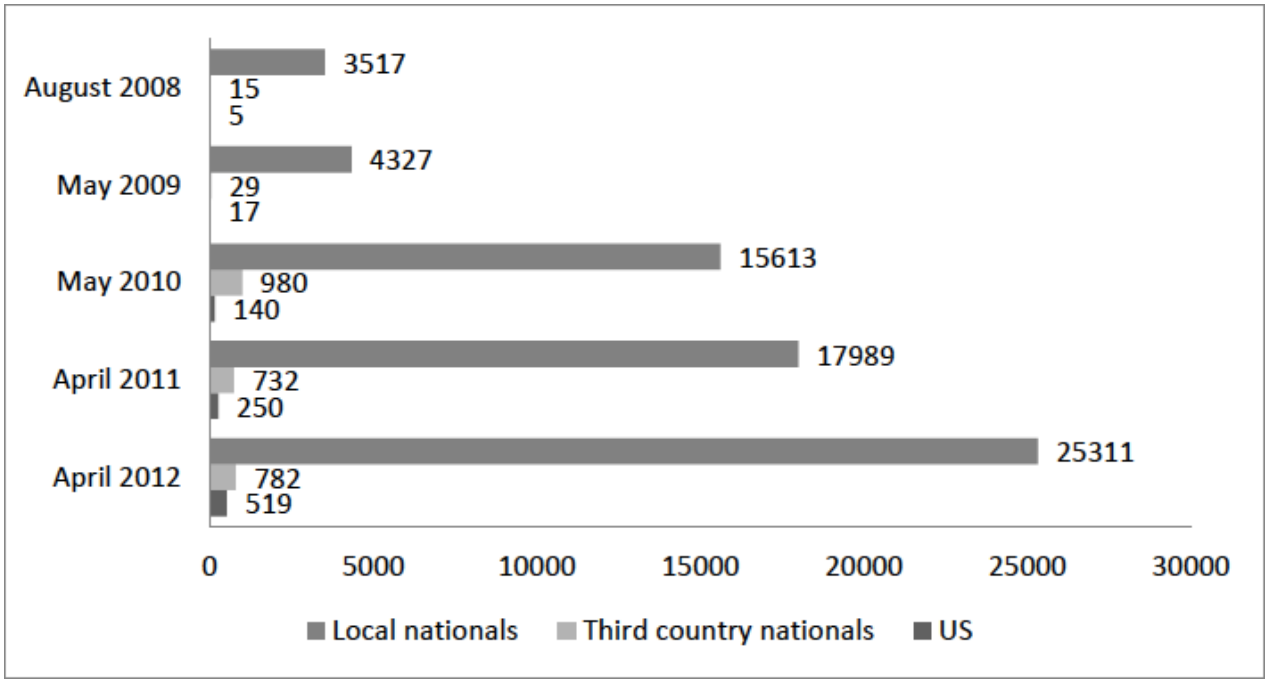

Figure 6: Private Security Contractors Personnel in Afghanistan (August 2008-April 2012) [18]

The number of security contractors supporting military operations in Afghanistan continued to grow at solid rates until reaching its highest peak in 2012 but since that year an ongoing decrease in size is affecting the PMSC industry. According to the US CENTCOM Reports, from the 28,686 reported in July 2012 a total of 1,816 Private Security Contractors were supporting CENTCOM operations in Afghanistan as of 2nd quarter FY17 (USCENTCOM 2017: 3). This downward trend affected significantly also the internal composition of the personnel deployed in Afghanistan, which contrary to the early years of the conflict comprises today more third-county than local nationals.

As noted in the 2nd Report FY of the year 2017 "Security concerns have led to a decrease in use of local national contractors. Due to a constant Force Management Level, the number of contractors remains relatively stable".[19] Besides the unspecified security concerns, the plan to ban private contractors established with the PD62, postponed in several occasions over the years, at least got the reduction started. Furthermore, the new security force APPF that in Karzai's plans should have embraced most of the PMSCs failed in its purpose and was dismantled

[18] Source: USCENTCOM Quarterly Contractor Census Reports, 2nd Quarter, FY 2012.

[19] USCENTCOM Quarterly Contractor Census Reports, 2nd Quarter, FY 2017.

in 2014, also because of the accusations of unprofessional behaviors towards civilians (Krahmann 2016).

Indeed a number of concerns about the accountability of private security providers, in particular the links between PMSCs and local warlords, what seems to take the form of a *de facto* legal impunity for bad behaviors, emerged highlighting the impact of PMSCs' use in Afghanistan (Schmeidl 2008).

4. The impact of PMSCs on Afghans

4.1 Destabilizing Consequences: direct and indirect effects
4.2 Abuses and violations increase the distrust of PMSCs
4.3 Concerns for the lack of the governmental presence

4.1 Destabilizing Consequences: direct and indirect effects

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, an analysis of the privatization of security in the Afghan context cannot be addressed without extensive reference to the consequences of this phenomenon on the local society. Indeed in the following pages all the different ways in which local populations have been affected by the large presence of private companies are illustrated. The activities and vast uses of PMSCs since the beginning of the military intervention in Afghanistan have had direct impacts and indirect effects, causing a number of consequences at many levels.

The complex system of networks determined a multilevel structure where the role and the authority of the Afghan state have been called into question by local competitors such as commanders, warlords, powerbrokers or militiamen but even some strongmen that were part of the administration of the country. This chain of control implied different degrees of implication in the governance, which was traditionally established through diverse middlemen connecting the governmental to the local level. Transformations in the last years resulted in a new category of hybrid actors, mainly out of the control of the Afghan state, carrying out locally security practices intertwined with international strategies and actors (Olsson 2016).

Consequently, the outcome of this shift of the security governance to new structures in which local and private overlap with central and public categories appears unclear and not without concerns. A process of disassembling from which the Afghan state is not being thrown out completely, but of which represents one form of a wider multifaceted structure of governance, that had repercussions on the stabilization of the country. The next sections of the chapter are devoted to the explanation of how PMSCs represent a source of destabilization and why locals have a negative perception of the military and security providers.

In Afghanistan, due to the recent conflictual background and the very vague security landscape of the country, according to some interviews and surveys (i.e. Schmeidl 2008) PMSCs neither are very popular nor have positive reputation among the civilian population. Presenting this attitude, the author explains that not all the issues concerning the security governance in Afghanistan should be linked to the direct action of PMSCs. Indeed, the scant transparency of the security apparatus, the misleading role of militias and local armed groups and the frustration for the presence of unidentified foreign actors contribute to the lack of understanding about security providers amongst locals. "The insufficient information about PSC actors indirectly encourages speculations on their nature and activities".[20]

In addition even when they are directly affected by the action of PMSCs' employees, insofar as their involvement and contractor status can be proven, Afghans have often the impression that security actors can act with impunity and above the law in Afghanistan. This evokes a feeling of insecurity among the civilian population of a country where the security governance is based on structures that tend to blur the lines between private and public. A sense of vulnerability and a fear for the threats posed to the Afghan state and its durability but at the same time a frustrating impunity for the bad behavior of contractors reflect the position of a population that suffers from the grey areas of this environment.

According to the conclusions drawn by Abrahamsen and Williams, the key point is not focused on "whether or not the state is losing power and sovereignty in a zero-sum game with non-state actors".[21] Instead, the analysis covers on how the hybridization of the security governance has directly impacted on the lives of Afghan citizens and indirectly affected their perception of all the different actors involved in the provision of security in the country. The extensive presence of PMSCs is not just perceived by the local people as the hindrance to the stability (Sherman and DiDomenico 2009) but it has resulted also in a loss of trust in the institutions of the Afghan state.

[20] Schmeidl, Susanne, Profile of the private security sector in Afghanistan, in Joras, Ulrike and Schuster, Adrian (eds), Private Security Companies and Local Populations: An Exploratory Study of Afghanistan and Angola, swisspeace Working Paper I, 2008.

[21] Abrahamsen, Rita, and Williams, Michael C. Security beyond the state: Private security in international politics. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

In this regard a number of concerns emerge in other studies that underline how the use of PMSCs in a particular context, such as the Afghan case, can detract from the credibility of the state's government (Sherman and DiDomenico 2009 and Krahmann 2016). Among Afghans a number of concerns emerged about the misconduct and the perception of impunity of contractors, because PMSCs in Afghanistan follow the trend "that the countries where they are registered or physically based are not always those making most use of their services, and their most questionable activities occur in the most remote and chaotic locations".[22]

4.2 Abuses and violations increase the distrust of PMSCs

Considering the questionable activities of the private security providers is the first step that necessarily needs to be done in order to shed some light on the direct impact of the use of PMSCs on the civilian population in Afghanistan. Reports and testimonies in this regard are scarcely accessible due to a number of different limitations such as a lack of examination and of reliable monitoring systems or the difficult identification of the all actors involved. Despite the initial impediments to find evidences of incidents and violations, however a series of scandals concerning the activities of PMSCs can be noted. The large use of PMSCs in Afghanistan resulted in a broad sense of distrust and insecurity among the locals that have suffered from a context where incidents involving contractors generated significant sources of tension (Armendariz 2013).

Practices of dual nature, incidents of disproportionate use of force resulting in civilian casualties and serious human rights violations will thus be presented below in the chapter with a particular attention devoted to the direct impact suffered by civilians, because these incidents have generated a sense of fear, culminated in a broad perception of insecurity. Afghans, due to a series of abuses and serious violations, started to be afraid of PMSCs showing a paradox in which military and security providers create insecurity and affect the civilian population.

One of the first scandals monitored dates back to 2003, when an interrogation of an Afghan by a contractor assigned to the US Army forward operating base in Asadabad resulted in the death of the former. In June 2003 David Passaro, a former Army Special Soldier working on a

[22] Bailes, Alison & Holmqvist, Caroline, The Increasing Role of Private Military and Security Companies. Brussels: European Parliament Subcommittee on Security and Defence, 2007.

contract directly to the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) for capturing and interrogating suspects, was conducting the interrogation of Abdul Wali, an Afghan national who died after two days of custody. Once back to the United States, the former Green Beret was not charged with the murder but sentenced to eight years for committing brutal assaults (Armendariz 2013, Kinsey and Erbel 2011, UNWG on Mercenaries Report 2010). Even if this one represents the only case of prosecution of any contractor by the US Government for violence toward locals, numerous incidents of abuses and violations in Afghanistan remained unsolved.

For example a supervisor of the American USPI (United States Protection and Investigation) after having shot and killed his local interpreter during an argument, was soon flown back to the United States without any investigation of the local authorities. This case illustrates the climate of distrust and the sense of frustration among civilian populations that not only suffer the consequences of contractors' misconduct but also face difficulties in obtaining justice and adequate remedies. The impression that PMSCs' employees are not held accountable for their actions and can therefore act with impunity seems to be substantiated by a number of additional cases (Schmeidl 2008).

Concerns about the excessive use of force among contractors are confirmed in the practice even with regard to local employees, as in the case of contractors' extrajudicial killings of seven Afghans in Wardak Province during a fighting in October 2007. According to the Report of the UNWG on the use of mercenaries, in the Haft Asyab area the international military forces were engaged in an exchange of gunfire against Anti-Governmental elements when some employees of the company RWA Road and Construction Engineering Company entered a village and, shooting one by one, killed seven adult males and injured one child.

The wide use of locals also for military-type activities has led to a large number of armed groups operating in an unstable area where multiple interests are intertwined and powerful men can challenge the GIRoA's authority through the use of violence. This is the case of the 2009 shooting incident occurred between an Afghan private security company and the Afghan National Police. On the 29 of June the Afghan Special Guards opened fire against the ANP killing the Chief of Police, the head of criminal investigations, four officers and probably causing undefined civilian casualties. The Afghan Special Guards was a private entity operating for the security provision in Afghanistan alongside or under the American Special Forces

(UNWG on Mercenaries Report 2010). This is a demonstration of the employment of armed groups, likely of unlawful nature, by foreign armed forces; indeed ASG was an unregistered militia force, whose heavily armed men opened fire against Kandahar's police officers who had arrested one of their members that day. The June 29 Kandahar Incident raises questions of how 41 contractors, later on arrested, could shoot ANP's members challenging the authority of the Afghan state (Sherman and DiDomenico 2009).

Another blatant case of unreliability concerning Afghan subcontractors and the vagueness of their nature occurred in August 2008, when US and Afghan forces engaged a hard and prolonged battle against militiamen when approaching Azizabad. During the operation, called the Azizabad raid, approximately 55 persons, amid civilians and militia forces, were killed but what is more remarkable about these casualties is that security contractors for the British PMSC ArmorGroup were part of the anti-coalition militia. Indeed a US Military investigation found that eight men employed for ArmorGroup were killed in the Azizabad raid, in a site where a later search revealed the presence of thousands of dollars and a host of military equipment, including heavy weaponry (SASC 2010).

As emerged from this case, ArmorGroup, a company that relied upon local workforce for security contracts in the country, subcontracted their activities to local warlords that had important ties to pro-Taliban elements causing a serious threaten both to the activities of the security forces engaged in the area and to people's perception of security, as well as to their life (Lovewine 2014).

The resentment felt towards PMSCs grew among Afghans because all these types of incidents increased the sense of insecurity and undermined the efforts made in the country. The various transgressions of PMSCs personnel, arising from serious deficiencies in training, loyalty and accountability, caused difficulties for the locals that had to suffer injuries and human losses. Incidents that have resulted in serious violations of human rights like torture or in war crimes such as unlawful killings show the necessity to consider PMSCs' behavior also from the human rights perspective, in order to provide a fuller picture and to determine whether the impact of PMSCs poses a serious threat to the Afghan population. And if so, what measures and rules should be established to set up a better oversight (Armendariz 2013).

Human Rights Watch for instance reported that the UN had documented incidents where the commander of a company employed by the US forces was directly involved in abuses against Pashtun civilians. Apparently Azizullah, this is the name of the ethnic Tajik commander on the US payroll, leaded the company ASG which has been accused for several violations, such as extrajudicial executions, mutilation of corpses, shootings, or abduction and rape of boys (Human Rights Watch 2011: 50).

Similarly a scandal involving local warlords and foreign employees broke and the abuse of young boys became public knowledge even in western countries. Known as the dancing boys incident, this scandal showed the Afghan controversial practice of *bacha bazi* ("boy play" in afghan) with some DynCorp contractors tied to the recruitment of the local boys. During this practice, which consists in hiring young boys to dress up in women's clothes and dance for Afghan men, usually perpetrators abuse of the adolescents, sometimes literally sold to these wealthy and powerful warlords. In the specific case, in the Northern Province of Kunduz some employees of the US registered PMSC paid young *bacha bazi* performers to dance for them breaking both *sharia* and the Afghan civil law in what the US State Department has called a "widespread, culturally accepted form of male rape".[23] Human Rights Watch reports that perpetrators of these abuses are rarely arrested and enjoy impunity because the vast majority of them are the most influent commanders of the country and have the protection of their armed militias (Human Rights Watch 2011). Impunity from which also DynCorp workers have benefited.

Considering the direct consequences of PMSCs, there are also minor criminal and illegal activities involving contractors that shall be taken into account. Alongside serious violations like sexual abuses, unauthorized raids, improper use of force or extrajudicial killings, several illegal activities can be mentioned. Criminal behaviors may include a wide range of activities as opium trafficking, briberies, arms trade, robberies, illegal transport of weapons, extortions, irregular and abusive house inspections; most of the practices linked to Afghan illegal economy in which most of the Afghan PMSCs are highly involved. The accusation of PMSCs staff participating in illegal activities emerges in the study conducted in Afghanistan by Susanne Schmeidl and presented in the 2008 working paper of the SwissPeace institute on how local

23 Jalalzai, Musa Khan, Daily Outlook Afghanistan (Afghanistan), July 9, 2011.

populations perceive Private Security Companies. Of these, extorting passing vehicles and trafficking drugs seem to be the most profitable and thus the most common (Tierney 2010).

Documented and verified informations about crimes and violations perpetrated by PMSCs in Afghanistan are slim; even the UN Working Group on the use of mercenaries that visited the country and published a Report on this matter in 2009 faced difficulties in finding evidences. The same Report highlights the sense of instability created by the difficulty in differentiating the multitude of actors, legal or illegal and local or foreign, involved in the security practices. The loss of trust among locals generated by the practice of the security actors active in the country is therefore evident; far from the standards expected with the process of dissolution and the bridging strategy, concerns and mistrust characterize locals' attitude towards PMSCs.

In sum, the fact that in Afghanistan PMSCs have been involved in a number of misconducts has affected directly the lives of locals, with casualties and killings, and has led them to a general distrust. And thus, bad behaviors and the consequent sense of insecurity amongst local people represent one of the main consequences of the large presence of PMSCs in the country.

4.3 Concerns for the lack of the governmental presence

The myriad activities carried out by PMSCs in the realm of the provision of security in Afghanistan and the multilevel governance which has arisen provoked a fragmentation in the sector with serious consequences for the capacity of the government to control roles and practices of several actors.

PMSCs' personnel present in Afghanistan since the beginning of the international operations, the case of highest ratio between contractors and troops, was implicated in a series of activities regarding the process of securitization of the country among which also some questionable practices. The difficulty to investigate and the inadequacy of the mechanisms of control, added to the strong political influence exercised by the owners of the implicated companies, generated in the country a perception of lack of the governmental presence. In this regard the procedure of regulation launched in 2008 by President Karzai, even if officially implemented in 2011, was a measure to reassert GIRoA's sovereignty in a hybrid area.

The serious issues presented in the section above represent one of the diverse consequences, probably the most severe and evident, of the common practice of outsourcing the use of force to private entities. But for the Afghan state this practice resulted in a loss of responsibility, "shifting its role from a monopoly provider to that of a manager of the legal context" (Armendariz 2013: 36). Managing the security sector should represent for the GIRoA the possibility to delegate to other actors certain areas or practices with the maintenance of an overview of all the activities and the actors concerned. On this point, in contrast, the emergence of a parallel structure consisting of entities out of the government's control raises a number of issues for both the GIRoA and the Afghans.

Local owners of some PMSCs have shown their ability to wield power and control violence over a certain territory, exercising an authority in opposition or otherwise parallel to the GIRoA. Indeed significant shortcomings on the government's part led to a second important consequence: the difficulty for local people to rely on the central government. The shifting of control and responsibility to private entities that locals hardly trust, resulted in a parallel structure managed by an élite of commanders that challenge state's control at the expenses of Afghans.

The population suffers the lack of reliability of the mixture of actors providing military and security services, a perception which is reflected in the fact that Afghans don't feel adequate protection in terms of security. Actually the presence of an undefined assemblage of security providers including at the same time governmental forces, PMSCs and illegal armed groups has created fear and insecurity within local people. The feeling of insecurity, emerged from the interviews in the Report of Susanne Schmeidl for SwissPeace on the perception of PMSCs by Afghan population, was generated by practices such as bad behaviors, bad business practices and corruption. Quite often Afghans reported that militias active in Kandahar associated to the PMSCs of that zone were engaged in opium trafficking or other petty crimes. The fact that these activities were not tackled, or not adequately, led to the sensation that in Afghanistan PMSCs can act above the law, thereby increasing the feeling of insecurity (Schmeidl 2008).

The unstable borders between licit and illicit practices, that have generated fear and subsequently frustration among people, can also be accounted for by the high level of corruption. The collusions of some companies with political elites, i.e. the Karzai extended family, but at

the same time with powerful warlords tied to local militias ended up in a fragmentation of power. This process could be seen as a factor of destabilization, with the GIRoA delegating parts of its authority and several tasks to actors whose intentions do not match those of the Afghan public institutions and consequently not operating in the interests of the Afghans' security.

Allegations of ties between local commanders and Taliban indeed would undermine the future of the Afghan system because hybrid multilevel structures assembled to ensure the security in the country would find themselves linked to the main source of insecurity in the region (Schmeidl 2008). This connection indeed contributes to increase the feeling of insecurity, blurring the distinction between licit and illicit practices of control, and impairs PMSCs' effort to provide security in a post-conflict and highly unstable context. Failures in the process of securitization in fact would be suffered, once again, by the Afghan civilian population.

Population's perception of security thus does not correspond with the positive spillover effect planned for the country; instead, it has to be noted that the commodification of security in Afghanistan has been highly contradictory. Negative consequences on both the image of the entire private sector, with a scarce recognition of the effectiveness of its practices, and the reputation of the government, that has shown contradictions and shortcomings, represent the bequest left to the Afghan population.

5. Conclusion

The use of PMSCs in Afghanistan and their impact on local population was the main subject of the thesis, during which I sought to figure out whether private military and security companies have affected the lives of Afghan nationals, to what degree and causing which kind of consequences.

Starting from the question "What were the consequences of the large presence of Private Military and Security Companies for local populations in Afghanistan?" and after an initial analysis of the existing literature, I have approached the phenomenon of the privatization of security, its historical relevance in the realm of the international relations and the reasons for the recent re-emergence. A broad overview was necessary to get into the specifics of the Afghan context, where a number of different actors combine their practices at multiple levels in order to carry out the security governance. Using the category of the global security assemblages proposed by Abrahamsen and Williams it was possible to address the current process of hybridization of the security practices in the locally oriented approach employed for this case study. Indeed, this approach has led to identify a global trend, plotting the boundaries of its local version in the more limited context of Afghanistan.

What has emerged is a fragmented picture of myriad actors, linkages and practices, held together by several interests for the security provision. Treating security as a simple commodity does not provide an exhaustive analysis because the Afghan case showed that among all the diverse actors involved, some mainly have not economic reasons to be interested to the security governance. Political purposes, such as the control of certain territories, or urgent necessities, namely the need to reshape the armed groups and militias which have been outlawed by presenting them as regular companies, added to the desire to make profits through the employment of PMSCs.

Findings on Afghanistan suggested that a number of peculiarities could be observed; above all the specificities about the composition of the Afghan assemblage focus on the local aspect of PMSCs active in the country: most of the owners and the employees are Afghan nationals. In addition, a considerable number of these have ties, or even command, irregular armed groups.

This particular aspect led to a fundamental consequence, that the use of PMSCs has empowered some actors, others than the Afghan government, in what seems to be a parallel structure of governance. A significant effect of it is represented by the difficulty to control, regulate and supervise their activities, which have affected local population directly, indirectly and at many levels.

In a multifaceted structure, wider than the state's domain but from which it has not completely been thrown out, there are many different types of linkages and sometimes not totally clear. Ambiguities about the multifarious services that have been provided during years resulted in a problematic issue for Afghans, that have difficulties in relying on the private security sector because of its inherent instability.

Bad behavior and misconduct have accompanied the presence of private companies since the beginning of the conflict in 2001, when the troops of the international coalition requested the support of private contractors to operate. Questionable activities involving PMSCs have been reported since their first years of engagement and a number of incidents may be counted. Scandals about illegal activities and incidents resulted in abuses and human rights violations have underlined the direct implication of contractors for the instability of the country. The perception of fear and insecurity, added to the concerns about the impunity of those who have committed violations sometimes ended with civilian casualties, is a common feeling amongst the Afghan civil population.

Examples of abuses, assaults, excessive use of force, extrajudicial killings, shootings, torture of detainees have been collected within civilians that suffer from a context where a high presence of military and security personnel does not result in more security for the people. Rather may be observed even a sense of frustration, because the impacting activities of PMSCs in Afghanistan instead of creating a positive spillover effect, represent one of the most important issues for the entire society.

The presence of private security providers indeed has affected negatively this environment, where former militiamen run PMSCs hired by foreign entities such as the U.S. DoD and powerful warlords take advantage of their private groups to gain power at the expenses of the state. Cases of direct challenge to the central government, however, should not hide the fact

that in Afghanistan private entities are inseparable from political linkages in such blurred structures of governance.

Lastly the Afghan case seems to recommend that, when considering the impact of PMSCs on the civil population, it is necessary to evaluate the phenomenon from a broad perspective, including all the possible actors, linkages and practices, whether they clear or obscure, legal or illegal, public or private. Because only a comprehensive picture of the commercial military and security practices can describe how PMSCs represent a destabilizing factor for Afghans.

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