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GENDER IDENTITIES IN TRANSFORMATION

Afghan female police officers` contested profession in Post -Conflict Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

Kaisa Rautaheimo: Gender Identities in Transformation – Afghan Female Police Officers` contested profession in Post-Conflict Afghanistan
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Afghanistan has been in turmoil in recent decades. US-led coalition forces invaded the country in 2001 when it had already suffered from decades of ongoing conflict and gender relations had been radicalized to a point of extremity. Alongside intensive fighting against the Taliban and the other insurgency groups, the US and its allies took an active role in rebuilding the country, where the SSR played a key role. Women were for the first time in the history of Afghanistan formally accepted in the police forces and gender equality was promoted throughout the security forces. However, the number of women in police forces has not increased as expected. The varying insurgency groups have taken policewomen as their targets and their presence has awakened dissonance inside the forces and among the larger society. At the same time, they are seen by the international community as crucial actors for increasing the human security of the whole nation.

This thesis seeks to increase knowledge on how Kabul based female police officers navigate their lives around their contested profession. The research is based on thematic interviews with seven female police officers living in Kabul. The main focus of the study is on gender identities; how they are constructed in surroundings which may be characterized as an extremely patriarchal society, excessively internationalized state-building reforms, and a highly masculine professional context.

The data reveals that the presence of female police officers in Afghanistan threatens the existing gender order as they occupy positions that are commonly seen as best performed by men in a context where the duty to protect has traditionally been connected to men`s pride. Thus the participants have not been able to build their identity vis-à-vis the traditional roles assigned to men and women. In a civilian context, the post-conflict setting, the institutional changes as well as the re-organizing of social action it has brought, have enabled participants to stretch the norms related to gender and find new positions for themselves. However, the sustainability of these new roles and statuses may be questioned as the state-building has been excessively internationalized and the reforms have lacked real legitimacy among Afghans themselves. Furthermore, it should be re-considered whether the female police officers really have space to express themselves as individuals or whether their lives have been essentialized to another rigid interpretation of womanhood, as saviors of all the Afghan women. In a professional context participants were more willing to obey the security sector`s particular and persistent gender norms. This was especially strong among the youngest participants, whose lives the new profession has affected more comprehensively.

This thesis concludes that from the participants` perspective gendered social hierarchies in the security sector have remained stagnant as there is very limited space for ideas of gender to change or to develop in comparison to a civilian context where the participants have been able to stretch the norms related to gender, although their sustainability may be questioned due to the present situation in the country and the complex historical context of Afghan women. Furthermore it may be stated that the present data reveals that there have been deficiencies in SSR`s ability to form representative police forces in terms of gender.

Keywords: Afghanistan, SSR, gender, gender relations, post-conflict, militarization, female police officers

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

List of Acronyms

ANP = Afghan National Police

ALP = Afghan Local Police

AIHRC = Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Comission

EU = European Union

EUPOL = European Union Police Mission

EVAW = Elimination of Violence Against Women

LOTFA = Law and Order Trust Fund of Afghanistan

MOI = Ministry of Interior Affairs

NATO = North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NGO = Non-Governmental Organization

OECD = The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OECD DAC = Development Assistance Committee of The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PDPA = People`s Democratic Party of Afghanistan

SSR = Security Sector Reform

UN = United Nations

UNSC = United Nations Security Council

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1 INTRODUCTION

Traditional gender norms have persistently remained fixed in Afghanistan due to weak state-society relations as well as decades of ongoing conflicts (Moghadam, 1993). Although there have been several attempts to improve women`s rights and status in society throughout history, they have only made women`s rights political tokens; different rulers have used the issue to consolidate national unity and their own strength, and external interventionist to justify their actions inside the country (see Moghadam, 1993; Kandiyoti, 2001; Kouvo, 2011; Atashi, 2015). Securing Afghan women`s rights was part of the political rhetoric also when the US-led coalition invaded Afghanistan in 2001. Numerous reconstruction programs concerning women`s rights were carried out by external donor countries, as intensive fighting against insurgency groups continued (Atashi, 2015). UNSC resolution 1325 inspired initiatives to mainstream, participate and protect women in all levels of peace-building. Thus in a donor-led Security Sector Reform (SSR) women were for the first time in the history of Afghanistan formally accepted in the police forces and gender equity was promoted throughout the security forces (Sedra, 2010). At the present moment, 19 years after the reform, women constitute less than two percent of the forces (Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, 2019). Varying insurgency groups have taken policewomen as their targets and their presence has awakened dissonance inside the forces and among the larger society (see Frogh et al., 2018; AIHRC, 2018; NYT, 2018; Amenesty, 2015; ICG, 2013: HRW, 2013). Female police officers are said to possess a profession, which is threatening the traditional gender norms inside the country, but at the same time, they are seen as crucial actors for improving the human security of the whole nation by the international community (ibid.). Hence, after 19 years of intervention it is relevant to question how effective the SSR has been in terms of inclusivity and how female police officers, themselves, perceive their lives through their new profession.

This master thesis attempts to increase knowledge on how donor-led SSR has affected Kabul based female police officers` lives by exploring how they navigate their lives between their new profession and the limitations and demands of society. The main focus of the study is on gender identities, which are understood here as social constructs (Alcoff, 1988) that are grounded the basis of how femininities and masculinities are defined in a certain time and space. The research question is framed accordingly: How is Afghan female police officers` gender identity constructed in post-conflict Afghanistan? The aim of the study is to increase knowledge on what kind of positions post-conflict society as a setting and security sector as a work environment may offer for women in a highly patriarchal and militarized culture. In other words study aims to describe in what kind of

social hierarchies the participants live in and how they are able to express themselves in those contexts. On a more general level, the research contributes to studies on Afghan women's own experiences of post-conflict reality as well as studies on gender and SSR: why and how gender should be taken into account when implementing SSR in war-torn countries.

The research relies on a feminist approach to peace and conflict studies, where analyzing gender is seen as a crucial feature in understanding the nature of the conflict. Furthermore, the research relies on a comprehensive understanding of security, where different kinds of personal, economical, or institutional threats may prolong and complicate the ongoing conflict. (See e.g. Cockburn, 2012; Eichler, 2014; Enloe, 2000; Sjöberg, 2018; Tickner, 2014).

Existing research on gender relations in post-conflict Afghanistan has concentrated on the peacebuilding and state-building measures, and how they have affected women`s status and role in Afghan society. The effectiveness of these measures has been accounted for mainly in quantitive terms. Furthermore, the literature has concentrated on questioning the moral justification of internationalized peacebuilding. SSR`s gender focus has been mainly researched through exploring women`s role in it. Rare studies have been conducted on gender identities and how these identities have an influence on the inclusivity of the reform (apart from Myrttinen, 2008). The present research aims to fill the gap and increase knowledge on how working in the security sector has affected female police officers` ability to express themselves in professional realms as well as in civil realms in order to reveal how representative the police forces actually are.

The research is based on thematic interviews with seven female police officers living in Kabul. The knowledge gained through this research is based on personal narratives; what is real and thus meaningful for the individual participant. Throughout history there have been several attempts to meddle with Afghan women`s lives by the different rulers and invaders, hence hearing voices of the individuals themselves may be considered as an essential approach to understand the complex realities they live in. However it is relevant to highlight here the inevitable power hierarchy of the present research, where I have, from my cultural and social-economical background, constructed the platform where the participants` voices are heard. The interviews were conducted through Facetime and Whatsapp from Finland via a Dari speaking translator in 2019. The participants had varying backgrounds in terms of age, ethnicity, and social class, but they were all more educated than average police officers in the country. Due to the participants' residential area, the capital of the country, and the higher educational career, their experiences of their lives and profession may

vary excessively from the experiences of women police living in the rural parts of the country. Thus the scope of the research is to reveal realities Kabul based female police officers live in.

Female police officers' experiences are set in the context through theories of gender relations in post-conflict settings, and gender in the security sector, in order to find consistencies and disparities. Furthermore, the particular historical context of Afghanistan is taken under consideration along with the analysis process.

The structure of the present research is outlined followingly. The background chapter will start by introducing the historical context of Afghan women with a focus on gender relations. Subsequently, SSR and its practices and aims and how the gender is considered in it will be briefly introduced as well as its rationale in the Afghan context. The third chapter will introduce key concepts of the present research, theoretical discussions around them, and how they are utilized in the present research. The fourth chapter unwraps the methodological choices of the research and their affiliation with the knowledge that is gained through this research. Furthermore, ethical considerations concerning the chosen research design are included in the chapter. Chapter five presents the findings and analyzes them in reflection of the theoretical framework presented in chapter 3. Finally, the last chapter summarises the findings, acknowledges the limitations of the study, and considers necessary further research on the topic.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1. A short history of Afghan women

To understand the present realities that female police officers live in, it is necessary first to elaborate on the historical context. This section will briefly introduce how gender relations have evolved throughout the history in Afghanistan and where the values and norms related to gender derive from.

2.1.1. Unveiling and veiling - Pre-2001

Afghanistan gained its independence in 1919 and since then has been formally called an independent state. However, until this day the state has never managed to spread its control over all the country and to sustain its citizens with basic needs (Barfield, 2010). Afghanistan has remained a weak state due to a lack of reliable and well-intentioned rulers, challenging terrain and numerous intrastate and interstate wars (ibid). Coercive reforms and modernization projects by the state or by the external powers have been confronted with strong opposition in rural areas as they are seen as threatening the old norms and distribution of power without providing people with their basic needs (Moghadam, 1993). Thus the numerous different regional tribes and communal groups scattered around the country have continued to have a role as primary providers for many Afghan citizens and economic development and modernization projects have only reached urban centers (ibid.). The communal groups, which are based on primordial ties, have had their own customs, informal judicial systems and armed groups (Moghadam, 1993; Sedra, 2010). They have worked independently from the central government and they have been economically self-sufficient (Moghadam, 1993). How Afghans perceive the idea of a nation-state is a contested issue among scholars (Kandiyoti, 2007). Some argue that before the decades of conflict, there was, especially in urban centers, a notion of a common shared state (Kakar, 1978; Wardak, 2004). Educational and professional opportunities in the urban centres as well as inter-marriage and service in the national army mixed people from different ethnic and tribal backgrounds and strengthened the idea of a shared state (Wardak, 2004). On the other hand, it is stated that the commonly shared idea of statehood is a fabrication, which has only served the purpose of the urban-based elite to consolidate their power over local autonomies (Edwards, 1996). However the idea of nation-state is perceived,

Islam has been considered as a unifying force in resistance to fight against encroachment of the state or foreign aggression (Zulfacar, 2006).

Although Afghanistan consists of 34 provinces with 14 different ethnic groups, which all have their own set of norms and customary laws, their attitudes towards women, as subordinate and dependent on men, have been similar (Emadi, 2002). Nevertheless, Afghan women are not a homogenous entity as they constitute a multitude of aspects, including traditions, ethnicities, tribal allegiances, regions (Zulfacar, 2006). Furthermore being ” a woman” or ” a man” is only one defining character of your status in society as class, economic status, demographics, culture, and politics are also influential factors (Ataishi, 2015).

Historically Afghans have tended to have relatively relaxed attitude towards Islam (Zulfacar, 2006), especially in terms of the adherence to rituals and an unpuritanical approach to art, music and poetry, although the society has been always highly conservative (Marsden, 2001). Tribal affiliations and local codes have had a great influence on how Islam has been perceived among people (Zulfacar, 2006). Thus patriarchy, which has been the prevailing way of understanding gender norms in Afghanistan (Emadi, 2002), is derived from both, the Quran and tribal traditions (Ahmed Ghosh, 2003).

In Afghan society women and children are considered traditionally as the male`s property and kin has been formed along patrilineal lines (Moghadam, 1993). Marriage has been a way to ”…ending feuds, cementing political alliances between families or increasing a family`s prestige” (Moghadam, 1993, pp. 221). A ”Brideprice” is given to the father of a bride as compensation for giving away his daughter (Moghadam, 1993). Thus marriage is rather seen as a part of social organization and a practical act than a commitment between two persons.

According to the traditions men are expected to protect and provide for their family as women`s duty has been tied to childbearing and caring and to maintaining the family honor through their behavior and reputation (Kouvo, 2011). Honor is the most desired status symbol of Afghan society and the practice of *Purdah* (meaning curtain) has been an important feature of the honor code (Moghadam, 1993). It veils or otherways secludes women from the gaze of men who are not part of their households (ibid.). Failing to *purdah* your wives or daughters properly would harm the reputation of the entire household and the males would be regarded as incompetent and similarly, the women would be punished for failing to fulfill their tasks (Moghadam, 1993; Kouvo, 2011).

Thus the patriarchal gender relations have been tied to men`s self-respect as well as to their economic self-sufficiency. Furthermore, they have tied women`s security and recognition to the family sphere as women do not tend to exist outside of it (Ahmed Ghosh, 2003).

Throughout history, there have been several extensive efforts to improve women`s positions in Afghanistan. However these efforts have managed to empower only a very tiny population of the country living in the urban areas, as there has been a dismissal of the different realities Afghan women live in in different parts of the country (Zulfacar, 2006). The disorder of the central state and thus weak state presence have widen the cap between how women in rural areas, which constitute the majority of Afghan women, experience their lives and how women in urban areas do, as well as between women in low-income families and higher-income families (Kouvo, 2011). Additionally throughout history women`s own participation for the reforms have been dismissed and the reforms have been implemented in a way that has only made women`s rights political tokens to serve the larger political goals of the constantly changing rulers (Zulfacar, 2006).

At the beginning of the 20th century, after achieving independence from Great Britain, Emir Amanullah Khan attempted to modernize the country and free women from social and cultural oppression (Emadi, 2002). Women`s rights were seen as an evident next step to a better future of the country (Mogdaham, 1993). They were linked with extensive social, economical and political reforms, which reduced the influence of tribal chiefs and religious leaders (Emadi, 2002). People were forced to use western clothes and women were encouraged to discard their veils (ibid.). The modernization programs were very much in conflict with the customary way of life and were seen as anti-Islamic and thus faced extensive resistance (ibid.). As a result Amanullah attempted to ingratiate his opponents and women were again forced to veil themselves and most of the reforms were canceled temporarily (ibid.). However, these gestures did not satisfy the opposition and Amanullad was expelled from the country (ibid.). In following decades there was a constant change of rulers of the country as none of them failed to gain majority support among Afghans. As a consequence, Afghanistan became one of the poorest countries in the world and it suffered from economic deprivation, widespread illiteracy, and insufficient healthcare (Mogdaham, 1993).

Another veil revolution took place in the 1950s when Mohammed Daoud Khan became prime minister. With the support of the modernized army, Daoud thought he would reform the country and unveil the women again (Emadi, 2002). However, opposition to Daoud`s strategies and oppressive tactics grew both within and outside of his administration and he was forced to resign

(ibid.), which depicts well the Afghan context, how political strategies are responded to when families` self-determination is in concern.

In the post-World War II period, an increasing amount of women attended schools, started to work in industrial and manufacturing enterprises and to participate in social and political activities outside their homes. In 1978 with the support of the Soviet Union, the People`s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) was formed. They attempted radical social change where patriarchy would be transformed and tribal and landlord authority would be decentralized. Marriage law was reformed to become more equal for men and women and literacy was made compulsory for everyone. Women attended the same workplaces as men, and many of them felt courageous enough to abandon their veils. However in rural communities, the new reforms ruined the economy as the brideprice was forbidden and land-reform prevented people from collecting the debts. Compulsory education was seen as a threat to families` honor as people felt it would prevent them from looking after their women. Additionally acts to support equality were seen as empty promises among women as the schools were only promoting socialist party propaganda and they were not given the professional positions they were entitled to. Repressive strategies of development and the systematic torture and execution of innocent civilians provoked even more opposition. Armed actions against the government followed. (Emadi, 2002) The Soviet Union invaded in 1979 in support of the PDPA and the USA and Pakistan started to support the opposition forces, mainly Islamic parties called Mujahideen (Kouvo, 2011). Consequently, Afghanistan became the scene of another Cold War era proxy war.

The Soviet Union withdrew after nine years of unsuccessful warfare. Afghanistan was plunged into civil war, where women and their bodies became weapons of cruel war by contesting Mujahideen groups (Emadi, 2002; Kouvo, 2011). Raping, killing and abducting women was used to dishonor the rival ethnic community and to intimidate the people not to oppose their rule (Emadi, 2002). In the ensuing power vacuum a new force, The Taliban movement was created, which promised peace and security for the whole country (ibid.). In a short period of time, the Taliban gained a stronghold in the southern and central provinces of the country, including Kabul, and they formed the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (ibid.). This was followed by a period of regaining national pride, which meant for women a return to the old patriarchal system (Ataishi, 2015).

During the civil war and its “aftermath”, the Taliban period, moderate form of Islam in Afghanistan radicalized to become a political tool “a force for division, fragmentation and enormous blood

letting" (Rashid, 2001, pp.83). As for the Mujahideen gender based humiliation was a weapon of war, for Taliban strict gender roles were used to unify the country under the ideology of an idealized Islamic society (Ataishi, 2015). However by falsely mixing an unbending interpretation of Islam to the Afghan tradition the Taliban only served the aim of their own ideological agenda and to strengthen the motivation of their own forces (Zulfacar, 2006). The real needs of the Afghan people were not listened to (ibid.). Women were to be covered from head to toe. They were forbidden to work or to go to school or to go outside their homes without a reason. These policies influenced both the urban women, whose rights had progressed in recent decades and rural women, who were subsequently unable to fulfill their usual economic and social roles in their communities (Zulfacar, 2006).

Constant radical efforts of reforms and contestation over power have prevented Afghanistan to evolve by itself and give up centuries-old gender norms. As women`s rights had been so tightly interconnected with family honor and economic self-sufficiency they had become signs of political goals and part of the communal identity. Continuously changing new rulers and external intervention forces have presented themselves as being the saviors of Afghan women, which has radicalized patriarchy even more. Women`s rights were politicized as their empowerment was used to serve a particular political goal. Elham Atashi (2015, pp. 19) states that "Women and the spaces they inhabit have historically served as a space to negotiate power throughout Afghanistan's political transitions". Valentine Moghadam (1993, pp. 248) continues: "representation of women are deployed during processes of revolution and state-building and when power is being reproduced, linking women either to modernization and progress or to cultural rejuvenation and religious orthodoxy". With regard to women`s rights David B. Edwards (2002) notes that numerous attempts to improve women`s role and status in society have been done in a way that has limited personal integrity of the men as the principle decision makers of the family and thus touched a very sacred part of how masculinities are defined in the Afghan context. In his view "That is one reason why female education and veiling have perennially been such powerful and explosive issues in Afghanistan…" (Edwards, 2002, pp.172–3). Sari Kouvo (2011) adduces the role of the international financial and military support for particular commenders, which has for its part strengthened fundamentalist religious politics in Afghanistan. Deniz Kandiyoti (2001, pp.53-4) concludes that it is an interaction of three factors: the religion (Islam), the attempt to build national identity, and the international pressure that has created an oppressive patriarchal order and the "cultural conditions in which women are willing participants". Continuing the same theme Huma Ahmed Ghosh (2003) states that in rural areas and among the low-income families women themselves have preferred their

lives to be built around Quran and old tribal traditions although it has meant a subordinate position for them. They have seen it as bringing stability, security and moral upright against the weak state and thus the meaning of religion is being emphasized as it is perceived as the only trustworthy force to construct your identity on (ibid.).

2.1.2. Unveiling again? - Post-2001

It can be argued that the same policy to use Afghan women as a political tool continued when the US-led coalition invaded Afghanistan in 2001. Slogans justifying the invasion promoted democracy and saving Afghan women although the main focus of the intervention was to ensure that Afghanistan would no longer be a safe heaven for insurgency groups that jeopardiesed the security of the United States and its allies (Ayub & Kouvo, 2008). Alongside intensive fighting against the Taliban and the other insurgency groups, there was an attempt to rebuild the country and money was poured into programs aiming to improve women`s rights (Atashi, 2015).

After the invasion the Bonn agreement was signed. It formed a transitional government for the country and committed the international community to assist Afghanistan in rebuilding the government and the state`s main institutions, although the main responsibility to define their own political future was left to the Afghans themselves. The phrases in the Bonn Agreement were celebratory. All the undersigned were “determined to end the tragic conflict and promote national reconciliation, lasting peace, stability, and respect for human rights in the country”. Decision making aimed at including a broad representation of the Afghan population, and it would be gender-sensitive and multi-ethnic. (Bonn Agreement, 2001)

As there had not been a functioning state for decades in Afghanistan, everything had to be built from scratch. Very quickly the ”minimalist doctrine” of the international community ”…expanded to encompass a maximalist agenda related to state-building and democratization.” (Goodhand & Sedra, 2013, pp. 240). However, the reconstruction programs and state-building implemented by western donor countries have been widely criticized among scholars. They have been accused of imposing western values in western ways and thus not allowing the locals to adopt new policies in their own time (Kouvo & Levine, 2018; Ataishi, 2015; Barfied, 2010). The international community hurried on installing a highly centralized government, which led to problems with legitimacy at the very beginning of the state-building process (Barfied, 2010). In addition the Bonn Agreement has

been accused of dismissing the real power-sharing process as it was mainly warlords previously allied to the West who were invited to the conference (Kouvo, 2011). Furthermore the international financial and military support to previous warlords ”contributed to strengthening fundamentalist religious politics in Afghanistan” (Kouvo, 2011, pp.162). The government of the first democratically elected president, Karzai, has been accused of maladministration and corruption as it was unable to provide the security and economic development that its citizens desperately called for, which made it more dependent on the international community and undermined the government`s legitimacy even further (Barfield, 2010). To promote women`s rights in a newly designed state structure the external forces approached it through ensuring women’s representation and participation in key political and reconstruction processes (Ahmed Ghosh, 2006). However, it never ensured women`s actual equal participation in decision making (Kouvo, 2011). Kouvo (2011) explains that women`s participation has been especially complex as the country is concurrently ruled by the previous warlords, who introduced in the first place the culture of rape and impunity as the women`s bodies became weapons of war during the civil war in the 1980s. Furthermore, as the Taliban`s insurgency flared up in 2006 and the security situation worsened throughout the country, reconstruction programs have become the secondary goals of the external forces (Barfield, 2010).

Concerning women`s rights and status in Afghan society, there have been several positive developments after 2001. Women have had a chance to take part in public life more actively; women hold 27 percent of civil service jobs, 100 000 women attend universities, and 3,5 million girls are enrolled in schools, even in Taliban-controlled parts of the country (ICG, 2020). Access to health care has improved as the number of women dying in childbirth has halved (ibid.). The Afghan constitution was re-written in 2004 to respect men and women as equal members of society and several key human rights concerning women`s rights were included into it (Farhoumand-Sims, 2009). The ministry of women’s affairs (MOWA) and the government’s National Action Plan for Women (NAPWA) have been established to secure women`s presence at all levels of state-building. However several other features demonstrate contradicting developments in the country. Article 3 in the Constitution states that ”no law can be contrary to the beliefs and the provisions of the sacred religion of Islam” which gives the Supreme Court the authority to reject any law or treaty that is considered un-Islamic. Afghanistan still has one of the world’s lowest Human Development Indexes (UNDP, 2019). The UN has reported on widespread ignorance towards women`s rights in Afghanistan in recent years as two thirds of Afghan men consider women to have already too many rights (UN WOMEN & PROMUNDO, 2019). Violence against women has not decreased, it has rather found new forms and perpetrators have remained unpunished (UNAMA, 2018). Additionally

NGO reports have shown how women have again become political tokens (Amnesty, 2015; ICG, 2013). With threats, harassments, and attacks to women in public life, schoolgirls, and different female professionals, Taliban and other insurgency groups have attempted to gain maximum attention and a better position at the negotiation table (ICG, 2013). These phenomena have led to backlashes in women`s rights in recent years (Kouvo, 2018; Kandiyoti, 2007).

On February 4th 2019 the first official peace summit was held among Afghan representatives and Taliban leaders in Moscow. It was considered a landmark in the road for peace. Noticeable was that the Afghan government was absent and among more than 50 delegates only two were women (Graham-Harrison & Roth, 2019). This is not a picture international forces had in mind when they invaded Afghanistan. Their biggest enemy is at the table (Taliban), the government which they helped to build is excluded, women`s rights, which were part of the justification rhetoric of the invasion, were holding on the shoulders of two female representatives.

A year later on February 29th 2020 the US and the Taliban signed a provisory agreement to end 18-year of war (BBC, 2020). According to the agreement the US and its international NATO allies will withdraw their troops within 14 months if the Taliban ceases the violence and promises not to allow al-Qaeda or any other extremist group to operate in the areas they control (BBC, 2020). The agreement also consisted of a prisoner swap between the Taliban and the Afghan Government, which has now stalled the discussions as there are disagreements and mistrust related to the release of the prisoners. Additionally, the violence has continued in Afghanistan until the present day.

The agreement between the US and the Taliban does not consist of provisions on how Afghanistan should be governed in the future, neither does it consist of commitments concerning human rights. These are expected to be discussed in the intra-Afghan talks. According to ICG (2020), there is no clear understanding whether the Taliban have altered their vision on women`s rights and status in society. If the intra-Afghan discussions ever get further most probably Afghan women have to prepare themselves that there will be some degree of degradation in how women’s rights are defined and protected in the future (ICG, 2020). However, Afghanistan remains widely dependent on foreign aid which may be used as a leverage to prioritize the protection of women`s rights (ibid).

This section has briefly introduced the historical context of Afghan women; their role in society and how their rights have evolved along different timeperiods. This knowledge will be used as a reflection in the analysis chapter.

2.1.3. Literature review of Afghan women in post-2001

An extensive literature has been produced on Afghan women in the post-2001 reality. The main focus has been on state-building and peacebuilding measures and how they have affected women`s status and role in Afghan society. Scholars have questioned the correct balance between two contradicting concepts: imperialist and feminist, to determine where does the vague line separating these two approaches lie. The perspective of the existing literature may be roughly summarized with one question: how much should the international community patronize Afghanistan in terms of gender rights or how much space should be given to cultural adjustment?

Kouvo (2008; 2011) and Kouvo & Levine (2018) have concentrated in their studies on the implementation of human rights in post-conflict Afghanistan. Although all the key human rights documents have been signed and there has been a strong focus on the rule of law and on gender-sensitive and a rights-based approach, no real change has happened in society. Institutions and laws have been implemented from the top down by external forces and the Afghan elite who had no understanding of the lives of the majority of Afghans. Thus the new laws were lacking any real legitimacy. Kouvo & Levine stress the importance of local ownership when the new laws are implemented. They emphasize the international community`s important role in support and pressure but they discount their role for real change, which has to happen among the Afghans themselves at their own rhythm. Kouvo (2008, pp.39) brings forth the power imbalance between ”well-developed Western lobby machineries” and a weak state, that may do more harm than good for a country recovering from the war. Futhermore in Kouvo`s (2011) view the liberal equality norms have been naturalized in a way that there is very little space for alternative ways to be equal that move beyond individual and gender-centered equality. In her view there should have been more dialogue between Afghan counterparts and western humanitarians on what increased political participation, equality and human rights might mean for them. (Kouvo, 2008; 2011; Kouvo & Levine, 2018)

Atashi (2015) states that although according to available statistics women's and girls' situation have improved considerably in the post-2001 period, the peacebuilding measures have also increased

violence against women and widened the gender gaps in society. In peacebuilding measures, there was a strong tendency to impose western ideas of gender equality, which many people considered to be as a threat against their own culture. Furthermore, there was a strong tendency to concentrate solely on women`s freedoms and not real equality, which was another problematic phenomenon. Thus the reforms by the donor countries were even used as a tool to mobilize protests against intervention and development aid. Additionally, lack of security has made the implementation of the projects impossible which has generated more mistrust and aggression towards the external forces. Atashi emphasizes the importance of understanding prominent gender-related insecurity and increasing militarization, when operating in post-conflict societies, which has been dismissed in reconstruction processes in Afghanistan. (Atashi, 2015)

Kandiyoti (2007, pp. 193) analyses three sets of factors that in her view continue to affect on current politics of gender in Afghanistan: ”troubled history of state-society relations; the legacies of prolonged conflict and the diverse and often contradictory agendas of global and local actors since the Bonn Agreement of 2001”. In her view, this set of factors creates an unpredictable future for gender politics inside Afghanistan. As the state has never managed to extend its control throughout the country, the different geographical areas have had their own contesting judicial systems and have had their own visions for the future of Afghanistan. Thus when the external forces invaded Afghanistan and the new constitution was written as a result, which directed the country to respect the equality of men and women, it has had little or no effect in several parts of the country. Furthermore as the state-building has been dominated by the donor countries there has been a constant threat that gender relations become politicized. In that setting, external forces have adopted a defensive tone and appealed to respect for cultural differences in terms of women`s rights, which has meant there has not been a real will to advance Afghan women`s rights. Furthermore, decades of war have produced new vulnerabilities for women as mutually recognized rights and obligations are in transformation due to the changing political economy. These transformations have affected gender relations more effectively rather than the indigenous culture or Islam. In Kandiyoti`s view, as women`s options in life are primarily determined in communities and household, it is in those contexts the most effective progress may happen. (Kandiyoti, 2007)

The backbone of these introduced studies has been mainly in the moral justification of internationalized peacebuilding measures as well as in the effectiveness of the peacebuilding measures, which has been evaluated in reflection of understanding the historical context of Afghanistan. The present research touches the same phenomena but evaluates their effectiveness by

hearing the voices of Afghan women themselves, and explores how post-2001 reality looks at the individual level.

2.2. Security Sector Reform

As the present research focuses on gender identities and how female police officers are able to express themselves in different social contexts, it is important to explore SSR, its practices and aims and how the gender is considered in it. This section will briefly introduce SSR` main principles, why SSR was implemented in Afghanistan, who conducted it, how it was conducted and finally how is it valued in present day Afghanistan. Lastly as the female police officers and their profession have been a contested issue among different actors of post-conflict Afghan society, the views of different actors are introduced.

2.2.1. Purpose of Security Sector Reform

The security sector covers all the organizations that are entitled to use or order force to protect communities, individuals and the state (Bendix, 2008). Reforming these organizations is nowadays seen as a significant feature of post-conflict reconstruction. According to the OECD DAC guidelines for SSR, it aims to increase post-conflict countries` ”ability to meet the range of security needs within their societies in a manner consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of governance, transparency and the rule of law” (OECD, 2007, pp. 21). At the beginning of the 1990s, there was a shift in understanding: rather than just securing the state, the SSRs should concentrate on restoring the civil security in order to achieve more sustainable peace (Murray, 2007; OECD, 2007; Bastick, 2008). Thus SSR is allied with the concept of human security, which promotes the needs of the entire population, including women, girls, and boys (Bastick, 2008). The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has stressed the importance of SSR in the following way: ”reforming the security sector in post-conflict environments is critical to the consolidation of peace and stability, promoting poverty reduction, rule of law and good governance, extending legitimate state authority, and preventing countries from relapsing into conflict” (UNSC, 2007, pp 1). In other words ”the end goal of SSR is to effect shifts in mindsets and the transformation of a political system where the security sector is abusive, corrupt and politicized to one that is accountable, legitimate and transparent in the provision of internal and external security and the rule of law”

(Mobekk, 2010, pp. 279). In the OECD guidebook of SSR it is stated that SSR aims at accountable and effective governance, where justice and security are served through the society comprehensively (OECD, 2007).

SSR can not succeed if it is not owned by its citizens, which is why it is considered important that the whole nation is represented in the security forces. It should be ethnically representative and include men and women to serve its purpose as a reflection of the whole society (Mobekk, 2010; Bastick, 2008). The adoption of resolution 1325 by the UNSC in 2000 focused the attention on women`s roles in SSR. The resolution stresses ”the importance of their [women`s] equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security” (UN, 2000, pp. 1). Subsequently, the UNSCR 1820 mandated the international peacekeeping missions to pay attention to gender sensitivity when conducting SSR. The Council of the European Union has stated that mission personnel should include both men and women as it contributes to the operational effectiveness and context sensitivity (Council of the EU, 2006). Furthermore gender should be taken into account as there needs to be a recognition that men and women suffer from different types of insecurities (UN INSTRAW, 2004), especially during the war and its aftermath. Increasing women`s presence in the security forces is believed to strengthen local ownership of the reform process and to improve monitoring in security sector (Bastick, 2008). Women are required to participate in all levels of decision making inside the security sector in order for the process to be effective and legitimate (ibid.). Female professionals in the security sector are seen as trust builders between the state and the society (UN INSTRAW, 2004). Furthermore, it is stated that adding women to police forces, society becomes more effective and efficient, as it encourages women to attend to work-life (Oelke, 2007).

2.2.2. Security Sector Reform and gender

In the previous section, the views of practitioners and international aid organizations (OECD, UN, DCAF) on the importance of gender-sensitive SSR were introduced. This section will further elaborate on the theme through the views of central critical scholars of SSR and gender. Firstly Eirin Mobekk`s (2010) article on SSR and gender and why the policy and practice remain so distant when gender sensitivity is concerned will be explored. Mobekk (2010) argues that policy has evolved in recent years, especially after the implementation of resolution 1325, but the practice remains stagnant. She states that gender sensitivity in SSR should not be considered as an optional

or appendable requirement rather it should be understood as a crucial feature for successful SSR. From her article, it may be concluded that representative SSR is a crucial factor in decreasing the militarization of society.

SSR are commonly organized and financed by external actors. In her article Mobekk (2010) argues that this easily leads to the marginalization of local needs as the programs are influenced by the donor`s own values and agendas. Thus the external countries' own security needs might be prioritized in a process, even when they contradict the local needs. Furthermore, the external countries' own values might be taken for granted as they are seen as role-models. Thus certain ideas of masculinity and femininity are introduced, which in turn might jeopardize gender-sensitive SSR. Mobekk warns against the essentialization of women. Seeing women as inherently more peaceful and beneficent only strengthens certain stereotypes and might limit women`s ability to conduct their profession properly. In other words, gender sensitivity should be realized on a broader scale, where a variety of ideas of womanhood and manhood are accepted.

According to Mobekk (2010), another problematic phenomenon is the train and equip strategy, which in practice dismisses gender-sensitive SSR and restores the decision making to security officials and political elites. With the train and equip strategy, the programs are more easily implemented but they lack accountability and oversight measures and the ability to respond to citizen`s real security needs. Additionally, Mobekk (2010, pp. 286) brings forth the importance of the cultural context of the target country: ”…there is a need to work with sensitization and understanding of gender roles in each particular post-conflict setting…”. She concludes that gender issues in SSR may only be determined by the beneficiaries themselves, not by outsiders. (Mobekk, 2010)

Gordon et al (2015) delve further in the theme of local ownership in SSR. They question the tension between local ownership and gender equality that is commonly used as an excuse when SSR is failing in gender equality. Gordon et al (2015) upend the blame that it is not the local ownership that should be seen as a barrier, it is the failure to understand what the local ownership is about. They contend that the contradiction between gender equality and local ownership serves the purpose of the dominant groups and disempowers the marginalized and thus fails to fulfill the very principles of SSR. The core of SSR is in building security institutions that promote trust and confidence between the state and its citizens and where everybody`s needs concerning their overall security are represented and addressed. When a diversity of people and ideas are listened to, there is

no contradiction between gender equality and local ownership. The approach should not be in normative goals, it should be context-specific where the heterogeneity of society is recognized. By truly realizing this, implementing SSR becomes more complex but the outcomes may be far more equal and enduring as structural inequalities and conflict dynamics are more effectively tackled. (Gordon et al, 2015)

Myrttinen (2008) has conducted empirical research on SSR in three post-conflict societies: Haiti, Salomon Islands, and Timor Leste. The research is based on the researcher`s own observations from the field as well as background literature on SSR and gender. Myrttinen`s main focus is on masculinities; how they are played out and what kind of consequences it has on the effectiveness of SSR. In his view, the discussions on gender sensitivity in SSR have overwhelmingly concentrated on the integration of women in the security forces and how to respond more effectively on gender-based violence. Thus, the questions of how masculinities and femininities are played in a certain cultural context, and the institutional culture within the security force itself and how it affects SSR's gender sensitivity, have been completely ignored. In these post-conflict societies of concern, the security forces have tended to be part of the problem of people`s insecurity rather than the solution. They have mainly operated to secure the interest of certain groups. For the general public, they have represented forces of corruption and brutality. Thus an effective SSR has been considered as a crucial feature in order to proceed towards a more peaceful society. Similar phenomena have been identified in the Afghan context, which will be further elaborated upon in following section. According to Myrttinen the internal problems of the concerned security institutions may be traced to male role expectations in society and inside the security institutions. Thus solely increasing women`s presence in the security sector does not tackle the real problems for gender-sensitive SSR. Furthermore, Myrttinen warns that the tasks in security forces should not be built on the basis of gender: men should also be able to handle domestic violence cases in order for both gender`s professionalism to be respected equally as well as the security needs of every individual to be respected equally. He concludes that for effective SSR it is crucial to explore masculinities and femininities inside the forces and the external donor countries should play a supporting role in this process. (Myrttinen, 2008)

2.2.3. Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan

Throughout the history of Afghanistan, police forces have not fulfilled their purpose as servants of citizens but have rather worked as coercive instruments of the state (ICG, 2007). Before 2001 the main task of the police forces had been to take care of security concerns of varying regimes in power rather than the country`s citizens (Giustozzi & Isaqzadeh, 2013). As the mistrust towards state security organs was widespread, several informal justice systems were scattered around the country to settle local disputes, which continue to be used until this very day (Sedra, 2010).

Women started to serve in the Afghan police forces from 1967 (Oxfam, 2013). However, their number remained limited and they faced backlashes in the coming decades (ibid.). Since all women were banned from working during the Taliban period, there were practically no female police officers when the international community invaded Afghanistan in 2001.

SSR in Afghanistan has been a focus of attention for the Afghan Government and international community as they have seen it as a priority reform to promote democracy and the economic and social development of the country (Murray, 2009). Furthermore, a successful SSR was believed to increase trust among the state and its citizens, which Afghanistan has desperately lacked (Murray, 2007). Increasing the presence of various ethnic groups and minorities, and gender representativeness have been seen as a key features for a increased security (ibid.). At the start of the SSR there where 50,000-70,000 police officers who were mostly untrained illiterate ex-combatants who had never learned their purpose as servants of the citizens (ibid.).

At the present moment, SSR has been implemented in Afghanistan with the assistance of several different donor countries and missions (DCAF, 2020). At the beginning, different donor countries took the responsibility for different sections of reform: the US led military reform, Germany planned police reform, the United Kingdom took responsibility on counter-narcotics, Italy supervised judicial reform, and Japan directed disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of the ex-combatants (ibid.). Later on, NATO joined the reform process to train the military personnel and in 2007 the EU joined to process with its EUPOL Afghanistan program focusing on civilian policing, police-justice cooperation, the inclusion of human rights in Afghan police training and procedures promotion of policewomen (AREU, 2018). The police forces constitute the Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan Local Police (ALP). The police reform’s goal has been to prioritize “good governance, respect for human rights, sustainability, and democratic civilian

control" (Sedra, 2010, pp. 371). Police officers have been educated and trained according to the new constitution, which contains all the key human rights agreements, and for the first time in the country`s history gender equity is being promoted throughout the security forces (Sedra, 2010). However, many critique SSR for dismissing local realities and thus failing to serve its purpose to produce competent security forces.

Mark Sedra states that one of the gravest mistakes has been to dismiss the people-centric focus of the SSR. The top-down approach that has been prevailing in several reconstruction programs, has strengthened the regime-centric approach of SSR (Sedra, 2010; Ayub, Kouvo & Wareham, 2010) which far too vividly reminds mistakes done in the past by previous regimes. As the security institutions had to be rebuilt from scratch the funding has flown to re-equipping, rebuilding and training, rather than reforming democratic organizations that emphasize the role of human security (Murray, 2009). Furthermore continuing insurgency and drug trafficking have made hard security train-and-equip strategies more tempting than the protection of people and their communities (Murray, 2011; Perito, 2009; Sedra, 2010). Thus police forces are said to be trained like paramilitary forces, as they are conducting tasks usually assigned to the army (Murray, 2009). This has led to many undemocratic decisions, which has undermined police forces' credibility among the local population (Sedra, 2010). The main purpose of the forces, that is to ensure the security of Afghan citizens, has been obscured as well as police forces` ability to offer their service throughout the whole justice chain from police and justice institutions to correctional practices have been questioned (Murray, 2009). Furthermore widespread corruption and polices` misuse of their positions in society have further delegitimized police forces and the government in the eyes of the Afghan population (Sedra, 2010). The top-down approach has also had an adverse influence on the local ownership of the SSR, as reforms have been directly imposed and advanced by a particular chosen elite (ibid.). The reality in Afghanistan constitutes in several ethnic and language groups, thus the representativeness of SSR would have been crucial in terms of local ownership. There has also been ignorance towards the role of Islam in Afghan society, which has alienated many Afghans from the SSR processes (Maley, 2009; Sedra, 2010). Local level religious leaders who have delivered informal justice during the previous decades around the country in their communities where dismissed from the judicial reforms, which has for its part decreased trust to state institutions (Sedra, 2010). According to Sedra (2010), this partially explains why people still tend to turn to informal judicial structures to resolve disputes. The statistics from 2007 show that 80% of disputes were resolved in informal judicial systems (CPHD 2007).

The number of women in police forces has not increased as expected. According to the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) which was formed in 2001 to fund police salaries, improve police capacity and develop the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MOI), there are now 150,000 police officers in Afghanistan. Less than two percent of them are women (Lofta, 2019). The target of having 5,000 policewomen by 2017 has been postponed several times and the long term goal of having 10,000 by 2020 is even further distant (Frogh et al., 2018). Additionally very few have been promoted to higher positions as general rank has been granted to two women and colonel to 22 women (ibid.). In the majority of the provinces, there are female police officers but in Paktika, Khost, Logar, Laghman, and Kunar there are no policewomen at all, or only a few (AIHRC, 2018). Most women work in administrative affairs and only a small number of them work in the field.

To increase the number of policewomen and ensure their promotion to leadership positions, the MOI and the SSR donor countries have attempted to improve their recruitment and training strategies (Bastick, 2008; AIHRC, 2018). A women`s dormitory has been established at Kabul Police Academy, and regional training facilities have been improved so that women may live with their families and concurrently attend to training programs (ICG, 2007). In 2018 the first women`s police town was inaugurated ”to ensure the safety, security, and privacy of policewomen and their families” (NATO, 2018). It is able to house 300 policewomen and their families. The complex will include an elementary school, a child and infant daycare facility, a women’s medical clinic, a fitness center, and a community center. The MOI has attempted to attract more women to join the police forces by increasing their salaries and offering them better training facilities (AIHRC, 2018). At an institutional level, there have also been several attempts to improve the working conditions for female police officers (Frogh et al., 2018). These include integration strategies, anti-harassment mechanisms, new policies, and directives as well as more effective complaint mechanisms including the position of polices` own ombudsman (ibid.). The establishment of Family Response Units (FRU) in 2005, which are supposed to be mainly staffed by female police officers responsible for addressing domestic violence cases and harmful traditional practices related to gender, is considered an important step in fulfilling the human right commitments that Afghanistan has signed (Amnesty, 2015; Frogh et al., 2018).

However, the real implementation of these policies and practices has been challenging. According to Frogh et al. (2018) report, police women`s role inside the forces is reserved for menial tasks and the possibilities to advance in their careers have remained limited. Illiteracy is common and more training is needed for policewomen (ibid.) The AIHRC report (2018) states that women do not have

the same facilities, rights, and privileges as men in the workplace, and that they are frequently excluded from decision-making and policy-making processes. Furthermore, both reports state that in many police stations women do not have separate toilets and changing rooms, which increases the risk of sexual harassment (Frogh et al., 2018; AIHRC, 2018). Harassment is a common phenomenon in the police forces but according to the reports many policewomen are reluctant to speak about it (Frogh et al., 2018; AIHRC, 2018). This phenomenon will be further elaborated in the analysis chapter as I experienced the same reluctance while conducting the interviews with the female police officers.

2.2.4. Afghan female police officers' contested role

Several NGO reports and newspaper articles have reported on widespread problems relating to female police officers' security and their ability to conduct their profession in Afghanistan (see (HRW, 2013; ICG, 2013; Frogh et al., 2018; Amenesty, 2015; AIHRC, 2018; Jones, 2018). Their profession has awakened dissonance and they have been threatened because of it (ibid.). The number of female police officers has not increased as expected. However at the same time their work is seen as an important feature of comprehensive human security of the whole nation by the international donor countries. Thus it is important to further explore, where these contesting interpretations of women in police forces are coming from. This section will briefly introduce the views and behaviors towards female police officers from the perspective of NGOs, principle donor countries, MOI, insurgency groups, and scholars.

Several international NGOs as well as the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) have reported on targeted discrimination, violence, intimidation and harassment against women police officers inside the police forces, among the larger society and directly from the insurgency groups (see AIHRC, 2018; Frogh et al., 2018; Amnesty, 2015; ICG, 2013: HRW, 2013). Most NGOs, AIHRC, MOI, and scholars think that the reasons for this lay in a deeply segregated society where women are not expected to attend public life. Furthermore, policewomen are believed to dishonour traditional gender roles by conducting a male-dominated profession. Additionally, they have become part of the ongoing war as the insurgency groups have intentionally assassinated policewomen in order to undermine their ability to perform their duties and prevent women from joining the forces (ICG, 2013).

While acknowledging the reality of the segregated society, several international NGOs and AIHRC opine that women police officers are needed to conduct special tasks in the police forces, which include body-searches for women, legal protection of women, tackling violence against women, and enforcement of the EVAW Law (HRW, 2013; AIHRC, 2018). Several scholars have also argued that in a country like Afghanistan where the segregation of men and women is strong, female police officers are needed in particular tasks, which men police can not fulfill (Mobekk, 2010; Valasek, 2007; Bastick, 2008). AIHRC (2018) also emphasizes on women`s role in the security and defense sector in general by stating that it is part of women`s human rights to participate in this sector, and that both men and women benefit from it.

First Lady of Afghanistan Rula Ghani has taken an active stance in advancing women`s role in Afghan society. In several public appearances, she has stressed the importance of policewomen. She has stated that women in the security sector play a major role in defending the country and preserving the rights of all citizens of Afghanistan (Ghani, 2016). Furthermore, she has blamed the forces for not treating women equally to men (Tolonews, 2015).

The EU, which is supporting SSR in Afghanistan through its EUPOL mission, also emphasizes the importance of the female officers' role ”in a gender-separated society like Afghanistan” and states that women police officers have ”a key role in dealing with female victims, suspects and perpetrators” (EEEA, 2016). The EU has further stated that female officers have access to information that is not accessible to males and can, therefore, contribute to the prevention of crimes” (ibid). The Canadian embassy, which has contributed to building the first women police town, stresses the women police officers’ role in ensuring peace and stability of Afghanistan (Canadian Embassy in Afghanistan, 2018). In their view, the female police officer`s presence will ”improve the effectiveness of the police force and better serve the Afghan population” (ibid.). In a press release from the NATO Resolute Support, women`s ”unique capability to community policing” is emphasized (NATO, 2018). Women are needed in the forces as they understand better the challenges women are facing and are able to assist them accordingly and ”provide overall security for all Afghans” (ibid.).

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Afghan female police officers are caught in the middle of multiple contesting structures and norms related to gender: what the patriarchal society expects from them, how the post-conflict setting has changed their position, and lastly what kind of changes and limitations working in the security sector has introduced in their lives. These social hierarchies form a context where female police officers` gender identity is constructed. Thus the research understands the identity from the poststructuralist feminist perspective. This approach will be used as an analytical frame to organize the data. Concepts of patriarchy, post-conflict society, and security sector will be treated as powers that affect how gender identity is constructed.

3.1. Construction of Gender Identity

Identity is a contested term. Different theorists in different time periods have taken a different stand on how individual, subjective, personal, and private the identity is built and vice versa how the society, culture, history, and politics construct and define it (Elliott, 2011). It has been open to debate how consciously or unconsciously we build our identity and how different powers affect it as well as how meaningful the identities actually are in our lived realm (ibid). This research draws its understanding of identity from post-structuralist research, where identity is understood as ”…a construct mediated by and/or grounded on a social discourse beyond (way beyond) individual control” (Alcoff, 1988, pp.416).

Throughout history, women have been denied their autonomy and freedom on the basis of gendered constructions of subjectivity, which has interfered with their ”capability to make autonomous decisions and to exercise their agency without interference” (Ashe, 1999, pp. 105). Thus gender has become the primary concept to feminism; it is seen as an organizing principle of life, which has been used to subordinate others (e.g. women from men) and as an analytical category, which can reveal forces that construct the subject (Ashe, 1999; Scott, 1986; Zarkov, 2018). By revealing how gendered subjectivities are constructed and how they work, space might open up for alternative ways of understanding gender (Butler, 1990).

The concept of gender points to the fact that there is no one meaning for men and women (Scott, 1986; Zarkov, 2018). Meaning changes in time and space as it is socially constituted (ibid.).

Additionally, gender is not something that should be understood in isolation from other social relations to power, such as race, class, religion, or sexuality, they are all part of how we give meanings to gender (ibid.). Intersectionality is the term that has been used to describe these identity dynamics and their relation to power (Rooney, 2018). It aims to reveal structural inequalities in social realities and at the same time depict how complex these power relations are (ibid.) It aims to fight against the essentialist ideas of gender and proves the plasticity of gender (Eisenstein, 2007).

Hence the post-structuralist feminists see gender as something that penetrates through all our social and political lives and there is no other identity outside of our gender identity (Kronsell, 2012). Judith Butler frames it accordingly: ”It would be wrong to think that the discussion of “identity” ought to proceed prior to a discussion of gender identity for the simple reason that “persons” only become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognizable standards of gender intelligibility.” (Butler, 1990, pp. 68). Raewyn Connell has even suggested that we should abandon the whole concept of ”identity” as it is gender and gender performativity which matter the most (Connell, 2009).

Gender cannot be considered by what we are, it is lived through in our daily practices of life (Acker, 1992; Connell, 2009; Kronsell, 2012). Thus although we construct our own gender, it is tightly controlled by the gender order around us (Connell, 2009). Normative, institutional, and symbolic features in societies give meaning to it (Scott, 1986; Zarkov, 2018). Focusing on gender we can reveal something essential for every social relations and organization (Kronsell, 2012). As an analytical category ”gender asks how ideas about manhood and womanhood influence identities, norms, institutions, and symbols” (Zarkov, 2018, pp. 20). Cordula Reimann (2002) has illustrated the dynamics of gender in ”Gender Triangle”. The triangle introduces three different factors, which are in constant interplay with each other and thus give a meaning for gender: ”the individual gender identity (how one defines oneself as a man or woman in society); the symbolism signifier (how masculinity and femininity are defined in a given society); and the structure of gender (how social action is organized and institutionalized in the public and private sphere)” (Reimann, 2002, pp.5). Reimann (2002, pp.5) states that ”all three dimensions just make sense together” and ”a change of any of the three dimensions leads to a change of the entire gender triangle”. In this sense our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world is mainly based on gendered social hierarchy around us (Wilcox, 2009).

The present research will use Reimann`s triangle as it sees it as a practical tool to analyse how changes in one dimension have an influence on another. In the context of the subject matter of this thesis, it helps to depict how female police officer`s gender identity is affected by changing gender structures (post-conflict setting, working in the security sector) and changing symbolic signifiers (new norms produced by the international community and security sector) and again how their gender identity may change these structures and norms related to gender.

3.2. Gender – Power – Patriarchy – Nation

The post-structural understanding of gender has contested the idea that there can be one stable and ”natural” identity, which is independent from complex social power relations around it. It has sought to increase knowledge on how gender is constructed and how different social power orders around it affect it, concurrently understanding that the meaning of gender is constantly changing. The actors with power, willing to mobilize the people for their own goals, have used identities as ”vehicles of their control” (Cockburn, 1998, pp. 213) and pretended that they are stable and ”natural”. For example, a patriarchal understanding of gender is based on the idea that there are only two sexes that are always persistent and never changing (Mogdaham, 1992). It has subordinated women to men, as a biological fact (ibid.). Thus it fosters hierarchical thinking, were qualities associated with masculinity (e.g. strong, independent, worldly, assertive, rational, tough, and “in control”) are more valued than qualities associated with femininity (e.g. weak, dependent, naive, peaceful, emotional, gentle, and often unpredictable) (Peterson, Runyan, 2010, pp. 68). Patriarchy is based on a dichotomy, where ”men” and ”women” need to be of a certain kind, otherwise, it stops existing (Kronsell, 2012). There is no patriarchal masculinity without a certain kind of femininity and the power, based on gender, constitutes in this relationship (ibid.). The changes in female police officers` lives most probably challenge the lives of other people in their communities. Thus in the analysis phase of this research attention will be paid on the interaction between individuals.

Patriarchal assumptions of nations and nationalism have offered particular positions for men and women in the state. Nations is said to be built on the belief that people share a common past and have a common future (Enloe, 1989; Anderson, 1983), which makes them continuous and persistent. Women`s roles in it have been tied to the private sphere as they have been typically called mothers of the nation, whose principal task has been the reproduction of future generations

(Yuval-Davis, 1997). Men are the ones who are expected to ”defend our country, run our country, and represent our country” (Nagel, 2007, pp. 408). Thus men operate in public duties, which are considered ”recognized” and ”important” in comparison to women`s duties which are less valued and acknowledged (ibid).

As the patriarchy`s strength lies in the way it naturalizes the understanding as if there would not be any other truth (Yuval-Davis, 2010), it is not only men who foster this hierarchical thinking, women too may be active participants in this order (Yuval-Davis, 1997). In many societies, women have power over some men as over other women (ibid.). Thus who is oppressed by whom in a particular society and in a particular moment is tightly connected to intersectionality (ibid.).

Cynthia Cockburn (1998) sees that identity processes are most often coercive. However she raises an important question; how much choice do we have as an individual, towards creating our identity? She states: ”The factors that limit an individual`s agency derive both from the social formation in which she lives and from her individual circumstances.” (Cockburn, 1998, pp. 214). She concludes that although we might be constrained circumstances and contexts, we are always equipped with a certain kind of agency, which is ”real-ized” when the circumstances change (ibid.). The post-conflict situation and working in the security sector have certainly introduced changes in circumstances in female police officers' lives, which will be more closely explored in the following sections.

3.3. Feminist theory of conflict

In peace and conflict studies feminist scholars have brought gender at the center of the study; one cannot understand war if gender is not taken into account. Analysing particular gender relations in a particular context ”helps to understand both the nature of conflict and the nature of gender subordination” (Sjöberg, 2018, pp. 12). The theory builds on an ontology of social relations, where the focus is on gender relations, and how they are embedded in hierarchical social, political, and economic structures (Tickner, 2014).

Feminist scholars have attempted to widen the understanding of the concept of security (See e.g. Cockburn, 2012; Eichler, 2014; Enloe, 2000; Sjöberg, 2018; Tickner, 2014). The whole security apparatus is gendered as it is mostly men who are fighting the wars, it is mostly men who are

”securing” the state and its people (Sjöberg, 2014). It is men who have defined the traditional concept of security, which is based on a rationalist top-down approach to securing the state whereas feminist scholars have preferred a bottom-up approach in understanding what is the impact of the war at the micro-level (Tickner, 2014). They have connected ”domestic violence, structural violence, economic instability, unemployment, poverty, poor working conditions, the impending threat of war, and/or infrastructural damage” to be part of a study of peace and conflict in order to widen the understanding of how threats of these kind prolong and complicate the ongoing conflict (Sjöberg, 2014, pp. 18). They have focused on identities and how they are used as a force to mobilize people in conflict situations or how the identities impose gender hierarchies which may decrease the security of individuals (Tickner, 2014). How gender and identity are negotiated in a particular time period of the conflict affects security and insecurity of both men and women (Handrahan, 2004). Furthermore feminist scholars have brought body in the center of the focus. Where as in traditional security studies bodies are seen ahistorical biological entities that either live, suffer or die, feminist scholars understand body as a result of discursive practices which should become aware of in order to understand better politics of violence (Wilcox, 2011). Understanding how war happens at different levels, from the individual to societal level, has led to a notion that war is a continuum, where the conflict does not have a clear start or end (Sjöberg, 2014; Sharoni, 2016). It has started long before fighters pick up their weapons, and it will last long after these weapons have fallen silent (ibid.).

3.4. Gender and Post Conflict Setting

The third quarter of 2019 recorded the highest number of civilian casualties in Afghanistan since 2009 (UNAMA, 2019). Atrocities on the ground show no mark of the war ending. However, Afghanistan has had democratic elections since 2004, and reconstruction programs have been running since 2001. Thus it is relevant to ask whether Afghanistan can be named a post-conflict society. Since this is the term that is used in SSR-related narratives in Afghanistan, it will be used in this paper too. How the situation is labeled, is important as it depicts how power is shared on the ground at a particular moment (McLeod, 2018). By this is meant that gender relations are transformed, altered or sustained differently in a post-conflict moment than in a time of war or peace, due to reconstruction programs, presence of international forces (ibid.) and changing power structures as an outcome of the war (Handrahan, 2004).

Wars are messy. They challenge the prevailing power structures. They deny people their basic livelihoods. They kill and they injure. Pressure forces people to think about who they are and where do they belong (Cockburn, 1998). As men and women are exposed to different types of hazards and vulnerabilities during the conflict, their experiences may vary considerably (Kandiyoti, 2007). According to Cynthia Cockburn (2012, pp. 23) ”war deepens already deep sexual divisions, emphasizing the male as a perpetrator of violence, women as a victim”. Cahn & Ni Aolai (2009, pp. 2) state similarly ”traditional gender dichotomies may be further entrenched and exacerbated during times of extreme violence”. In Cockburn`s (2012, pp. 32) opinion gender roles are radicalized during the war to ”armed masculinities, demoralized and angry men, victimized femininities, types of momentarily empowered women”. When men are fighting the wars, women might become the primary care-givers of the households and the wellbeing of their societies rests on them (Chan & Ni Aolain, 2009). They can feel temporarily empowered in their new social, economic, and political roles in society (ibid.).

Women`s empowerment during conflicts is often described as being temporary. Several scholars have brought forth their concern towards backlashes in gender relations that frequently become the reality in post-conflict societies (Cockburn, 1998; Meintjes et al, 2001; Manchanda, 2001; Handrahan, 2004; Pankhurst, 2007). The backlash refers to two distinct features: a rejection of women`s newly-assumed rights and behaviors, and violence against women (Pankhurst, 2007). By this is meant that women`s rights return to the way they were before the conflict and additionally women may face new forms of violence in post-conflict societies (ibid.). Pankhurst (2007, pp. 4) explains that the reasons for it are ”restoring or returning to something associated with peace in the past”. Similarly Manchada (2001) states that peace is associated with the gender status quo. In both of their thinking women`s rights are directly related to nation-building and ideas of men`s and women´s roles in it. Pankhurst (2007) questions further whether it is only individual men who are imposing these reactions or is it part of the state`s or government`s policies. Meintjes et al (2001) bring forth the economical necessity that fosters the older generation to control and re-establish traditions to societies by the sake of the younger generation, especially young women, in order that they survive economically, which may lead to a conservative backlash in the post-conflict society.

Cockburn (1998) concentrates on new gender identities that emerge during the war and argues that after the war these new identities distract gender relations even more, to the point of ”disturbing peace”. Lori Handrahan has similar views as Cockburn. She states that although war jeopardizes patriarchal systems, these changes in gender structures are very short-lived: ”... as the national

patriarchy begins to reassert itself after the war, it expects women to return to 'the way they were before the war', that is, to their subordinate positions." (Handrahan, 2004, pp. 436). However, Handrahan (2004) states that in the post-conflict setting there might be even more complex and dramatic fluctuations within gender identity. She calls it a period of uncertain identity, where power is re-distributed and former identities are instructed to "revert" or "embrace" depending on the new regime (ibid.). This is accompanied by traumas and horrors of conflict that all parties have experienced (ibid). In addition to this, post-conflict societies are commonly characterized by the presence of the international community. They bring their own norms and ideas consciously or unconsciously and maintain a male-dominated dynamic (Handrahan, 2004; Ni`Aolain, 2009). Fionnuala Ni`Aolain (2009) states that ´international masculinities´ and patriarchy that are being imported by external forces to countries under reconstruction may have severe impacts on local society and their sense of femininity and masculinity as they introduce themselves as saviors, who have come to rescue the societies from themselves. Thus the presence of the international community challenges, even more, this "uncertain identity period".

According to Cockburn & Zarkow (2002), what is the outcome of this post-conflict period depends only on how men are doing. Chan & Ni Aolain (2009) have similar views as they state that attention should be paid on masculinities in the post-conflict societies as it is a crucial factor in ending the violence. According to Jeff Hearn (2012) although in time of war individual men may suffer, in post-conflict setting their collective structural power is reinforced and it is the women and children who are more likely to suffer. Margarete Jacob (2008) has a slightly more positive view as she states that the post-conflict period may be a window of opportunity for challenging gender roles if society is benefitting from it. However it could also an obstacle if the post-conflict period only reminds one of what has been lost, in that case a return to an imagined "pre-war" idyll is considered more tempting (ibid).

In the previous paragraphs, it is referred to a typical gendered understanding of a conflict, where men are fighting on the battlefields, and women concurrently take care of their homes and communities. However it should be noted, that while such phenomena may be common, both "men" and "women" do have varying roles in time of conflict, which a feminist understanding of conflict attempts to bring up. Cahn & Ni Aolain (2009) assert that women should not be essentialized either in post-conflict societies. Typical essentialization is that women are solely associated as peacemakers or facilitators and the fact that they might also be conducting atrocities is ignored. Thus they are commonly seen in "soft civil society roles" rather than understanding them

part of the political infrastructure (Cahn & Ni Aolain, 2009, pp. 7). Cahn & Ni Aolain (2009) encourage identification of women`s diverse roles as well as the highly gendered patterns they are surrounded by in order to create a greater practical understanding of the lived realms. Thus the post-conflict processes would be more gender-sensitive and more effective (ibid.).

As women`s outcry against the old gender order is often associated with ”western influence” (Kandiyoti, 2007) and thus undermined, extensive research has been conducted on how ‘internationalized’ state-building may promote or safeguard women`s rights in an effective manner in post-conflict reconstruction. Kandiyoti (2004; 2007) questions the way varying external donor countries or global governance institutions take over the task of improvement of women's rights as Kouvo (2008; 2011) brings forth how human rights agreements should be promoted in an effective manner. They both have done extensive research in Afghanistan, where the internationalized state-building has been especially powerful. Kandiyoti (2004, 2007) states that women`s rights should not be necessarily tied with building democracy and good governance as there is a threat that they may become politicized. Statebuilding should be more context-specific, non-technocratic, collaborative, and independent from donors` resources (ibid). Kouvo (2008; 2011) invokes the importance of genuine local ownership for human rights agreements. In her view, equality should also be understood as context specific, which can be understood independent of individual and gender-centered equality that supports liberal equality norms (Kouvo, 2011).

Meintjes et al (2001) criticizes a right based approach to reconstruction in post-conflict societies, which concentrates on human rights, justice, and equality and undermines the importance of women`s social and economic needs. They state that both approaches are important but they are not adequate enough alone or in combination for real change in gender relations: ”…true transformation encompasses a political economy open to women in ways that recognize their social and productive roles and contributions, as well as their desires as sexual beings.” (Meintjes et al., 2001, pp. 5).

In conclusion, if we go back to Reimann`s (2002) gender triangle it can be stated that conflict and post-conflict periods have an enormous effect on the ´structure of gender´. In other words, conflict and post-conflict settings change how social action is organized and institutionalized in society (Reimann, 2002, pp.5). The prevailing structures are challenged and a new reality has stepped in. Individual gender identity is also threatened as the power is re-distributed in the society and new people, mostly men, have come to assist in rebuilding the state. Additionally, the post-conflict setting, with external donors or even forces in the country, challenges prevailing symbolic

signifiers. This is especially true in Afghanistan, where the international community has participated in rebuilding the country from scratch. Along with the state-building initiatives they have imported new norms related to gender, which have woken dissonance among Afghans, both men and women (See e.g. Kouvo, 2011; Ataishi, 2015).

3.5. Gender and Security Sector

Men do dominate the security sector. If we look at the statistics in either police or military attendance, women reach the highest of 20 percent in the whole world. In Afghanistan women`s attendance is even far less. Hence a closer look should be paid on gender dynamics inside the security sector.

The concept of militarized masculinities was developed to describe the gender dynamics inside the military institutions and state security discourse by the feminist scholars of international relations. The aim was to show how masculinity is constructed in the security sector, what kind of power hierarchies it produces, and how the militarization is normalized (Eichler, 2014). As militarism is not something that is inherently attached to men, the security sector as an apparatus militarizes men, in order to make them proper soldiers (ibid). They become representatives of the military`s mandate, where lethal goals and practices are normalized and legitimized (Kovitz, 2003). The military personnel is segregated from civil society in order to insulate it from the values of the civilian sphere and replace them with solidarity to their comrades and competitive attitude to assigned tasks (ibid.). Toughness, violence, aggression, courage, control, and domination are the characters that are commonly associated with militarized masculinity (Eichler, 2014). Hence the militarized masculinities are ideal values associated with military personnel, which promote hierarchical thinking. Militarized masculinities are based on dichotomy; men are the warriors and women are the victims, who should be saved (Elshtain, 1995), which serves the purpose of unequal gender relations and the actual use of military force (Runyan, 1990). As the recruitment to the military is done by appealing to masculinity, and the whole security apparatus uses masculine identity as a force, it can evoke war even more aggressively, by giving individual purposes to it (Eichler, 2014). However, it should be remembered that militarized masculinities are dynamic social constructs that take different forms in time and space (ibid.). According to David H. J. Morgan (1994) what kind of masculinities are produced depends on varying relationships between militarism, military institutions, and nation-states. As the character of wars change, the militarized

masculinities change too (ibid.). However, the individual pressure to fulfill the particular kind of ideals of militarized masculinity remains (ibid.). As the militarized masculinities are produced at several levels - the individual, the institutional and the ideological - the possibility for an individual to avoid participation to it stays limited as it would contradict the institutional values, namely ”the egalitarianism of men sharing a common fate” (Morgan, 1994. pp.178).

When women join a military institution, they challenge the prevailing norms related to gender at the individual, institutional and ideological levels (Enloe, 1983). Thus they threaten the very existence of military institutions (ibid.). The problem is not what the women are, it is in the kind of social attributes that are associated with women in a military setting (i.e. peace, weak, civilian, diversity, defended, enemy, etc.) (Kovitz, 2003, pp. 6). Military institutions' defense against this threat is to control what kind of tasks are given to women and how they can and should present their femininity as a soldier (Enloe, 1983; 2000; Yuval-Davis, 1997). This leads women to question their capability to do ”men`s work” and also to struggle with their own identity as women (Davis, 1997, pp.185).

Cynthia Enloe (2000) takes a wider perspective on militarization and explores how militarization occurs in societies and how it constructs particular ideas of femininity and masculinity inside and outside of military institutions. She defines militarism as: ”step by step process by which something becomes controlled by, dependent on, or derives its values from the military as an institution or militaristic criteria” (Enloe, 2000, pp. 291). Zillah Eisenstein (2007, pp. 22) uses Afghanistan as an example of the countries where there are not ”neat divides between civilian and military realms”. Thus the militarization has become the realm of gender relations in the private sphere too (ibid).

The dichotomy in militarism requires that both sexes to adapt to the roles assigned to them otherwise the function of the security apparatus is not guaranteed (Enloe, 2000; Yuval Davis 1997). Enloe (2000, pp. 294) describes roles assigned to women in the following way: ”a loyal wife, a patriotic mother, a modern woman, a professional nurse, a healthy prostitute, an ashamed rape victim, an understanding girlfriend”. For women soldiers, the militarization has meant integration with the institution (ibid). How the women are militarized depends on the assigned role and the intersectionality (ibid). Enloe (2000, pp.285) suggests that many women who wear the uniform, militarization has been satisfying as it has offered ”adventure, travel, camaraderie, physical fitness, skill training, college scholarship, the chance for leadership, equal pay, child care for their children, pensions”. In Yuval Davis (1997) thinking, the military is an opportunity for women soldiers to empower themselves physically and emotionally. It may offer them ”new identities, skills, and

respectable social positions, as well as to struggle for causes they believed in" (Yuval Davis, 1997, pp.102).

As the process of militarization offers particular advantages to some women in some circumstances, women might not see themselves as victims of that process. Thus the process hides "militarization`s fundamentally patriarchal consequences" where masculinity is always privileged and women are treated distinctly from men (Enloe, 2000, pp.298). In Eisenstein`s (2007) thinking the military may look more democratic when women are added in the forces but in reality it becomes less egalitarian or democratic. Women`s and men`s choices inside the army are not truly the same and patriarchal privilege is there to remain (ibid.). In her analysis women in military serve as "sexual" or "gender decoys" whose main purpose for the military is to distract attention from the actual militaristic operations (ibid.). However, it should be noted that Eisenstein refuses to take into account that women too may be masculinized and their gender identities may be similarly transformed as men when they start working in the security sector.

Higate & Hopton (2005) would like to widen the conversation of militarism to cover all masculinist organizations with uniforms. For them, the challenge is how to notice when the institutional inequalities have been neutralized: "what does an organization of equal opportunities and diversity look like?" (Higate & Hopton, 2005, pp.438). Enloe (2000) touches the same phenomena by reminding that there is an extremely thin line separating the militarization of women from the liberation of women. She suggests that attention should be paid on where and when women are able to exercise their own agency and at what point the agency starts to integrate into militarized culture (Enloe, 2000, pp.271).

Until the present day, the outcomes of adding women in the security sector have not been flattering. Gender-based violence (GBV) is especially rife in a military setting. According to Enloe (2000), GBV is institutionalized and it is used either to verify masculine strength, to bolster the state's control over a population, or as an instrument of open warfare. The problem is persistent as women are discouraged from reporting such incidents (Peterson & Runyan, 2010).

As the military institutions have not been ready or willing to take crucial steps towards gender equity, it has been women who have become the most adaptive (Pettersson and Persson 2005, pp. 3-14). According to Annica Kronsell (2012), this has led to a paradoxical position, where women either deny their womanliness or they become radicalized by the situation. Thus they either accept

the prevailing norms or start their fight against them (ibid). Enloe (2000) argues that military institutions have a comprehensive effect on women`s gender identity. She separates the ones who are fully militarized from those who are ”less-than-full” militarized (ibid.). Fully militarized might consider themselves at the forefront of pushing gender equity as they are the ones who are facing patriarchal assumptions and enduring the ”misogynist ridicule” (Enloe, 2000, pp.286). Less-than-full militarized easily find themselves pushed to the institution`s margins (ibid.). They are denied promotions and their voices are not heard and they are more likely harassed and are not able to speak about the harassment (ibid.).

When it comes to female police officers in Afghanistan, theories of militarization and women soldiers form a good base to reflect the findings of this research. However, it should be reminded that the concept of militarism is based on describing the power relations. It lacks the dimension of how their lives have actually been militarized. By this, I refer to the multiplicity of militarized masculinities that are produced in differing relationships between militarism, military institutions, and nation-states (Morgan, 1994). Further research would be needed in what kind of values is associated with militarization in post-conflict Afghan society.

4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The knowledge that is gained through this research is based on personal narratives; how the female police officers narrate their own lives and how these narratives relate to existing theories. These narratives have been collected through thematic interviews, where I have used my understanding of the topic, through previous experience, existing literature and collaboration with the participants, to conduct the interviews. The data have been organized inductively as well as deductively using a post-structuralist understanding of gender identity as a reflection. These research processes will be further explored in this chapter. Furthermore, due to the sensitivity of the topic and security of the participants, ethical considerations of the present research will be explored in-depth in this chapter as well as the background of the participants, which is taken into account when interpreting the data.

4.1. Narrative as an Approach

The present research approaches the topic through narratives told by the female police officers. The narratives focus on personal experience; what the individual perceives as truth and thus meaningful from him/her (Chaitin & Hiller, 2014). The knowledge that is gained through the narrative approach is based on feelings and emotions (Hyvärinen, 2008). The participant consciously or unconsciously has chosen to tell particular extracts from her life in a certain way. Thus the narratives are never told solely and directly from the person's "inner world", they are constructed in co-operation with social realities around a person and what is found appropriate or inappropriate in those realities (Czarniawska, 2004). Narrative research's strength lies in how it sheds light on identities and self-perceptions (Creswell, 2012). The importance of the knowledge does not lie in the accuracy, it lies in what it means for the interviewee (Chaitin & Hiller, 2014). Chaitin & Hiller (2014) emphasizes narrative research's role in peace and conflict studies as it brings forth the individual experiences, which are tied with collective understanding, as well as his/her perceptions of the social reality. Thus the narrative approach may increase knowledge on important features of prolonged and complex conflict realities. In Afghan history, different rulers and invaders in different time periods have spoken and acted on behalf of the Afghan women to advance their own political goals. Hence hearing voices of Afghan women themselves, how they narrate their personal lives, may be considered as an essential approach to understand the complex realities they live in.

The challenge in the narrative approach is that the participants might expose familiar narrative constructs, which they consider socially important, rather than reveal meaningful insights into their subjective view (Miller & Glassner, 2004). This challenge and how it concerns the present research will be further developed in this chapter.

4.2. Data Collection

The data includes thematic interviews with seven Afghan female police officers. The interviews were conducted through Facetime and Whatsapp from Finland due to the worsening security situation in the country and the lack of funding to cover the travel expenses. Interviewees spoke their native language Dari, which was translated simultaneously to English by an Afghan translator. Permission to conduct the research was requested from the Ministry of Interior Affairs in Afghanistan. The data was collected during the months of June, July, and August in 2019.

The original purpose of the interview method was to leave questions as open as possible to encourage the interviewee to share things that are relevant to her and thus to increase knowledge on female police officer's own perceptions of their lives. However, after the first interview, it became clear that the open-ended interview approach is not suitable as the interviews were conducted through Skype via a translator. Open-ended interview method would require more trust-building measures among the participant and the interviewer, as it reminds more like a discussion situation, where the roles of being interviewee or being interviewer are blurred (Eskola, Suoranta, 2008; Kortteinen 1982). This approach was not possible due to practical realities. Thus in the following interviews, the thematic interview approach was chosen. In thematic interviews, the researcher has a more active role in directing the discussions and the themes to be covered with all the participants are decided in advance (Eskola, Suoranta, 2008; Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 1980).

The interview structure was built as a combination of two factors: a post-structural understanding of identity construction and my previous knowledge of the topic. A post-structural understanding emphasizes the role of social surroundings in constructing the identity and undermines the role of individual control (Alcoff, 1988). Thus the themes in the interviews were built around different social contexts the participants lived in. My previous knowledge of the topic was based on interactions that I had with the policewomen when I visited Kabul in 2012, as well as on the literature and newspaper articles that I have read about it. This will be further elaborated in the

ethics section. The structure of the interview was built chronologically in order to follow the structure of a life story. However, with each interviewee, the discussions went in a different direction. I had prepared myself to follow the interview structure but also to follow new themes that the interviewees introduced. Additionally, the interview structure developed during the interview process as the participants introduced new themes that could be elaborated upon with other participants too. One interview lasted more or less one hour. Thus the overall data consisted of around seven hours of material. They were all recorded and carefully transcripted in a written form after all the interviews had taken place. The data has been stored on my encrypted hard drive.

There were several challenges in this chosen data collection method. Firstly doing the interviews through internet phone calls via a translator disrupted the process of building trust with the interviewee. Doing accountable research on the topic of concern, there needs to be considerable trust between the interviewer and interviewee. The interviewee needs to feel safe and comfortable discussing her personal experiences. Furthermore, she needs to feel that she is entitled to her own opinions, and that her anonymity in the research is guaranteed. To overcome these challenges I confirmed on several occasions their anonymity in the research (this will be further developed in the ethics section). Furthermore, to ensure a comfortable and safe atmosphere I asked the translator to share things about me and my life, my previous experience in Afghanistan and why I considered this research important. Additionally, I asked the translator to conduct the interview in places where the interviewees would feel free to speak. Unfortunately, most of the interviews were done in the Ministry of Interior Affairs or police stations during working hours, due to the fact that the internet connections in people's homes are poor. Also, organizing time for the interview during the participant's spare time seemed problematic as most of them work and study from early morning to late in the evening. However, the interviews were always conducted in separate quiet rooms, where there was nobody else present other than the interviewee, the translator, and me through the internet.

The second challenge relates to how to make the interviewee speak about her own experiences and not to act as an analyst or theoretician. This was especially challenging with the policewomen, as they have been recently educated to a new profession, which most of them felt empowered by, thus they preferred to bring up the expertise of their new profession rather than speak about their own lives. To direct the conversations to their own lives from the general analysis, I tried to point at very concrete everyday phenomena that everyone could relate to, e.g. how they go to work, what they do with their children, what is their daily schedule.

The chosen data collection method also affected how the data was analysed. This will be further explored in the following chapter.

4.3. Analysis Process

Content analysis was chosen as an analysis method as it supports the overall research design. I was not able to conduct face to face interviews. Neither could I spend several hours with the participants` or interview them on several occasions. A translator was used as the interviewer and interviewee did not share a common language. Furthermore, the research deals with voices that have been seldomly heard. Thus, due to reasons mentioned above, everything that was said was taken under consideration and focus was put on what is said and not on how it is said. Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2018) describe content analysis as a method that seeks meanings inside the text and thus ignores how they are produced. In other words, content analysis leaves little space for qualitative and interpretative message analysis (Bird, 1998; Klee, 1997, quoted in Neuendorff, 2002). It is virtually seen as a technical operation that strives to meet the standards of a positivist understanding of social research (Neuendorf, 2002). The data is under scrutinized exploration, which is "governed by rules that are explicitly stated and applied equally to all units of analysis" (Krippendorff, 2004, pp.19). Krippendorff (2004) prefers to describe content analysis in terms of replicable and valid. By this, he means that the content analysis's goal is to make inferences from the data, which are independently available evidence regardless of the time and from the researcher (ibid.).

The main function of content analysis is to "organize the data into a concise and clear form without losing its inner meaning" (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2008, pp.122). It is not directed by a theory or model or epistemology, thus the researcher may apply several theoretical and epistemological approaches to support the research aims (Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2008). In the present research the data was reduced and categorized inductively as well as deductively using a post-structuralist understanding of gender identity as a reflection. During the analysis process, the data was first reduced on the basis of what is relevant for the research question. Subsequently, it was broken down into few sentences' paragraphs, which were tied together based on logical reasoning, conceptualized and finally categorized under two main categories: constructing gender identity in a civilian context, and constructing gender identity in a professional context. These main categories formed two seperate social contexts which had an influence on how participants`s gender identities were constructed.

Content analysis does not provide a direct conclusion, it solely offers inferences from the topic of concern in a dense and general form (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2008). The present research has reflected the inferences to theories of patriarchy, gender and post-conflict setting, and gender in militarization, in order to draw conclusions from the topic of concern.

4.4. Ethics & Biases

Several ethical considerations should be mentioned in relation to the chosen research design. First of all is the security of interviewees. There have been several attacks targeted directly on female police officers since 2001. Thus the identities of interviewees have been hidden. The research presents them anonymously and doesn't mention any details that could reveal their identity. The original data has been restored to safe encrypted hard disks.

The second consideration was the language barrier. A translator was used, as the researcher and interviewees did not speak a common language. Thus attention should be paid to the translator's expertise, and to how her presence might have affected interviews. The translator is a professional interpreter and her English is fluent. Her native language is Dari and she is very experienced in translating from Dari to English. She is a woman in her thirties, and she seems to have an ability to gain trust among the interviewees. The translator's social status in society did not seem to matter as there was no noticeable hierarchical positioning in the interview situation.

Thirdly, attention should be paid to who was interviewed and where. Permission to conduct this research had to be granted from the Ministry of Interior Affairs in Afghanistan. I had instructed the translator to find female police officers to interview. I had not expressed any limitations as to whom should be interviewed as long as they were female police officers. The translator was in contact with police stations and with the MOI to find the interviewees. To my knowledge there was no formal selection of who was allowed to be interviewed. The selection of interviewees was based on who was willing and available for the interview. Five of the interviewees worked in the Ministry of Interior Affairs and two of them worked in the Kabul police station. They all expressed pleasure that they could take part in this research. The interviews were conducted in the MOI or police stations during the working hours, although I had expressed my willingness to conduct the interviews during the participants' spare time outside the professional context. This probably had an

effect on how participants shared their experiences. While speaking about their lives they most probably put the stress on their profession and expected the research to be mostly interested in those dimensions, although the greater part of the questions concerned their lives in general.

Lastly, my own positionality of this topic should be explored. My interest in this topic had already risen in 2012 when I visited Kabul as a photojournalist. I was on an assignment for a newspaper, aiming to explore how the situation with women's rights had changed after the US-led invasion in 2001. Back then we met several policewomen in the police stations and also visited one police officer's family at her home for an interview. I remember them showing amazing courage although simultaneously explaining their problematic situation in society and in their work environments. During our assignment, we additionally met several other women from very different backgrounds: from a woman in a refugee camp to a human rights advocate, from a low-income single parent to a member of the parliament. Based on these experiences in 2012, I had some kind of picture in my mind about the realities of Afghan women in the Kabul area, which certainly have had an effect on my interest in the topic, and on how I have approached it. However, it should be noted that we were only seven days in the country, thus the experience may be considered relatively superficial.

More generally, concerning my positionality vis-à-vis the topic, it is worth noting that I am a white female researcher coming from Finland. This positioning has certainly affected how I have framed the research question and conducted the interviews. It has also affected how I have interpreted the data and what kind of theories I have chosen to use the reflect the findings. To circumvent these biases I have continuously and routinely attempted to also use the historical context of Afghanistan in my reflections.

Furthermore, it should be noted that I am based in a country that has actively participated in SSR in Afghanistan. There have been Finnish police officers taking part in the training of the Afghan police forces, and the Finnish diplomat Pia Stjernvall acted as head of the EUPOL mission between the years 2015 and 2016. Additionally, Afghanistan has been one of the biggest receivers of Finnish development funds for several years, and the main focus in developing cooperation has been in police training and strengthening law enforcement.

These features might have exposed a power hierarchy between the participants and me, as well between the translator and me. They probably affected how the participants spoke about their attitudes toward their profession and their work environment and how the translator framed the

questions as well as what kind of things she emphasized in her interpretation. To reduce this power hierarchy I discussed on several occasions with the translator my motives to conduct this research, before the interviews took place. Furthermore during the interviews I attempted to do my best that I would not be understood as a representative of one of the donor countries, but rather as an individual who is honestly interested in participants` personal lives.

4.5. Background of The Participants

As already described in the background section, there is not one unified story for Afghan women. Their position in society varies extensively depending on class, economic status, demographics, culture, and politics (Kouvo, 2011; Ataishi, 2015). Exploring the backgrounds of the participants is important when considering the representativeness of the present research. These features should also be taken into account when analysing the findings, as intersectionality is tightly connected to how one constructs her gender identity. In this section, the participants' socio-economic background, geographical positionings, as well as the positions they are holding in the police forces will be further explored.

All the participants are at the present moment living in the Kabul area, but they have varying backgrounds in places of origin. Two of the participants have grown up as refugees in Pakistan and Iran. Three of them have lived their youth in other parts of Afghanistan, and two were originally from Kabul. It should be re-emphasized here that the present research aims only to explore the gender identity of female police officers based in Kabul. The realities for women police in the capital area vary extensively as compared to realities for women police in rural areas. Historically in the capital areas, people have been more educated and gender roles have not been as strict as in rural areas (Ahmed Ghosh, 2003). Several reports (Amnesty, 2015; ICG, 2013: HRW, 2013) have underlined that the attacks against female police officers have been more frequent and violent in rural areas of the country. In the capital area, women police officers have faced less discrimination, and the overall attitude towards the police forces has been more positive than in the rural areas of the country (Amnesty, 2015; ICG, 2013: HRW, 2013). Additionally, there are considerably fewer women police officers outside the capital area due to more restrictive gender roles (AIHRC, 2018). As the majority of Afghans, 74.5% (Worldbank, 2018) live in rural areas, it would be crucial for future research to explore the realities of female police officers conducting their profession outside the capital area.

Half of the participants of the research had recently started their careers, and half of them had already worked as police officers since the beginning of SSR in 2001. As the country has been in a turmoil since 2001 and security institutions were built from scratch, the elder and younger participants' experiences in police forces also may vary extensively. The training of female police officers has developed and improved since the very beginning of the SSR. Furthermore, the gender discrimination inside the police forces which was institutional and widespread in the beginning has decreased to some extent the past ten years (Oxfam, 2013; Frogh et al., 2018).

All the participants worked under ANP, which is responsible for general police duties, as well as more specialized tasks such as counternarcotics, terrorism, and border control (Perito, 2009). The ANP is regarded more like a paramilitary force than solely a police force (Murray, 2009). Five out of seven participants worked in the MOI, and only two of the participants worked in police stations. More than half of the participants worked in the administration or as teachers. and only three of the participants worked in the field among local people. This imbalance seems surprising when the police work is in question, albeit it supports the statistics, where the majority of women police conduct supportive tasks inside the forces (AIHRC, 2018). This phenomenon will be further explored in the analysis chapter.

In terms of ethnic backgrounds, participants represented the three major ethnic groups in the country: Hazaras, Pashtuns, and Tajiks. Although Afghanistan is commonly characterized as a country of strong ethnic boundaries, ethnic identities are seldom fixed and stable (Barfied, 2010). Communal identity is formed by a complicated mix of ideas regarding a common ancestor, language, religion, cultural practice, place of birth, etc. (ibid). Furthermore, it should be noted that tribal affiliations and old traditions are more persistent in rural areas than in urban centres, where people are more exposed to new influences, especially in higher income families. None of the participants brought forward the role of ethnicity in their lives but several of them spoke about the role of the community in their lives. One participant described how she lives in a very strict community. One participant spoke about the importance of the extended family and their acceptance whereas one participant rarely met her parents and was more focused on her nuclear family. Thus it can be stated that the community and old traditions played varying roles in participants' lives.

The participants' ages ranged from 21 to 45 years. The four youngest ones were single, and they were living with their parents. The three oldest ones were married and they were living with their husband and children. Age and position in a family have a great impact on individual possibilities in the Afghan context. Traditionally Afghan women move to their husband's homes after they get married to form an extended family with their husbands' parents and siblings. This tradition has meant that older women have a stronger control and authority over their own lives, as well as over the lives of their daughters and daughters-in-law (Kandiyoti, 1988; Wakefied, 2004). Furthermore, it should be noted that women born in different decades most probably have different attitudes towards themselves and their surroundings due to changes that Afghanistan has gone through in recent decades.

Participants had also varying backgrounds in terms of social class. Some of their fathers were educated, and some came from very poor and uneducated families. None of their mothers were educated or had professional careers, and many of them were illiterate. All the participants were literate, and except one, they all had a university degree. According to UNAMA (2013) report, 70 to 80 percent of the ANP force are illiterate, thus the participants in the present research are more educated on average. This may limit the representativeness of the research. However, it should be noted that the UNAMA (2013) report covers the whole ANP staff throughout the country, and that police forces inside Kabul tend to be more educated.

As a conclusion, it may be stated that the participants had varying socio-economic backgrounds, which can be considered as increasing the representativeness of the research, although they were all more educated than average police officers. Furthermore attention should be paid to the fact that people in the most vulnerable situations might not want to or be able to participate in this kind of research, which can be seen as a limitation. In the analysis chapter, these remarks on varying backgrounds will be further discussed.

5 FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

For all the participants becoming a police officer has been a turning point in their lives. The data reveals that participants narrate their lives mainly through their profession. However, it should be noted that the participants probably thought that the research`s main focus lied in their profession and thus put the stress on that dimension when speaking about their lives.

From the data, two main social contexts emerged through which female police officers` gender identity is constructed: the civilian context and the professional context. This chapter will start by introducing findings in both of these categories in sections 5.1. and 5.2.

As both of these contexts construct simultaneously the individual gender identity, in a subsequent section all the findings are merged to conduct the analysis. Findings will be first analysed in a reflection of theories of patriarchy in section 5.3. Section 5.4. will explore findings through theories of gender in post-conflict settings and a final section 5.5. in relation to theories of gender and militarization.

5.1. Civilian Context

In a civilian context the opportunity to educate oneself and practise a profession, which neither has been possible for Afghan women for decades due to the ongoing war and strict gender norms, have been the most effective features for the participants' lives. However transforming their status and role in society has not advanced without obstacles, especially as they practise a profession that is seen as unsuitable for women in Afghanistan. There is a discrepancy between traditional gender roles and working as a female police officer in Afghanistan. Society`s resistance has been widespread, which was repeated in all the interviews. Participants state that they have been called ”whores”, ”prostitutes” or ”not good women” because of their profession (Participants 1,6,7). Aggression towards them has come from both women and men in society. However among their families they have been able to negotiate new positions for themselves. How participants` gender identity is constructed through these new surroundings will be introduced in detail in this section. Data is divided here into three subcategories: negotiating new norms, being empowered, making sacrifices.

5.1.1. Negotiating New Norms

Aggression towards the policewomen has led participants either to hide their profession or reject the prevailing norms. Half of the participants decided to hide their profession (Participants 1, 2, 3, 4). They don`t use their uniform outside the office. They have revealed their profession only to close family members. They state that there are two reasons why they hide their profession: society's intolerance and the security threat, which is prevailing for both men and women working in the security sector. Participant 2 portrays her decision to hide her profession in the following words:

"I would really like to wear my uniform, do work in the field but our people are not ready yet to accept that in this way. So because of that, I`m not doing that. Afghan people, our society, our culture, it is not ready yet." (Participant 2)

Another half of the participants decided to reject the prevailing gender norms (Participant 5, 6,7). They work in the field and use their uniform publicly. For them, it is a matter of honor and pride to present their profession publicly.

However, all the participants state that cultural and traditional norms related to gender have started to change. They believe institutional changes in the Afghan society have enabled it. The government has publicly embraced their importance (Participant 2) and there are more and more women conducting different roles in society (Participant 3). Appreciation towards policewomen is especially seen among the ones in need of police forces because they understand why policewomen are important (Participants 5,6,7). Participant 7 depicts her professional contact with society in the following way:

"It used to be really bad (the reaction in society), but now it has changed. I handle domestic violence cases. Men can not enter the house first, because there are women in the house. So I`m the first person entering to house and then the men follow me. These people who have cases like this (domestic violence), when I go in, they really appreciate my interest and presence in the house, because now they thank me, that thank god there is a woman, who got into my house because I have wife and children in here. And I could not let men come in, and handle this case. This is why people know, they know the problems they have, the domestic violence cases are always family problems. And they really need women to be there." (Participant 7)

Families of the majority of the participants resisted when they heard that their daughters or wives wanted to join the police forces (Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 7). However, all participants stated that they were able to negotiate with their families and husbands for their new role in society. Two of the participants stated that the negotiation with the family and decisions made in consensus with the parents are crucial features in Afghan culture (Participants 2,3).

"We are Afghans, we have a different culture, we have to listen to our parents, we decide together with our parents." (Participant 3)

This can also be realized from the fact that at the moment families of all the participants have accepted their daughter's or wife`s new profession; if they had not had, these women probably would not be police officers.

Institutional changes in society eased negotiations with the families. Families who might not have been able to send their daughters to school before because of the tuition fees, were now able to send their daughters to the free Police Academy. Additionally, there was a realization that their daughters and wives could also support the family financialy, which would benefit the whole family. Participant 3 depicts the discussions in her family in the following way:

"In the beginning, my father was against it (the police work) but we had a lot of financial problems. I gave my university exam and I was elected to literature. But when I came home, I asked my brother, if he can afford my finance, my brother said he can not afford it. And then I spoke to my father. After that, my father agreed because they could not afford my education. That is how they started agreeing with what I wanted to do." (Participant 3)

Now she supports her family financially by giving the whole salary to her mother every month.

Several other institutional changes have eased police officers' chance to organize their everyday lives around their profession. MOI has offered kindergarten for police officers` children. Several participants have either own drivers or they use buses organized by police forces to get to their workplaces. Additionally, the fact that in present-day Kabul women can walk alone and run their errands alone has enabled women to be more independent and participate in social action differently.

The re-organizing of social action has additionally aided participants in convincing their families that norms are changing in their society. One participant recounted how meaningful was the First Lady Runa Ghani`s public speech where she embraced female police officers. Two of the participants referred to television ads which encouraged women to join police forces.

In negotiations with the families, the new profession has been justified as serving the country and helping other women (Participants 4,5,6). Two of the participants had told their parents that if they became police officers men would not need to conduct searches on women, because female police officers would do it (Participants 1,2). Thus their profession would actually enable society to live up to its norms.

5.1.2. Being Empowered

Being empowered is referred to here as a narrative that all participants repeated; being educated and having a paid profession have changed their lives positively and it has enabled them to do things that do not fit traditional roles assigned to women. In Naila Kabeer`s (1999, pp. 435; 2005, pp. 13) thinking empowerment ”refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability”. Thus empowerment means a change in an individual's life and power relations around her/him. However it has been argued that empowerment can not by itself be the goal for feminist politics (Yuval-Davis, 1997). It may refer positively to the ”power of” an individual to make their own life choices although they would face opposition from others or negatively, empowerment may refer to ”power over” an individual`s capacity to override others` agency by gained power (Kabeer, 2005). In the present research the empowerment idea rises mainly when participants speak about their civilian lives. It consists of factors like being financially independent, having a voice in a family and society, a chance to decide for their own lives, being useful for society, and making change for all the Afghan women. The new profession has introduced them to multiple roles in society. As Participant 1 describes it:

”I`m a mother, I`m a sister, I can be a teacher, a wife, so I have like the biggest role in society.” (Participant 1)

For Participant 7 being a police officer changed the direction of her life completely. She explains life before becoming a police officer in the following words:

”I do not even remember the US invasion in the country in 2001. I was a housewife then… I was not allowed to speak about anything, and I did not know anything.. it was like my eyes were closed, I did not know anything.” (Participant 7)

She continues to describe the change:

”After I took off my burqha, and I wore the uniform, I got to know the meaning of life. I got to know about my rights. I got to know what life is.” (Participant 7)

After she started working as a female police officer she has become the primary caregiver of her family. Her family is now financially stable and she has been able to send her children to school. She has been educated at the Police Academy and she feels she is doing something for the whole society. Additionally, it has expanded her ideas of gender; that women may achieve similar things in life as men.

Significantly, Participant 3 stated that she is nowadays called the son of the family. Usage of the term ”son” emphasizes that she is now conducting masculine tasks. She is not just having a masculine profession, she is additionally performing masculine functions by supporting her family financially and bringing new ideas to the family. Several of them state that they have a voice in a family now, which they did not have earlier (Participants 2,3,7).

Participant 5 feels the profession has changed her position in society in a way that she can be proud of herself, but it has also brought responsibility:

”Before I became a policewoman I was a very common person, which did not have any power over anything. But now when I`m wearing this uniform, I feel very heavy responsibility on my shoulders. And it makes me very proud when I wear this uniform. And it gives me the feeling that I have to serve my country.” (Participant 5)

For the younger participants (2,3,6) their profession has raised high hopes for their future. Participant 6 wants to become the Interior Minister and Participant 3 wants to get the ”highest position” in the Ministry of Interior. Participant 2 is reluctant to tell her actual goals but says she wants to be a leader.

Empowerment also consists of the idea, which was repeated among all the participants, that through their education and profession they have become role models for all the Afghan women. They believe they are able to stretch the norms related to womanhood and manhood. They believe they can change people`s ideas and thinking.

5.1.3. Making Sacrifices

The third subcategory that rises from the civilian context is the sacrifices participants have had to make to conduct this profession. As the profession contradicts the traditional gender norms, policewomen narrate that it is them, who are required to make sacrifices to conduct their profession and make a positive change for their own lives and for society. Thus the sacrifices are tightly connected to empowerment. By sacrificing parts of their lives they feel they can bring positive change. This is apparent for example when they speak about their security. Half of the participants state that they have given up their security to work as a policewoman, but at the same time there is a notion that they have done it for a good reason. Participant 6 states:

"This is a very dangerous job but I`m proud of being in this job and I`m proud that I can be in service to my country. Even if I die it is an honor for me." (Participant 6)

For several participants, social relations have become harder because of their profession. Close relatives have refused to meet them and they have been ostracized from their communities. Participant 1 has hidden her profession from her friends and relatives since she became a police officer, which was over 10 years ago. Only her closest friends know about her profession. She depicts her approach to her profession in the following way:

"...I`m in love with this job. I have made a lot of sacrifices to conduct it. I have started from zero. I have tried to open a door for other women this way. I will keep on continuing my job, working as police here, to serve my country. And I open more doors to other women like this." (Participant 1)

The younger participants (2, 6) felt that the new profession has complicated their decision to have their own families. Participant 2 states that it is hard to find a husband who would be comfortable with the idea that his wife has a professional career, especially a career as a police officer.

Additionally, she is afraid that she won`t achieve her professional goals if she gets married. Thus she has decided to postpone having her own family. Participants 6 states that she doesn`t want to have a husband. She is also afraid that she won`t be able to fulfill her goals if she gets married. She concludes that she will first complete a doctoral degree and after that consider having her own family.

Participant 3 doesn`t feel that she has had to make any sacrifices in terms of social relations because of her profession. She states that as long as she bringing food in the table, no person may criticize her of her profession. Additionally, she explains that Afghanistan is living now in a "new and modern era", where women do not have to get married before they turn 25. She has decided to first complete her masters, and get a good position in MOI. After that, she can start thinking about getting married. She believes there will be a lot of opportunities for her then.

For Participant 5 the biggest sacrifice has been that she cannot perform her femininity in a way that "common women" or "regular women" can, as she calls other women in her society. With her uniform she cannot wear make-up, do her hair, follow fashion, go to weddings with her family or meet her friends anywhere she wants to. She gives the reasons for this:

"I have different responsibilities than other women, common women. Our business is all with weapons. With a lot of domestic violence. A lot of families coming to us with their problems, Lot of women coming to us with their problems. We are solving these problems. A lot of these problems happening in provinces and we have to travel to other provinces. We can`t wear make-up with a uniform and go there. It is not good to wear wake-up with the uniform." (Participant 5)

There is also a strong sense of responsibility in how Participant 5 narrates her profession. She states that she is devoted to society, not to herself. She works in the field because nobody else is doing that and she feels the pressure of fulfilling all the requirements that she has assigned herself to help all Afghan women.

5.2. Professional Context

The first time in Afghanistan`s history women were formally accepted in police forces in 2001, due to donor led Security Sector Reform. Female police officers have been at the forefront of change in their society and they have been trained by the external powers according to their norms. This setting has certainly had an influence on how female police officers experience their lives in a professional context. Furthermore participants practice a profession, which has been traditionally seen best performed by men. This brings yet another dimension of how the participants experience their lives in a professional context. How participants` gender identity is constructed through their new work environment will be introduced in detail in this section. From the data two sub-categories emerged: narrating one`s duty as a female police officer and negotiating one`s role inside the forces.

5.2.1. Narrating One`s Duty as a Female Police Officer

The majority of participants stated that their main duty as a female police officer was to help other women. There was a strong sense that through conducting their job, they were also changing the lives of all Afghan women. For Participant 5 performing publicly as a policewoman is a way to bring the change:

"I`m a person who does not hide from society. I do not hide my uniform. I do not hide my work. Nothing. So obviously it is something very new for the society of Afghanistan. That a woman is wearing a uniform, and she is educated, she is fearless and she does not care about anything. ... I want society to change and there has to be someone to bring the change." (Participant 5)

Changing the lives of all Afghan women and acting as role models for them was especially relevant among the two youngest participants. They do not work in the field, among the society, but improving the rights of all Afghan women was a strong part of their professional narrative. Participant 3 depicts it at follows:

"I want to serve a lot of women in Afghanistan because their rights have been under, I don`t know what, under a lot of stones. Nobody takes care of their rights, nobody has heard about their rights, nobody wants to know about their rights, I want to snatch all women rights from men, who are the ones that have taken their rights." (Participant 3)

Participant 2 wants to encourage other women to join the forces:
"I came to police forces because I wanted other women to be encouraged. I wanted to open a way for other women, other girls to come and enjoy the forces as well. I want to be role model for other women, to come and start working," (Participant 2)

Older participants who have worked or are now working in the field have a more pragmatic approach. They work mainly in helping women in domestic violence cases and they believe that through conducting their profession they directly help women in their society (Participants 4, 7).

All the participants worked in the areas that were somehow related to how their gender is constructed in Afghanistan: administration, teaching, women`s prison, human rights, and domestic violence cases. As the sentiment among the majority of them was that they were helping other women, none of them complained about the options they have had in their work environment.

5.2.2. Negotiating One`s Role Inside the Forces

Three participants (1,4,7) have worked in the police forces since the beginning of the SSR. These participants speak about widespread oppression towards women inside the police forces. They say it was institutional: they did not have the same opportunities or equipment as men, none of the authorities listen to them and they did not have any rights. All of them state however that the situation has improved considerably in the past ten years due to institutional capacity. Gender departments have been created and both men and women have been educated about their rights.

At the present moment, all of the participants state that their work environment is very friendly. They feel they are treated the same way as men. The majority of participants consider their colleagues as family members. Simultaneously all of them state that there has been harassment or that there is harassment in their workplaces though it has decreased in past years. However, none of the participants state they would have personally faced harassment. Only two of them brought forth the issue of harassment voluntarily. The rest were directly asked about it. Thus it can be considered that there was a reluctance to speak about the topic.

One of the participants opened the present-day scenario of harassment in the following words:

"It is not like, there would not be harassment, obviously, there are a lot of colleagues, men, students, who look at you different way, but because I have learned how to control it, they have studied, they have got trained, they know how to control it, but there is some harassment. It is not like that obvious, way they look at me, and sometimes they say, they use a word for you, talk to somebody else but want you to hear it. These things are still there. It has not vanished yet. But it is not like very serious harassment." (Participant 3).

The previous quote also depicts how the majority of the participants respond to the harassment. They take heavy responsibility of it to themselves. Participant 5 says:

"So it really depends on your personality. How much you know about your rights? If you know your rights completely, and you have the power of the rights you have, there is nobody who could do anything for you like that. You know your rights and you can tell them what your rights are. And what their rights are. You can give them the limits. That is how it is. It has been nine years that I have been working in the police, I have never faced any kind of harassment." (Participant 5)

There is also a strong belief that if women and men are educated, harassment can be prevented.

"I think that it (the harassment) was because there were a lot of uneducated women working in the police in the beginning. And they did not know their rights. A lot of men were using these women because they did not know anything. But now women who are working are educated. They know their rights. They teach their rights to other men. A lot of men now are educated about women`s rights." (Participant 6)

Noticeable is also how Participant 2 speaks about the world outside comparing the work environment:

"I have not faced any harassment, thank god I have not faced anything yet. I`m not talking about the way, I`m coming outside to work. There is a lot of harassment. Lot of things that I hear when I come to work and university on the way but there is nothing at the workplace."

None of the participants stated that they had to negotiate new gender roles inside the police forces or that there is any need for that. There was strong trust on the institutional capacity of the police

forces, that the institution will tackle any inequality that may appear. In the following section, these findings will be analysed in light of theories of patriarchy, gender, and post-conflict society and militarization.

5.3. Threaten Patriarchy

According how the female police officers narrate their lives, the attitudes towards them have been intolerant among the Afghan society. There is a discrepancy between the traditional and cultural gender norms, and what the police officers represent. Due to this, female police officers have been named as not appropriate women, and appearing publicly as a female police officer has been challenging. Participant 1 and Participant 7 depict the start of their careers in the following words:

"First of all I had to hide it but when they got to know that I was studying in the police academy; what are you going to do as a woman? Police job is for men, not for women. And that time people were thinking if a woman is working for the police, she is not a good woman, she is probably a whore or a prostitute." (Participant 1)

"In the beginning, her close families, like cousins and everybody her neighbors, was saying a lot of things, that she has become a whore because she is working in the police forces, she is not a good woman, and she has started going out, doing makeup and going to police stations, leaving her children with her handicapped husband. We don`t know what she is doing". (Participant 7)

The literature on gender relations reveals how patriarchy as a power regime is based on three kinds of factors: the naturalization of gender relations, hierarchical positioning, and dichotomy, where women and men have to be positioned in a certain way (Moghadam, 1992; Kronsell 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2010). Female police officers challenge the existence of patriarchy because they occupy positions that are traditionally seen as best being performed by men. Furthermore, they practise a profession, where the main duty is in protection that in the Afghan context has been tightly connected to men`s pride and duty (Kouvo, 2011). Female police officers` presence shows that gender relations are not natural, they can change in time and space. By practising their profession they reveal that the hierarchical positioning of men and women is not biological. Their example shows that men and women may work alongside as colleagues and a woman can even be a boss for a man. Furthermore, their presence proves that women may independently work for society and

monitor law enforcement in society. Thus the female police officers' presence requires men to change and their ideas of masculinity and femininity to alter. In addition, women also are required to change, and their ideas of masculinity and femininity to alter, as Yuval Davis (1997) has written, it is women themselves who also participate in patriarchal power regimes. Hence the society might feel threatened by the female police officers` presence. They respond to it with resistance, which can be considered a more ”effortless” approach.

For participants society`s resistance has meant that they are required to negotiate a new role for themselves. They are not able to build their identity in line with traditional roles assigned to men and women. How they negotiate this new role is tightly connected to intersectionality, their previous status in society, and inside their families.

Most of the participants see themselves as agents of change (participants 1,2,3,4,5). They justify their profession by stating that they work for saving all the Afghan women. However, this may also be read as an attempt to obey the persistent gender norms. This phenomenon will be further explored in the following section.

Several of the participants justify their profession by appealing to a nationalistic agenda. They state they are serving their country by conducting their profession (participants 1,2,6). Thus they are constructing their identity through nation-building; building a better future for both men and women in Afghanistan. Scholars have discussed (e.g. Yuval Davis, Enloe, Nagel) how gendered the terms nation and nationalism are. Traditionally the terms have served particular positions for women, very distinct from those for men. Women are assumed to operate in the private sphere with the women`s issues as the men are expected to conduct “recognized public duty” which is likely to be called “important” (Nagel, 2005, pp.408). Reflecting on participants` statements regarding these ideas, it is clear that they challenge the patriarchal assumption of the nation and nationalism, as the participants are actively participating in public duty to serve their country. However, attention should be paid to the distinct historical context of Afghanistan where the state and its building have been on several occasions “hijacked” by external rulers. The US-led coalition`s invasion to Afghanistan in 2001 is part of the continuum. Hence when the participants appeal for nationalistic agenda, it may be questioned for whose country they are actually appealing. In the next section, this phenomenon will also be explored more in-depth, when the current relationship between the state and its citizens is discussed. Additionally, it will be further developed when reflecting the findings in relation to theories of militarization.

5.4. Post-Conflict Setting

The Afghan society has gone through turmoil since the U.S. led invasion in 2001. The Taliban were ousted and new political alliances started to run the country. The constitution was re-written and all the central state institutions were rebuilt, among them the security institutions. All the central human rights agreements were implemented in line with the new constitution to guarantee equal rights and opportunities for men and women in future Afghanistan. Prominent has been the presence of international forces. They have actively participated in rebuilding the state. Moreover, they have stridently declared that they will liberate Afghan women from centuries-old patriarchy. Their impact on prevailing power structures cannot be overestimated, whether on how the institutions will be built, how the constitution will be re-written, and thus what kind of gender norms the society should follow.

As already argued in the theory chapter this research uses a concept of post-conflict to describe the prevailing situation in Afghanistan, although simultaneously understanding how politicized the term is and how its usage has mainly served the purpose of external invaders. Feminist research on post-conflict situations has revealed that gender relations are in a state of flux during this time because of the institutional changes in society and changing power structures (Cockburn, 1998; Handrahan, 2004). Handrahan (2004) calls it an ”uncertain identity period”.

For female police officers, institutional changes in post-conflict society have enabled them to attend the Police Academy free of charges and practise a profession with monetary compensation, neither of which was possible during the Taliban period. Institutional changes have additionally contributed to convincing families of letting their daughters and wives join first the Police Academy and then the police forces. Training at the Police Academy and joining the police forces has empowered the participants as they now feel that they have more control over their own lives. It has changed their roles in society as well as within the family, as they feel that they are the ones that are broadening the ideas related to womanhood and manhood in their society. Most importantly it has extended their own ideas of gender, that women may achieve similar things in life as men.

Participant 3 states that she is nowadays called ”the son of the family” because she contributes to her family`s subsistence. Participant 7 states that she has become the head of the family as she is

financially taking care of her family alone. Both of them have taken their new role with great honor and pride. Man`s role in Afghanistan has been traditionally built around organizing subsistence and property of the family, and women and children have been considered as part of this property (Moghadam, 1993, pp. 211). Based on this notion, the new profession has considerably changed their status in their families and their society. However the usage of the term ”son” reveals how distinct the gender divide still is as her new role in the family is described in masculine terms.

Following Cordula Reimann`s gender triangle, which was introduced in the theory section, the society is going through changes in their understanding of gender. Institutional changes have re-defined ”how social action is organized and institutionalized in the public and private sphere” and the empowerment of female police officers has certainly affected ”how one defines women and men in society” (Reimann, 2002, pp.5). Thus they together contest the prevailing gendered social hierarchies. This phenomenon also emerges from the data; all of the participants felt that society is on its way to change its visions related to gender and becoming more acceptable towards them.

However, at least two subsequent considerations emerge. Firstly how sustainable are these new ideas of femininity and masculinity? Scholars have brought forth their concern towards the backlashes in gender relations that often occur in post-conflict societies. Return to old gender regimes is connected to gaining back the national pride which is reconstructed based on ”old good times” (Pankhurst, 2007, pp. 4), to peace which is associated to gender status quo (Manchada, 2001) and to men`s gender identity and how they are coping with new power relations in society (Cockburn & Zarkov, 2002; Cahn & Ni Aolain, 2009). This ”uncertain identity period” (Handrahan, 2004, pp. 433) is even more challenged by the international state-building initiatives that import as byproduct their own ideas of femininity and masculinity. State-building in Afghanistan have been marked by the presence of the international forces and aid operations. At the present moment the living conditions of Afghan people have not improved as promised, the overall security situation is fragile and political infrastructure is characterized by corruption and mistrust. These phenomena certainly affect power structures on the ground and hamper the evolution of gender relations. In Afghanistan history, there have been several examples where different powers have used women`s rights as a way to gain political power but simultaneously failed to sustain the citizens with their basic needs, which has led to a refusal of women`s newly assumed rights. It may be stated that present post-conflict setting in Afghanistan has introduced new insecurities and vulnerabilities that may further entrench an unfair gender order. This is especially prevalent in female police officers' lives, who have been educated by external forces, according to external norms, in a highly

militarized context. Hence the question is whose values and norms the police forces are actually promoting, whose security they are protecting, and thus how sustainable these new ideas of womanhood and manhood actually are.

The second consideration that emerges has to do with the essentialization of women`s role in post-conflict societies. All the participants state that their main purpose is to work for all Afghan women and they justify their profession with it. Thus the question rises how much space they actually have to express themselves? Have they been tied to another stiff and naturalized role that is associated with women? In other words, has the role of being subordinated voiceless women changed to become saviors of all Afghan women? According to Cahn and Ni Aolain (2009), the typical essentialization of women in post-conflict societies is to see them as the peacemakers and facilitators rather than understanding them as part of the political infrastructure. They argue that this does not tackle the real gender inequality. It offers another predefined role for women and allows patriarchy to continue its triumph (ibid). ”Accepting and accommodating a more diverse range of roles for women both in war and post-war facilitates a greater conceptual and practical understanding of the lived intersectionalities of most women's lives.” (Cahn, Haynes & Ni Aolain, 2016, pp. 129).

At this point, it is worth remembering that half of the participants still hide their profession because of the security threat and society`s resistance. Targeted attacks against women`s police by the varying insurgency groups reveal a continuation of women`s rights as political tools. Thus especially in the Afghan context, for real change to happen in terms of women`s role in society, the local ownership of the development is crucial as well as the overall security of the country. However, being a female police officer, and thus part of the political economy of the country, maybe an effective start for the change in women`s role in the society as Meintjes et al (2001) point out.

5.5. Militarization

All of the participants work under the Afghan National Police, which activity is stated to be closer to paramilitary forces than local police force (Murray, 2009). Their security is threatened and they have become part of the ongoing conflict as targets of an insurgency because of their profession. Being a police officer may be considered a masculine profession as women constitute a small

minority in the forces. Additionally, it has been stated that as the war has continued for decades in Afghanistan there are not any more ”neat divides between civilian and military realms” (Eisenstein, 2007, pp.22). Based on these features this section will analyse the construction of the participants` gender identity by reflecting it to theories on militarization.

All the participants have felt empowered by their new profession. They have felt they have become agents of change. However, they have also struggled. They have struggled with not being able to live like other women in their society. But in their perception they have done this for a good reason, as they narrate it; they are the ones who are fighting for all the Afghan women. Cynthia Enloe (2000) would argue that these features are part of the militarization that security institution as an apparatus is doing for them. According to several scholars (e.g. Enloe, Eisenstein, Yuval-Davis), empowerment is tightly connected to women`s militarization. In Yuval Davis’s (1997) thinking working in the security institution may enable women to find new identities, practise new skills, improve their social positioning, and fight for their own opinion. Enloe (2000) sees two options for women inside the security institution: ”less-than-full militarized” and ”fully militarized”, that are determined depending on how well a woman accepts the institutional norms (see the section on Gender and Security Sector in Theoretical Framework). Participants and their life narratives fit amazingly well with Enloe`s ideas about being fully-militarized as well to Yuval-Davis's thinking on militarized women. However, Enloe reminds us that empowerment typically hides the patriarchal power hierarchies of the security institutions where women are always been treated distinctly from men. In practice, patriarchy becomes visible inside military institutions when women are offered only a certain kind of way to perform their gender identity and there is tight control of what kind of tasks are given to them (Enloe, 1983; 2000; Yuval-Davis, 1997). Participants worked as teachers, in administration, in women`s prison, or in domestic violence cases. Thus they were only assigned to tasks that were somehow related to their gender as defined in the Afghan society. Several other features related to police work, in general, were left out of their reach, though none of the participants complained about it. The fact that they unquestionably accept the role assigned to them by the institution, again supports the view of being fully militarized. However it should be noted that especially young participants had high hopes for their career and they did not see any obstacles for advancing high positions in the Ministry of Interior, which suggests that they do not consider that only particular tasks are possible for women.

According to the literature, patriarchy in the security sector additionally becomes visible in high percentages of gender-based violence and the way in which the security sector as an institution

corresponds to it: women have been discouraged to report about sexual harassment (Peterson & Runyan, 2010; Enloe, 2000). Participants were reluctant to speak about harassment in their work environment and none of them admitted they would have personally experienced harassment. However when asked all the participants admitted that there is or has been widespread harassment, although it has decreased. At the same time almost all of them state how they are nowadays treated as equal partners with men inside the police forces. They consider their colleagues as family members. Hence there is a dichotomy when the participants describe the interactions inside their work environments. They see their work environment equal, at least more equal than the world outside of their offices but at the same time, the confessions of harassment reveal that differentiation between women and men remains and it is hierarchical. In Enloe`s (2000) thinking, militarization is a process where something becomes controlled by, dependent on, derives its values from the military institution or militaristic criteria. In other words, a person accepts the institutional norms and surrenders her/his own decision making to it. Among the participants` narratives, this surrender is noticeable as the majority of them state that there is no need to negotiate new gender roles inside the police forces. In the narratives, there was a consensus that if there are problems related to gender discrimination, the security forces` institutional capacity, through education and by establishing gender departments, will take care of it. Several of the participants even suggested that it depends on one`s personality if you get harassed, which reveals that patriarchal ideas of femininity and masculinity are still persistent.

Going back to Reimann`s gender triangle the security sector represents a kind of apparatus that has taken control of the whole gender triangle. David H. J. Morgan (1994) states that inside the military institutions certain ideas of femininities and masculinities are produced at several levels: individual, institutional and ideological. Participants' interaction with their families and inside the police forces vary extensively. Within the families, the participants felt that they are able to negotiate a new role for themselves, and institutional changes in the post-conflict society gave space to it, whereas in the work environment participants did not see any reason to negotiate new gender roles and they were willing to accept the roles assigned to them by the security institution. Forming a gender triangle based on how the participants narrate the interaction in both of these contexts (civilian, professional) reveals how the power is constituted in these different contexts and how flexible the ideas of gender may be. In the professional context, there is very limited room for ideas of gender change or develop in comparison to a civilian context where the participants have been able to gain new roles. Thus it may be stated that the participants are tied with another narrow idea of gender through their profession.

How women are militarized as well as how the new profession has affected their gender identity is tightly connected to intersectionality. This was noticeable, especially between younger and older participants. It should be noted that traditionally the older women in the Afghan context have had more control and authority over their own lives than the younger women (Kandiyoti, 1988; Wakefied, 2004). Additionally, the participants` varying backgrounds in terms of how conservative their families and communities were and what kind of ties they had to them had an influence on how their new profession affected their gender identity. However it should be noted that none of the participants mentioned the role of ethnicity in their lives, which international community commonly uses to describe the power relations in Afghanistan. These features will be further explored in the following paragraphs.

The militarization was especially strong among the younger police officers. The profession had empowered them physically and emotionally, as Yuval-Davis (1997) have pointed out about the militarization. They had become fighters for all Afghan women. They were not just conducting their job, they were also changing the society and being role models for others. They felt that they need to make sacrifices, give up other things in their lives, to conduct their profession properly, which can also be read as a surrender to security sector gender norms.

One of the younger participants brought forth as a sacrifice of how her profession has affected her femininity. She is not able to show her femininity in a way "other women" or "common women" may show. She explains that she has different responsibilities than other women because "*our business is all with weapons"* and as they are working among families with domestic violence cases she feels *"it is not good to wear wake-up with the uniform"(Participant 5).* She continues with the sacrifices in her private life: she cannot follow fashion trends as other women may, attend weddings with her family, or meet her friends anywhere she wants to because of her profession. Thus she separates herself from the civilian sphere and constructs new rules that she is engaged with. Similar ideas can be found from Kovitz`s (2003) writings on how she describes military personnel. She states that by segregating themselves from the civil society the values of the civilian sphere are shunned to replace them with solidarity to your comrades and competitive attitude to assigned tasks (ibid.). She ties this segregation to the identity of militarized masculinity and how lethal goals and practices are legitimized through it. It should be noted that Kovitz`s writings are based on militaries and not police forces. However, reflecting on Kovitz`s thinking, the participant`s narrative may be interpreted as a masculinization of her identity.

Another example of the masculinization of the identity may be found from one of the younger participant`s statements. She states that she is aware of the fact that she is conducting a profession, which may put her life in danger but she is proud of doing service to her country even though she might die because of it. The position to defend your country has been typically reserved for men, who, as Enloe (2000) argues, as “the real actors” of the state are the ones who are defending their freedom, their honor, their homeland, and their women. Masculinity is tied with the capability to defend but also to readiness to die for your country.

During the interview, the same participant also stated that she does not want to have a husband because it might have a negative influence on her professional career. The participant came from an open-minded family where her parents had encouraged her to join the forces in the first place. Three other young participants shared similar views about forming their own families. One participant felt that her professional career was an obstacle in finding a suitable husband for her, which she considered to be a big sacrifice for her personal life. During the interview, she had explained that she comes from a very strict community and she had a strong will to fulfill her parents` and community`s expectations. However, she simultaneously asserted that she is the one who is bringing the change to her community. Another young participant stated that she wants to concentrate on her professional career before she gets married. She felt that Afghan society has changed considerably during the past years and women do not have to get married before they turn 25. One participant, who is 30 years old, was engaged but was not sure when she will get married. In a country where marriage has traditionally been based on an arrangement between two families and where women have tended to get married at a very early age, the participants' statements contradict traditional values to a great extent. Some participants considered postponing marriage as a sacrifice that they were willing to do for their profession while for some it was a right which they had newly acquired due to their education and profession. This phenomenon supports Enloe`s (2000) argument on how the two contradicting concepts of militarization and liberation get easily intertwined. Enloe (2000) encourages in-dept exploration of the individual agency to confirm whether it is the institution or the individual who actually possesses the agency.

The elder participants who had worked in the police forces for a longer time did not have such a strong ideological approach to their profession, neither did they feel that they have had to make sacrifices because of their profession although they have been the ones who faced widespread oppression inside the police forces since the beginning of their careers. They felt that the current

situation was considerably better than when they had started. Participant 4 had worked in the police forces since 1993. Even during the Taliban period, she had been asked to work in the women`s prison, when needed and without pay. Her father had done his career in the army. Her brother had worked in the police forces. She had a very practical approach to her career. She felt that she did not have to fight for all the Afghan women or do sacrifices because of her career. She just wanted to conduct her profession as well as she could. She worked in the women`s prison and in domestic violence cases. The norms inside the family supported her profession and the long history in the forces made her attitude towards her profession pragmatic. For another elder participant who had worked in the police forces since 2001, the profession had changed her life completely (Participant 7). She explained how the burqha had changed to uniform in one day. After that, she was able to take care of her family`s wellbeing, which was unstable due to her husband`s handicap. She neither had a strong ideological approach to her profession nor any need to justify her choices. She wanted to educate her children and support her family which were the biggest motivations for her.

6 CONCLUSION & FUTURE RESEARCH

This master`s thesis has aimed at exploring how Kabul based female police officers` gender identity is constructed in surroundings that are characterized by extremely patriarchal society, excessively internationalized state-building reforms, and highly masculine professional context. Furthermore militarized work environment due the decades of ongoing war has been taken under consideration. The focus has been on femininities and masculinities; how the police officers respond to existing ideas of womanhood and manhood, what kind of new positions working in the security sector have introduced for them and how they navigate their lives around these pre-conditioned and often contradicting ideas. In other words the study has aimed at revealing social hierachies the participants live in and how they are able express themselves in those contexts. Hence the study has contributed in giving insights on inclusivity of the SSR; how it succeeds in its representativeness. As the data only encases thematic interviews with female police officers of their personal ideas and experiences, the study does not offer a comprehensive understanding of lived realms. However hearing female police officers' own voices may be considered crucially important because Afghan women themselves have been seldom heard and their rights have been politicized at several occasions throughout history. This chapter will give a brief overview of the present research. It will introduce the principal limitations of the study, conclude on the main findings, and consider the importance of future research in the field of study.

The obvious limitation of the research is that the interviews had to be conducted through internet phone calls from Finland via translator, which put constraints on how much time was spent with every participant and how in-depth the conversations could be, as the method certainly disrupted the trust-building measures with the participant. However it should be noted that since no academic research has been conducted on Afghan female police officers` personal experiences after SSR, even a glimpse of realities these participants experience may contribute to more in-depth future research. Further, certain limitations of personal narratives and their relation to reality should be acknowledged; firstly participants might frame their lives through familiar narratives that they consider socially important rather than expose insights into their subjective view; secondly, there might be a tendency to emphasize the role of the professional career in their lives as they were invited to participate in this research because of it; thirdly, my position as a female researcher coming from one of the donor countries certainly affected how the participants framed their answers; and lastly there might be a tendency to present overly optimistic views as a response to society`s resistance towards them. Moreover it should be re-emphasized that all the participants

were living in the capital area and they were all more educated than average police officers, thus their experiences may vary excessively from those female police officers living in rural parts of Afghanistan. Thus the research may only reveal experiences of Kabul based educated police officers.

The data reveals that participants have faced resistance and intolerance from Afghan society because of their profession, and their security has been in dangere because of it. The female police officers threaten the existing gender order as they occupy positions that are commonly seen as belonging to men. Their presence proves that women may independently work for society and attend public life, which further threatens the existing gender order. Thus the participants have not been able to build their identity vis-à-vis the traditional roles assigned to men and women. Hence they rather build their identity through more noble roles, such as the saviors of all the Afghan women or the servants of their nation, which obscures the traditional gender divide. Within the family sphere, participants have been able to negotiate new roles for themselves, which is crucial in the Afghan context where families tend to override individual decision making. The post-conflict setting and the institutional changes it has brought (e.g. free education, paid profession), as well as the re-organizing of social action (e.g. public encouragement of women), have enabled participants to convince their families that norms are changing in their society. Furthermore, participants' contribution to family`s subsistence has changed their role and status in families and several of them state that they nowadays have a voice in family matters. However it should be noted that although the post-conflict setting has enabled participants to stretch the norms related to their gender and extend their own ideas of gender, several of them still characterize their lives in masculine terms, which reveals how distinct the gender divide still is. Among all the participants there was a strong belief for a better future; society is becoming more acceptable all the time and the ideas related to womanhood and manhood are in transformation and they are in a key position for this change. Thus it may be stated that all the participants were strongly empowered by their new profession although they have had to make sacrifices in terms of their security and social relations around them to conduct their profession.

Scholars have brought forth how the traditional gender roles are in transformation during the post-conflict period (Cockburn, 1998, Handrahan, 2004, Ni`Aolain, 2009). Women may have gained new positions during the conflict, which reconstruction programs in the post-conflict setting have strengthened. These phenomena jeopardize the traditional gender order in society and in the end may lead to backlashes against women`s rights when ”the patriarchy starts to reassert itself after the

war" (Handrahan, 2004, pp. 436). Post-conflict society in Afghanistan has been especially characterized by the presence of international forces and the aid workers. This has also been a factor in female police officers' lives who have been educated by the external forces, according to external norms. Until the year 2020, when the US and Taliban have for the first time signed a provisory peace agreement, there have been several positive developments concerning women`s rights, but the attitudes towards these reforms have not advanced as expected, as the security and overall wellbeing of the Afghan people has not improved as promised. Furthermore, the legitimacy of the political infrastructure built after the invasion in 2001 has been questioned as it dismissed a real power-sharing process and was mainly built around previous warlords that were allied with the US. Thus in this context, it is relevant to question how sustainable the new ideas of femininity and masculinity which the new profession has introduced into female police officers` lives are, and whose values and norms the female police officers are actually promoting?

Additionally, it should be re-considered whether participants` roles have changed from being subordinated and voiceless to saviors of all Afghan women, or do they really have space to express themselves as individuals? Essentializing women`s role to peacemakers or facilitators is typical in post-conflict societies (Cahn and Ni Aolain, 2009) but it does not support real gender equality, where the diverse roles and lived intersectionalities have to be knowledged (Cahn, Haynes & Ni Aolain, 2016). However in accordance with Meintjes at. Al's views. the female police officers represent the political economy of the country, and are thus in a key position for real change.

As the participants are engaged in a profession considered as masculine in a society which may be described as highly militarized due the decades of war, it is crucial to connect participants' narratives to theories on militarized masculinity, which aims to reveal how the power hierarchies between different genders are produced and the militarization normalized inside the security sector (Eichler, 2014). In all the participants` narratives, there was a strong sense of empowerment, due to their new profession. They felt that they are the agents of change not just for themselves but for all the Afghan women. According to Enloe (2000) and Yuval-Davis (1997), these narratives reveal how the security institutions treat women; offering women particular advantages in some circumstances to make them feel empowered and concurrently hiding patriarchal constructs, which always limit women`s possibilities and privilege men. All the participants worked in the areas that were somehow related to their gender, though none of the participants complained about it. In Enloe`s (2000) terms this can be interpreted as a process of being militarized; a need to obey particular and persistent gender norms. However, among the younger participants, there were high

hopes for the future and they did not see any obstacles in advancing their careers which advocates for greater individual decision making.

The need to obey the security sector`s gender norms may also be realized in how the participants narrate the harassment claims inside the police forces. Several international NGOs and news outlets have reported widespread harassment inside the forces. When discussed with the participants they stated that their work environment is very friendly and they are like a family, although concurrently confessing to the harassment claims. None of them admitted that they have experienced harassment by themselves but all of them stated that this is a problem inside the forces. However, there was a consensus that the security forces` institutional capacity, through education and by establishing gender departments, will take care of the problems related to gender discrimination. None of the participants brought up the need to discuss new gender roles inside the forces. Several of the participants even suggested that it depends on your own personality if you get harassed, which reveals that differentiation between women and men remains, and it is hierarchical.

Especially between younger and older participants, it was noticeable how the militarization is connected to intersectionality. Furthermore, the participants` varying family backgrounds and ties to their communities had an influence on how their new profession affected their gender identity. For younger participants, the security sector and its gender norms had a stronger effect on both their professional as well as civil realms whereas in the older participants` narratives there was a more distinct divide between these two realms.

The four youngest participants have decided not to get married and have their own families or postpone it because of their new profession. For some, it was a sacrifice which they were willing to accept to conduct their profession properly, while for some it was a newly accomplished right which their new profession had enabled. This phenomenon supports Enloe`s (2000) argument on how the two contradicting concepts of being militarized or liberated gets easily tangled.

For one young participant the biggest sacrifice for participating in the police forces has been that she is not able to perform her femininity publicly in a way “other women” or “common women” may do. She narrated her life in separation to the civilian sphere and constructed for herself new rules that she is engaged with, which in reflection on Kovitz`s (2003) thinking may be interpreted as masculinization of her identity. Another example of the masculinization of the identity may be found in another young participant`s narrative on how she is ready to sacrifice her life for her

country. Protection and readiness to die for your country have been traditionally tied with the ideas of manhood (Enloe, 2000).

This thesis concludes that although being educated and having a paid profession have given more space participants to express themselves, working in the security sector simultaneously have tied them with another tight interpretation of gender. In other words, professional context maintains stagnant gendered social hierarchies as there is limited space for ideas of gender to change or to develop in comparison to the civilian context where the participants have been able to stretch the norms related to gender, although their sustainability may be questioned due to the present situation in the country and the complex historical context of Afghan women. However, these two realms are not separable when the construction of gender identity is in concern. The professional realm and its particular gender demands affect also the civilian realm, which was the case especially among the younger participants` lives. Furthermore the present data reveals that there have been deficiencies in SSR`s ability to improve the representativity of police forces in terms of gender, which rises a question of SSR`s effectiveness, where the representativeness is one of its key principles.

Although UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and its subsequent resolutions were considered as important milestones to promote gender equality in security institutions and post-conflict reconstruction, critique has risen towards the means of implementation as well as on the misconceptualization of the term gender. It is stated that solely concentrating on increasing women`s presence in the security sector doen not guarantee equality in an institutional level (Bastick, 2018; Gordon, 2019). Laura McLeod (2018) stresses the importance of conceptualizing gender correctly and thus undestanding how gendered power structures operate in post-conflict societies. Furthermore donor-led SSR have been seen problematic as it may impose external actors own ideas of womenhood and manhood and thus fail to build locally owned gender-sensitive security forces (Bastick, 2010; Gordon et al, 2015). The present research joins this critique and highlights the importance of local level re-negotiations of gendered power structures inside the security sector in order to have truly representative security forces.

As mentioned in the theory section there is not one kind of militarization. There are a ”multiplicity of militarized masculinities that are produced in differing relationships between militarism, military institutions, and nation-states” (Morgan, 1994, pp.180). Extensive research on women in military institutions has mainly focused on countries in Europe and North America. However, the concerned country`s history has a strong impact on the values of the state institutions and how they are

perceived in the society. This is especially true for a country like Afghanistan where there has not been a functioning central state for decades and the one which is now built is mainly based on the presence of international assistance. Thus further research would be needed on what kind of values Afghan police forces produce and how they position women and men in it, to understand more comprehensively how working as the female police officer in Afghanistan has affected their ideas of femininity or masculinity. Militarism is a concept that describes the power relations, but it does not necessarily depict the values associated with militarism.

Due to the scope of a master thesis and its limited resources, this paper has only offered a glimpse of realities the female police officers in Kabul live in. For future research, it would be interesting to conduct methodologically more demanding research as well as to enlarge the scope to the whole of Afghanistan as the realities for policewomen in the capital area are very different from other parts of the country. Interviews should be conducted face-to-face with the participants in their own surroundings in Afghanistan, which would enable the life story interview method, where participant's own voice would be better heard. Furthermore, narrative analysis would treat these life stories as a whole, which could reveal more in-depth knowledge of participants' own experiences. Being physically present with the participants would improve the trust-building measures and it might also assist in neutralizing the power balance between the interviewee and interviewer. Additionally, it would be useful to extend the data collection methods to ethnographic observations and to expand the interviews to include family members, international actors, or even society at large. As gender identity is something that is constructed in connection to social realities around it, this approach might increase knowledge of what these realities actually are.

Furthermore, as the present research has solely focused on gender identities, it would be important in future research to explore how the participants have been able to conduct their profession or have an influence on the police forces in Afghanistan, which would increase important knowledge on the overall effectiveness of the SSR.

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