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# Reconstructing Afghanistan

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China's and Denmark's engagement in the  
reconstruction process of Afghanistan

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## **Abstract**

After 9/11 the US started the war on terror in Afghanistan and ended the Taliban regime. Since then Western countries, led by NATO, tried to establish a stable and secure state of Afghanistan; however, only achieved meagre outcomes. Today continued reports about terror attacks, especially in urban centres, appear on Western news on a regular basis. Overall, Afghanistan has been in an almost non-stop conflict for more than thirty years and an end is not in sight.

At the same time that NATO is deployed in Afghanistan, China is establishing itself as a global great power and a regional power in Central Asia. This is not without consequences for Afghanistan, a direct neighbour of China. Therefore, this thesis will look at the Chinese engagement in Afghanistan and will conduct a comparative case study on the Danish engagement as a representative of NATO in Afghanistan. Furthermore, a comparison between the SCO and NATO, as overarching institutions of China and Denmark, will be conducted.

The Regional Security Complex Theory states that Afghanistan is an insulator state and not connected to the security dynamics of its surrounding neighbours. That there is a much stronger security interdependence than this theory claims will be part of the analysis. Furthermore, this theory claims that technically Denmark and NATO should not be interfering in the matters of Afghanistan, because threats travel easier over short distances. Why they are engaged anyway will be another issue that will be discussed.

## Table of Content

Abbreviations .....	4
1. Introduction .....	5
2. Literature review .....	7
3. Methodology .....	10
3.1 Sources .....	10
3.2 Method .....	11
3.3 Defining the reconstruction process .....	11
3.4 Choice of countries in focus .....	12
3.5 Limitations.....	13
3.6 Structure of Theory .....	14
4. Regional Security Complex Theory .....	15
4.1 Theoretical Assumptions .....	15
4.1.1 Regions and Security.....	15
4.1.2 Characteristics of RSC's.....	17
4.1.3 Powers .....	18
4.1.4 Types of RSC's .....	20
4.1.5 Possible evolutions of RSC's .....	21
4.2 Limitations of Theory.....	22
4.3 Application of RSCT by others .....	23
4.4 Choice of theory .....	23
5. Timelines of Engagement.....	24
5.1 Timeline China.....	25
5.2 Timeline Denmark.....	26
6. China and Denmark in Afghanistan a Case Study .....	27
6.1.1 Political Sector: China.....	28
6.1.2 Political Sector: Denmark.....	31
6.1.3 Political Sector: Comparison China and Denmark.....	33
6.2.1 Economic Sector: China.....	35
6.2.2 Economic Sector: Denmark.....	38
6.2.3 Economic Sector: Comparison China and Denmark.....	39
6.3.1 Military and Security Sector: China.....	41
6.3.2 Military and Security Sector: Denmark.....	43
6.3.3 Military and Security Sector: Comparison China and Denmark.....	45
6.4.1 Civil Sector: China .....	46
6.4.2 Civil Sector: Denmark.....	47

6.4.3 Civil Sector: Comparison China and Denmark .....	50
6.5.1 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.....	50
6.5.2 North Atlantic Treaty Organization.....	54
6.5.3 Comparison SCO and NATO.....	58
6.6 Summary Analysis .....	60
7. Discussion: Afghanistan in the Regional Security Complex Theory .....	61
7.1 Regional Level .....	61
7.2 Interregional Level .....	62
7.3 Global Level .....	64
7.3.1 China and Denmark in Afghanistan .....	64
7.3.2 SCO and NATO in Afghanistan.....	66
8. Conclusion.....	70
Bibliography .....	72

## Abbreviations

<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>ANA</b>	Afghan National Army
<b>ANDS</b>	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
<b>ANP</b>	Afghan National Police
<b>ANSF</b>	Afghan National Security Forces
<b>ARTF</b>	Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund
<b>BRI</b>	Belt and Road Initiative
<b>CAREC</b>	Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation
<b>CCP</b>	China Communist Party
<b>CIMIC</b>	Civil-Military Cooperation
<b>CPEC</b>	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
<b>DANIDA</b>	Danish International Development Agency
<b>DAC</b>	Danske Afghanistan Komité
<b>DACAAR</b>	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
<b>DKK</b>	Danish Kroner
<b>ETIM</b>	East Turkistan Islamic Movement
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>ISAF</b>	International Security Assistance Force
<b>LOFTA</b>	Law and Order Trust Fund Afghanistan
<b>ME RSC</b>	Middle Eastern Regional Security Complex
<b>MERICs</b>	Mercator Institute for Chinese Studies
<b>MOE</b>	Afghan Ministry of Education
<b>MOI</b>	Afghan Ministry of the Interior
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organisation
<b>NSP</b>	National Solidarity Programme
<b>OEF</b>	Operation Enduring Freedom
<b>OSCE</b>	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>RECCA</b>	Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan
<b>RSC</b>	Regional Security Complex
<b>RSCT</b>	Regional Security Complex Theory
<b>RSM</b>	Resolute Support Mission
<b>SCO</b>	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
<b>TA</b>	Technical Assistance
<b>TAPI</b>	Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNAMA</b>	UN Assistance Mission Afghanistan
<b>UNDP</b>	UN Development Programme
<b>UNHCR</b>	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>USD</b>	US Dollar

## 1. Introduction

Afghanistan has been under Soviet invasion for ten years (1979-89), before being confronted with a civil war and the following Taliban regime (1996 – 2001). After 9/11 the US started the war on terror in Afghanistan and ended the Taliban regime. Since then Western countries, led by the US, tried to establish a stable and secure state of Afghanistan with only meagre outcomes. Today continued reports about terror attacks, especially in urban centres, appear on Western news on a regular basis and 2017 was accounted as the year with most civilian victims of terror attacks since recording started in 2009 (UNAMA & UNHCR, 2018, p.1). Overall, Afghanistan has been in almost non-stop conflict for more than thirty years, with no end in sight.

With the retreat of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in 2014, Afghanistan was confronted with a power vacuum. This leaves space for regional actors to step in and support the country in its state-building and peace-keeping efforts. One of the most controversial discussed actors is China. Especially officials and scholars from the US fear that China will use Afghanistan to rise as a regional hegemon. But what is China's actual stand on the Afghanistan issue and how is it involved in Afghanistan? The main reason for being involved in Afghanistan is China's fear of a terrorist spill-over to its Muslim dominated Xinjiang Province.

Despite that China supported an UN intervention in Afghanistan in 2001; it did not participate in the ISAF operation. At that time China was not present in the country at all. Nevertheless, now 17 years later we face a different situation with China showing more interest in the development of Afghanistan. Why that changed and what methods China is applying today is a puzzle I want to analyse in this thesis. Additionally, I will analyse if there are different methods to the US-led ISAF operation, as this was the main foreign actor until 2014. However, ISAF consisted of troops from more than twenty NATO members and other countries, with every nation focusing on a different area of expertise and province in Afghanistan. Therefore, analysing every single countries approach is simply not possible. For that reason, I will focus on just one country. The US would be the most obvious choice; but an extensive body of literature on the US involvement already exists. In my opinion focusing on a smaller contributor is more interesting, as their involvement seems less obvious and the expected outcome by just a small contribution might differ from the overall acclaimed goal by the US. Hence, my choice fell on Denmark, which contributes only 1% to the ISAF mission.

Afghanistan is the biggest receiver of development aid from Denmark. On average the Danish government allocated ca. 130 million DKK annually to the Afghan government

(DMFA, n.d.b). Furthermore, compared to all countries participating in ISAF, Denmark sent the highest amount of people (military and civilian workers) per capita (DMFA & DMD, 2014). This implies that Denmark prioritises intervention in Afghanistan. Therefore, I will focus on China and Denmark, as both countries seem interested in a stable and secure Afghanistan, but are not the primary actors that initially started the war and at the same time have two different approaches to the development of the country.

My overall aim for this research is to find out if the applied methods by NATO and China in the Afghan reconstruction process are complementary and resulting, could be useful for the progress in achieving stability and security in Afghanistan. Or if the approaches are differing in a grave way that cooperation between both is impossible, which even could lead to counterproductive results in the progress of Afghanistan. Hence, my research question will be as follows:

*Why do China and Denmark apply different approaches in the reconstruction process of Afghanistan, despite having very similar incentives for doing so?*

To sufficiently answer this question, firstly a case study comparing the Chinese and Danish engagement in the reconstruction process in Afghanistan will be conducted. In this comparison the focus areas of political, economic, military and security, and civil engagement will be compared. Moreover, both states' engagement in the larger frame of the institutions of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and NATO will be analysed. Lastly, this case study will be discussed in the Regional Security Complex Theory, where Afghanistan will be analysed as a security region in the interregional and global context.

## **2. Literature review**

As the “war on terror” in Afghanistan started more than 15 years ago and has still not been resolved one expects plenty of literature on this topic and will not be disappointed. Countless articles, books, studies and government reports are existing on the ISAF mission in Afghanistan.

Looking into research done on the ISAF mission and Chinese engagement in Afghanistan, opinions are quite diverse. However, there is no country-specific separation of who perceives Chinese or Danish involvement as positive. The only exceptions are made by authors from the Central Asian countries. Here more positive views towards the success of China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) can be found, one example is Mirzokhid Rakhimov (2013) from Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, in general a negative perception is more often the focus of papers than a positive one. Therefore, only Small (2015) and Kley (2014) analyse positive aspects of Chinese involvement or the potential of the SCO or Heart of Asia conference in the peace-building process in Afghanistan. Whereas Yun Sun (2017), Langhammer (2016), Roy (2010), Clarke (2013; 2016) and Cheng (2015) have their focus more on the negative aspects of Chinese involvement and furthermore these authors do not have much hope for China or the SCO to be able to change the Afghanistan situation. Only Yu Bin (2013), Laruelle & Peyrouse (2013) and Rakhimov (2013) have a neutral stand and consider both sides. Nonetheless, most of the authors agree that a multi-lateral cooperation is a necessity for succeeding with peace-building in Afghanistan. Only Song (2014) and Parello-Plesner & Duchâtel (2015) mention that China is pursuing a regional solution in the conflict with the help of the SCO.

Concerning the Danish engagement in Afghanistan three studies by the Danish government were commissioned and undertaken by the Danish Institute for International Studies, the development consultants of Landall Mills and the Danish Royal Defence College. These studies analysed the international and in particular the Danish engagement in Afghanistan in terms of integrated approaches (e.g. civil-military cooperation), development cooperation and stabilisation projects between 2001 and 2014 (Riis Andersen, 2016; Ball, Emmott, Greenwood, Murshed, & Uribe, 2016; Bornholdt Andersen, Klingenberg Vistisen, & Schøning, 2016). Overall, they reach the same results, which are that much has been done, but only few projects and programmes have been successful and even less have been sustainable. The studies draw the conclusion that these meagre outcomes are partially due to wrong approaches adopted by the international community and Denmark, whereas other problems occurred due to the weak and fragmented Afghan government.



As media is often a resource for non-specialists, newspapers break down topics from a very complex situation to something that is easy to understand. Additionally, the story must be able to be sold. Both can be seen on the media coverage on Afghanistan issues. Most articles are concerned about bombings and the number of victims, whereas, only few look at other aspects of the topic and explain the local situation. Here again no major differences can be found between authors from different countries concerning the evaluation towards the Afghanistan engagement. However, it is possible to observe distinctions between different authors. For instance, the Swiss reporter Ackeret (2014) has a balanced stand in his report, so as he criticises both, Chinese and Western actions in Afghanistan. Whereas, the German journalist Mayer-Kuckuk (2017) clearly criticises US-strategies and speaks in favour of the China strategy.

Overall both, professionals from research institutions and universities, and media reporters agree on the reason why China is involved in Afghanistan. Some, such as Clarke (2013; 2016) and Zhao (2015; 2016) differ in the detailed explanation and add more minor reasons, which state that China has economic and resource interests in Afghanistan. Whereas others, e.g. Parello-Plesner & Duchâtel (2015), only mention China's strive for a secure Xinjiang, which they do not want to be affected by the terrorism spill-over from Afghanistan. Only Kley and Clarke look into the fact of Chinese suppression of Uighurs in Xinjiang as the cause for terrorism in the province (Kley, 2014; Clarke, 2016).

About how to create a secure and stable state in Afghanistan opinions differ greatly. Some argue that economic development and the rise of living standard are the foundation for creating a secure and stable country and therefore the economy has to play an important role. These are for example the Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi and the former foreign minister Yang Jiechi. Yang stated that, "Only by helping the countries concerned realize economic growth, social progress, and sustainable development and eliminate the economic and social causes for conflicts, can we fundamentally prevent the conflict from happening." (Parello-Plesner & Duchâtel, 2015, p.68). Nevertheless, despite Yang not saying that this is a solution to solve the conflict; one can derive that economic development is an essential part of not letting conflicts escalate again. This belief comes from China's own experience of lifting millions out of poverty. However, since China started its investments in 2007 a positive change in the security situation in Afghanistan cannot be seen.

Contrary to this opinion, others, such as Yu Fu, state that security is needed before any economic development could be started. According to her this applies especially to the BRI

case, because it cannot become a success if Afghanistan at its heart is still in conflict and threatens the neighbouring countries (Fu, 2017).

As ISAF withdrew from Afghanistan when it was still in an unstable state after more than ten years of its presence there, this seems only natural that the perception of the ISAF mission and NATO are not positive at all. Having China as the main topic of an article most authors simply state that it was an unsuccessful mission without mentioning many details. Nonetheless, there is an extensive assortment of literature evaluating why and how ISAF/NATO were not successful. These are for example the previously mentioned studies undertaken by order of the Danish government, and the book by Auerswald & Saideman (2014) in *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone*. Furthermore, does Bizhan (2018) in his book *Aid Paradoxes in Afghanistan: Building and Undermining the State* focus on how aid contributions from these nations did not have the anticipated success in building a stable state.

In this thesis I will use the existing literature as a foundation for the comparison between Chinese and Danish efforts undertaken in the reconstruction process of Afghanistan.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Sources

For this thesis I rely upon primary sources, such as policy papers made by the Chinese and Danish government or international co-operations of the Istanbul Process and Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA). The secondary literature contains research made by various scholars and newspaper articles, which I described previously in the literature review.

Government reports by the Danish government, such as *Denmark in Afghanistan – Why, How and for How Long? Or Denmark's Engagement in Afghanistan: Executive summary of the Government's Strategy for the Danish Political, Civilian and Military Efforts 2008-2012*, on their involvement in Afghanistan are mainly positive and point out the Danish achievements in Afghanistan. Furthermore, criticism is usually not stated as such, but phrased as goals for the future. It is hardly surprising that the information published by the Chinese government is also focused on future efforts and cooperation's between China and Afghanistan. China very strongly supports the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconstruction process and therefore emphasises on their non-interference policy. Curiously enough, the Danish government supports the Afghan-led and owned process too, however, the papers published by them read very much like a top-down approach from the Danish government and NGO's to the Afghan government and population.

Information on the Danish government's activities in Afghanistan was collected from official government online resources, e.g. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The same applies to the Chinese government activities (State Council of the People's Republic of China; Xinhua). Nonetheless, this supplies merely a small part of the information. Most information on Chinese government activities were retrieved from newspaper articles, e.g. from the US (e.g. The Diplomat), or from research organisations, such as MERICS (Mercator Institute for Chinese Studies) and development programmes, such as the Istanbul Process, RECCA (Regional Economic Cooperation Conference) or CAREC (Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation). Information on the development programmes can be retrieved from either the official webpages of the programmes, or from governments involved in these programmes.

The international cooperation's are mostly emphasising on a regional economic solution of the instability in Afghanistan. For examples, the Istanbul Process - Heart of Asia is emphasising on a regional solution with the argument that the problem of Afghanistan's instability is regional; therefore the solution should be a regional one too. Similar, RECCA is

also looking for a regional solution and is hoping that the One Belt One Road-Initiative will help to build infrastructure, which will integrate Afghanistan into the regional economy.

The retrieved data, primary and secondary literature, is in both cases qualitative data. There are no statistics or numerical data used in this thesis.

### **3.2 Method**

In this thesis I will use a deductive approach, as the research is based on two different hypotheses. Firstly, *China and Denmark are both actively participating in the reconstruction process of Afghanistan*. Secondly, *China's approach of engaging in Afghanistan is more effective than Denmark's approach*. These two hypotheses will be reflected on the basis of the regional security complex theory. The idea is to create a general picture at first, where only the theory describes a situation. Afterwards, inferred from this theory the two hypotheses are reflected, which then will provide a case specific explanation.

To conduct the analysis I will undertake a comparative case study. This will help to comprehend the motivations of different actors involved in Afghanistan and their methods, and if these methods (in form of policies, aid and investments) are successful or failed. Furthermore, using a comparative case study will help me to create more generalizable knowledge about the success and failure of the methods applied in the Afghanistan reconstruction process. Choosing China and Denmark will emphasise on similarities between these actors to create a foundation for possible policy recommendations; and highlight differences were further work in the future needs to be done.

For a clear comprehension of the Chinese and Danish engagement, it is necessary to include an extensive descriptive part in the analysis and to neglect analytical elements to a certain extent. However, the theory will be applied strongly in the comparison of each sector and between the SCO and NATO.

### **3.3 Defining the reconstruction process**

The topic of analysis in this thesis is the efforts of China and Denmark in the reconstruction process of Afghanistan. The term reconstruction is inferred from definition of *reconstruction* and *development* by Francis Fukuyama. He states that reconstruction is the process of “the restoration of war-torn or damaged societies to their preconflict situation.” (Fukuyama, 2008, p.4f). This, however, has the precondition that old institutions survived and only financial aid is needed for the reconstruction. Development on the other hand is described by Fukuyama as “the creation of new institutions and the promotion of sustained economic growth, events that transform the society open-endedly into something it has not been previously.” (Fukuyama,

2008, p.5). This means that creating new institutions of a government has the aim of economic growth. In the case of Afghanistan reconstruction is not possible, because there are no underlying state institutions that survived the rule under the Soviets, the civil war or the rule under the Taliban. Fukuyama acknowledges that problem and argues that a mixture of both, reconstruction and development, is necessary for proceeding on successful path of state-building (2008).

*State-building* is the process of building the central institutions of a government, with the aim that the government can provide domestic security and basic public services. This term is often used interchangeably with *nation-building*; however, nation-building usually is state-building combined with economic development (ibid.).

To prevent confusion about reconstruction, development, state- and nation-building, I will refer to the *reconstruction process* that is inferred from reconstruction and development, with the aim of nation-building, which includes state-building and economic development. Furthermore, this term provides the possibility of being applied on both the Chinese and the Danish engagement in Afghanistan.

### **3.4 Choice of countries in focus**

The reason for why I choose to analyse China's engagement in Afghanistan is obvious; China is a direct neighbour and therefore has a strong interest in stabilising Afghanistan. Why I choose to compare this to the Danish engagement is less obvious and is less connected to the big stake Denmark has in Afghanistan, than more with the big interest Denmark has in the country itself. Afghanistan is Denmark's biggest aid receiver, Danish NGO's<sup>1</sup> were working in Afghanistan since the 1980's (Ball et al., 2016) before the US declared the "war on terror" and when joining the ISAF mission Denmark send the highest amount of people per capita to Afghanistan from all ISAF members.

Both countries, China and Denmark, have the declared goal of building peace in Afghanistan. The reason for that is to secure their home country, which will be achieved by building a stable and secure Afghanistan. Additionally, both countries participate in the training and capacity building of the Afghanistan National Police (ANP), the development of infrastructure, the support of returning Afghan refugees to Afghanistan and mine clearing. As one can see China and Denmark have overlapping interests and areas of involvement, whereas, the method of this engagement varies greatly between the two. That will be the foundation of my analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. DAC (Danske Afghanistan Komité) and DACAAR (Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees).

Another reason for comparing China and Denmark is that there has been no comparison between the approaches of both states, despite that China and Denmark had a conference on UN peace-keeping missions in 2015. Comparisons about foreign engagement in Afghanistan, made in the past, were always focused either on China and the US or between the NATO members. However, I argue that it is interesting to know what a small state such as Denmark has to contribute compared to a great power like China. Maybe their approach is successful and no one noticed before, because it is only little successes. Whereas, especially in the Western literature China is mainly criticised for either not doing enough or stepping in where the US used to be active. Hence, I choose to compare China and Denmark and hope to gain a new perspective on the Afghanistan issue.

The interest in Denmark especially, stems from the fact that Denmark had 750 soldiers in Afghanistan at its highest point in 2012 (Auerswald & Saidemann, 2012). This makes Denmark the country with the highest amount of soldiers per capita (Auerswald & Saideman, 2014; DMFA & DMD, 2014). In total 30 soldiers (4%) were killed in action until 2009, which is the third highest percentage after Canada and Estonia (Auerswald & Saideman, 2014, p.4). Furthermore, by contributing with more than 500 soldiers Denmark was one of the eight key contributors to NATO (Auerswald & Saideman, 2014). All this shows the relatively large engagement of Denmark in Afghanistan and makes it an interesting country to compare to.

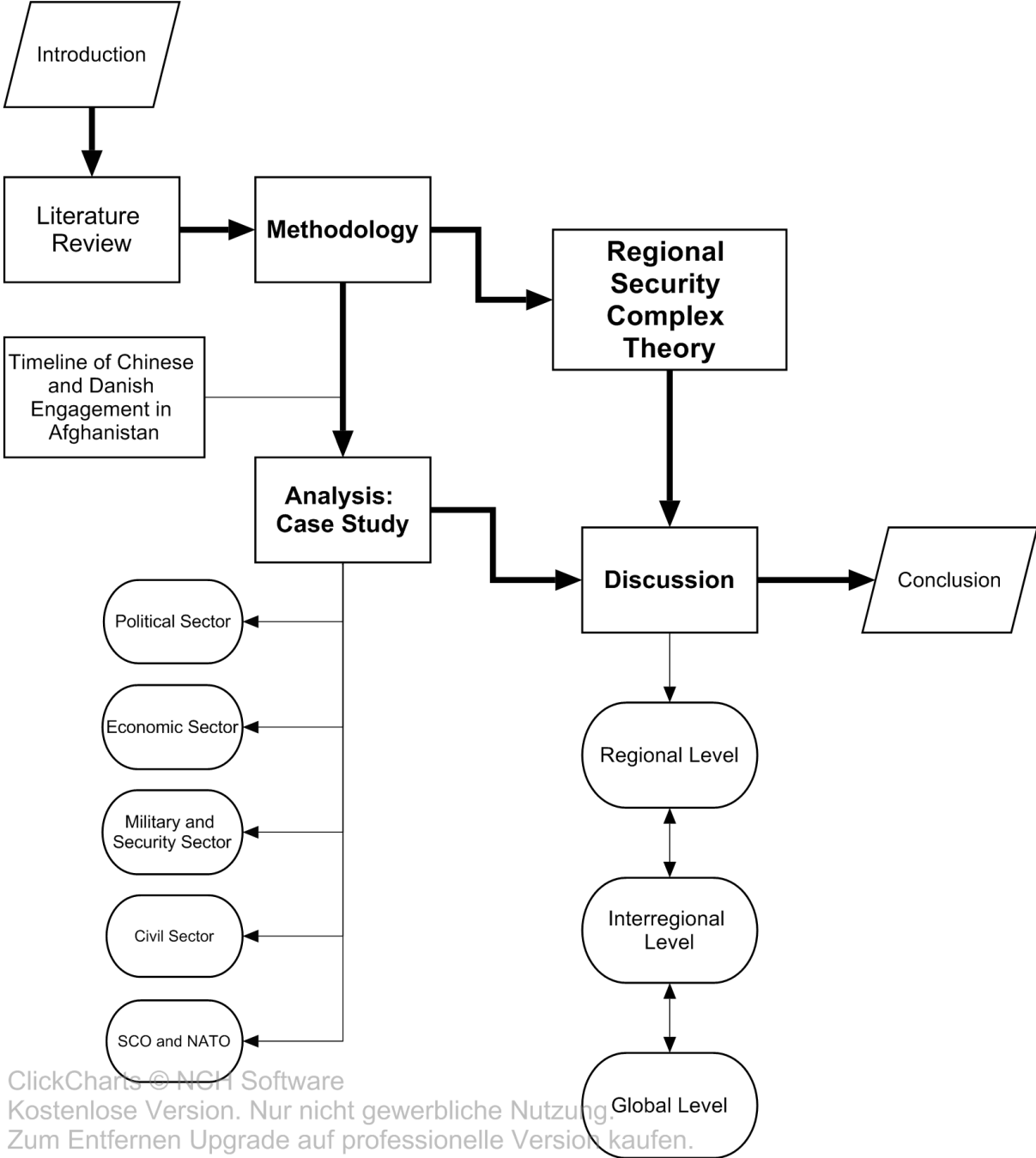
### **3.5 Limitations**

Due to insufficient knowledge of the Danish language no Danish newspaper articles were consulted in this research. As there are multiple official government documents in English this poses no limitation towards my research. However, only a limited quantity of official government documents can be found from the Chinese government. This results in my insufficiency of the Chinese language, but also in the opaque government itself. Moreover, Chinese views are only included from English sources, which often are not “pure” Chinese views, as these scholars are employed by universities often situated in the US and therefore I expect them to have a more open view on the “Western mind”. Hence, in my analysis I am comparing the Danish side based on primary sources with the Chinese side mainly based on secondary sources. Additionally, this thesis is mainly based on English sources, which poses a limitation to the diversity of arguments in my analysis. I will try to solve this problem by conducting English written newspaper articles and reports from other countries, e.g. Afghanistan, and a few newspaper articles written in German.

Another restraint to this thesis is the vast complexity of the topic. This puts certain limitations to the analysis in terms of the extend in which the relationship between regional

actors can be analysed. This is mainly a problem when arguing for the SCO being a security complex. Furthermore, the focus is directed at the Taliban only and other terrorist organisations such as al-Qaida and the Islamic State are excluded to a great extent. Including the different security relations among all neighbouring states of Afghanistan and the members of the SCO and all active terror organisations would only lead to confusion and moreover, it is not necessary to answer the research question.

**3.6 Structure of Theory**



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## 4. Regional Security Complex Theory

### 4.1 Theoretical Assumptions

The Regional Security Complex Theory (in the following RSCT) is part of the Copenhagen School and got first developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver. First outlines were given by Buzan in the book “People, States, and Fear” published in 1983, where he first introduced the term “security complex” and the theory that the security of all states is shaped and influenced by these (Buzan, 1983), was conceived for third world countries. However, Eurocentric elements dominated the theory in their 1990 and 1993<sup>2</sup> versions. Buzan and Wæver presented the final version of this theory in their book “Regions and Powers” in 2003, where they abandoned Eurocentric elements to create a more general theory (ibid.). This again is based on the ground work laid in the previously mentioned books and “Security: A Framework for Analysis” in 1998 composed by Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde (1998). RSCT is developed out of the two previously international relations theories of neorealism and constructivism and the lack of theory for regional security (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). It describes how the world is made up out of regions and powers and how regional security is an important part of the international security.

A clear difference between *Regions and Powers* and all other publications made on the topic of regional security complexes is the form of analysis. Where in *Regions and Powers* the level of analysis is differentiated by domestic, regional, interregional and global, however, the level of analysis in the other publications is divided into the five security sectors of military, political, economic, societal and environmental. As Buzan and Wæver state they did not include the last three sectors in *Regions and Powers*, as regional security was developed with the focus on military and political security (ibid.). Furthermore, there were doubts about the interdependence of non-traditional security sectors and if they would create the same region as the political and military sector. As these sectors are not included in the latest version of the Regional Security Complex Theory, I will not include them in the description of the theory here either.

#### 4.1.1 Regions and Security

RSCT is an analytical concept which is based on security (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). However, every actor defines security differently. Buzan and Wæver use security in their theory with the following definition: “A security issue is posited [...] as a threat to the survival of some

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<sup>2</sup> Buzan, B., Kelstrup, M., Lemaitre, P., Tromer, E., & Wæver, O. (1990). *The European security order recast: Scenarios for the post-cold war era*. London: Pinter. And, Buzan, B., Kelstrup, M., Lemaitre, P., & Wæver, O. (1993). *Identity, Security and the New Security Agenda in Europe*. London: Pinter.



referent object [...], which is claimed to have a right to survive.” (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, p. 71). They describe another definition in the book *The European Security Order Recast* (1990) where security is defined as “the ability of states and societies to maintain the independence of their life and their identity.” (Buzan, Kelstrup, Lemaitre, Tromer, & Wæver, 1990, p. 3). Utilising these definitions, Buzan and Wæver argue that the question of security and resulting, the survival cannot be solely a concern of politics. Moreover, extraordinary measures may be taken to break normal rules and assure security and survival (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). In their theory Buzan and Wæver claim to use security under the constructivist umbrella, as they do not focus only on the threat itself, but rather focus on “when under what condition who securitises what issue” (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, p. 71).

The main statement of RSCT is that the world is divided into regions and powers and that security threats travel only over short distances and therefore will only affect the relations between neighbours. This leads to the creation of so-called regional security complexes (RSC), where a “set of units whose major process of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another” (Buzan et al. 1990, p. 13). Furthermore, Buzan and Wæver state that these regions are distinguished from other regions, as the security relations with other regions are not as great as the ones within a region. However, this means that not every region or group of states can be a RSC, as it has to have sufficient security interdependence, and additionally, must this interdependence differentiate it from other states or regions (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998; Buzan, 2003; Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

The reason why Buzan and Wæver derived a new theory from constructivism and neoliberalism is that both previous theories underestimate the power of the regional level. Contrary to constructivism and neoliberalism, RSCT analyses security dynamics on the regional level and the interplay with the global level. It does not merely analyse either the global or national security dynamics. Buzan’s and Wæver’s choice for the regional level, is explained with their argument that this is the level with most action, as it is the level where units or states are closely linked in order to not being able to separate their security issues (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Nevertheless, applying the RSCT for empirical studies the four levels of domestic, region, interregion and global security dynamics are analysed. Hereby, the domestic level focuses on vulnerabilities that are generated within a unit. The regional level is concerned with the state-to-state relations and the interregional level with the interaction between regions. Analysing the global level in the RSCT means to detect the role of global powers in a region (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Buzan and Wæver state that all these

levels act simultaneously, but one can influence the odds in case it is dominant (Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

Furthermore, RSCT uses parts of both theories in explaining power relations in a post-Cold War world. RSCT is based upon the neorealist state-centralism, which is rested on a power polarity. However, moves RSCT away from the state being the only possible actor and therefore is not solemnly focused on the military-political area. From constructivism RSCT borrows the focus on political processes, which constitute security issues and does not only focus on the kind of threat. Moreover, RSCT utilises the amity and enmity as security complexes are dependent on action and interpretations between various players.

#### **4.1.2 Characteristics of RSC's**

Derived from the definition of RSC Buzan defined two characteristics for the essential structure of a RSC. Firstly, this involves that the relationship and social constructions within a RSC are determined by amity and enmity (Buzan, 1991). They can be projected in form of relationships of fear, rivalry or friendship. Secondly, there has to be a power distribution in form of polarity between the states of a RSC. In 2003 Buzan and Wæver added another two characteristics to the previous two. These units do not necessarily have to be linked directly, but merely have to be in the same RSC. These are firstly, that different RSC are separated by boundaries, which means that state boundaries are utilised and not cultural or ethnical boundaries. And secondly, the structure of the RSC is anarchic, which means that each security complex contains at least two autonomous units (Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

According to Buzan and Wæver a security complex can have subcomplexes (*ibid.*). This occurs when a security complex is embedded in a larger RSC. It has the same security interdependence as a regular RSC, but is caught in the bigger one. Examples are the Balkan subcomplex, which is embedded in the larger European RSC or the Central Asian subcomplex, which is embedded in the post-Soviet RSC. Buzan and Wæver divide the post-Soviet world into the regions and subcomplexes as shown here in Figure 1.

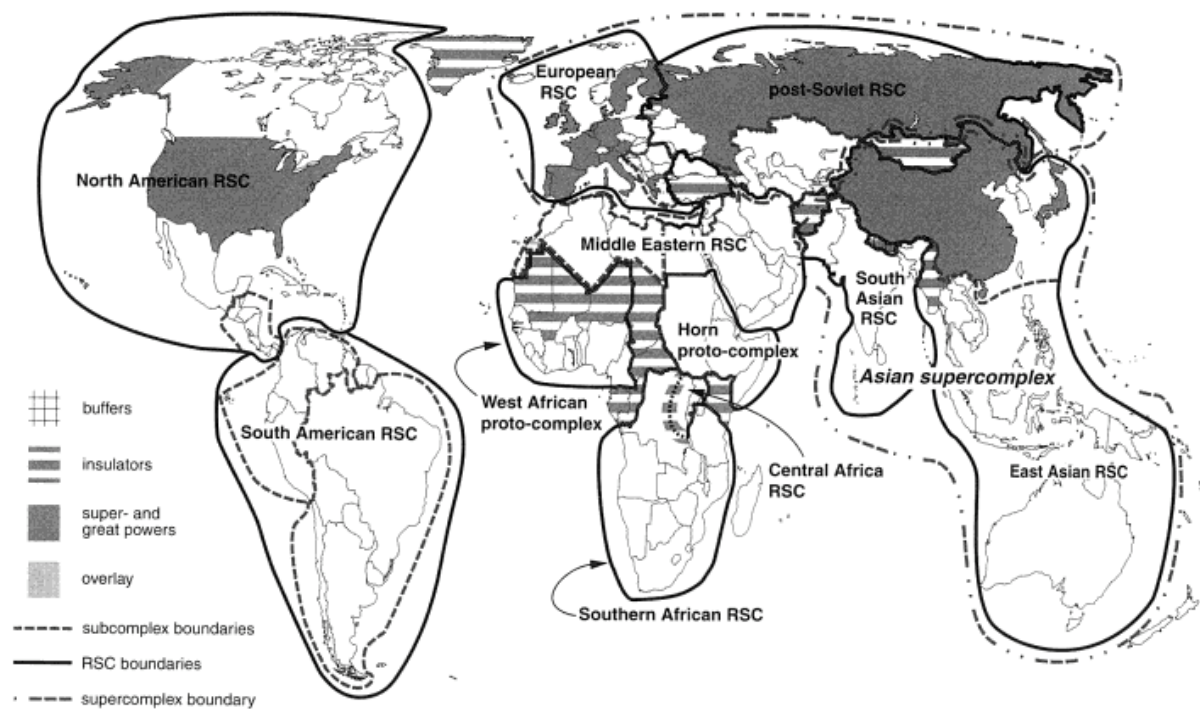


Figure 1: Patterns of Regional Security in the post-Cold War time (Buzan & Wæver, 2003)

#### 4.1.3 Powers

In the security system of international relations not just regions play an important role, but also powers. Buzan and Wæver define three different kinds of powers: superpowers, great powers and regional powers (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Superpowers have to be in possession of a broad spectrum of capabilities that they can apply in all of the international system. Furthermore, a superpower must be in possession of first-class military-political capabilities and additionally have the economic capabilities to support them worldwide. With these capabilities it must exercise a military and political reach on a global level to protect its global interests. Lastly, it must see itself as a superpower and others must have that perception of it too (Buzan et al., 1990; Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Example for a superpower would have been the Cold War Soviet Union or the United States during and after the Cold War. Great powers do not differ greatly from superpowers however their capabilities do not have to be existent in all sectors. A great power does not necessarily need to show its active presence in securitization processes in all levels of the international system. Another criterion for a great power is the fact that others treat it like it could become a superpower. What differentiates it from a regional power is the fact that others call on it concerning the present or future distribution of power, whereas this is not the case for regional powers (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). In 1990 Buzan et al. argue that, because great powers override regional boundaries, they form a security complex themselves over the entire globe (1990). Examples for a great power are China, Russia or the EU. Regional powers differ substantially from superpowers and great powers. They have large capabilities compared to other units in their region, but

cannot be compared to the capabilities of super- or great powers. Moreover, are they not calculated into the higher levels of the system polarity, even if they believe they deserve it (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Examples of regional powers can be found in Iran, Brazil, India or South Africa.

However, being in possession of power a state must have a sufficient up-to-date and large economy, be able to control advanced technologies, and have control over its military for the minimum aim of self-defense against other powers. Furthermore, it needs to be in possession of a sufficient socio-political power to monitor and maintain these conditions (Buzan et al., 1990).

Buzan and Wæver further argue that small states are locked in a RSC with their neighbours and do not act in other RSC (Buzan et al., 1990; Buzan & Wæver, 2003). The reason for that is the relationship of amity and enmity between different units, which usually are durable, and the close geographical proximity. As threats travel easier over short distances it has the tendency to create closer security interaction and therefore the creation of RSC's in the first place. This characteristic of regional powers cannot be applied on great powers, which are able to influence other RSC's or units beyond their RSC. Super powers are the second exception, as they are able to conduct their amity or enmity relationships over the entire world, because they have sufficient capabilities to do so (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Hence, superpowers are the connection between the regional and the global level, when they are penetrating a RSC that they are not a part of.

In 2000, Buzan and Wæver describe the current global security level with a 1+4 security dynamic (ibid.). This means that there is one superpower (the US) and four great powers (Russia, China, Japan and the EU). This shows how the global security order moved away from a bipolarity structure (2:3, the US and Russia as superpowers: China, Japan and the EU as great powers) during the Cold War to a unipolar one. Their prediction is that the international security structure is most likely to transform itself into a 0+x structure (no superpowers and various great powers) (ibid.). Most great powers are turned inwards and not so much interested in getting involved in global issues anymore. Nevertheless, as this form of security dynamic was not reached when Buzan and Wæver published their theory, they did not elaborate further on this issue.

#### **4.1.4 Types of RSC's**

As the world is complex and not the same everywhere Buzan and Wæver created four categories for RSC. These are called standard, centred, great power regional security complexes and supercomplexes (visualised in Figure 1) (ibid.). Standard RSC are defined by

the anarchic structure of the units it contains and the resulting polarity that comes from the regional power or powers and not from a single great power (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Moreover, are standard RSC defined by rivalries, balances, alliances or friendship in terms of amity and enmity and the main element of security politics is within the RSC and not infiltrated from an outside power. Examples for a standard RSC are the Middle Eastern RSC, the South American RSC or the Horn proto-complex (ibid.).

Centred security complexes are defined by their unipolarity of power. This power can come from either a super or a great power or on the other hand from an institution. This means nothing else than that there is a dominant centre, which dominates over the entire RSC. North America is an example for a superpower centred RSC, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) for a great power RSC and the EU for an institutional centred power (ibid.).

A great power security complex contains more than just one global level power within the RSC and therefore have a greater impact on the balance on a global level than a standard RSC (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, p. 59). As the chances for a spill-over to neighbouring RSC are higher, too, one could say that the great power RSC is a hybrid between the global and regional level. The difference to a normal great power lays in the fact that a great power RSC is not able to simply just leave the region if it pleases to do so, as it is part of the region (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). A contemporary example for this kind of RSC is the East Asia RSC, where China and Japan are both great powers gathering the power around them and influencing the security dynamics.

The last type of regional security complex is the supercomplex. Here a big amount of great power spill-over creates security dynamics, which would need a fourth level of analysis, the superregional level (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, p. 60). The interregional level is very strong between RSC's in a supercomplex, however, the regional ties and dynamics are not replaced by it. One example is the Asian supercomplex, where the South Asian and the East Asian RSC build one great security complex.

In addition to these four categories another term is important to mention in the theory of regional security complex, the so-called "insulators" (Buzan, 1991; Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Buzan and Wæver define insulators as "a location occupied by one or more units where larger regional security dynamics stand back to back" (2003, p. 41). Furthermore, Buzan says that insulator states "define and occupy the boundaries of indifference between the self-contained dynamics on either side of them." (1991, p. 196). This means that none of the neighbouring security complexes can transfer their dynamics onto this state or mini-complex (state containing subunits) or include this unit in their complex. As this unit is located between

minimum two RSC's one could assume it plays the role of a buffer. Buzan and Wæver nevertheless, distinguish insulators from buffers in terms of that a buffer is *within* the centre of a RSC, whereas an insulator stands *between* various RSC's (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Moreover, buffers keep rivalling states apart from each other whereas insulators on the other hand, are of no particular interest or better to say having no peace-keeping role between rivals. Prominent examples are Turkey and Afghanistan. Turkey is standing between the European, Middle Eastern and post-Soviet RSC. And Afghanistan stands between the post-Soviet, the Middle Eastern and the South Asian RSC. The only contemporary buffer, according to Buzan and Wæver, would be Nepal (ibid.), as it stands between rivalling China and India, but at the same time is in the centre of the Asian supercomplex.

According to Buzan et al. RSCs can never overlap each other. The condition of overlapping is explained with the terms of "overlay" and "penetration" (1990). An overlay describes the state of being when a great power overlays the regional patterns of a RSC so that these patterns cease to exist. Usually this is the case when a great power has armed forces in a region over a long period of time, when it shapes the main security dynamics in form of an invasion or occupation (ibid.). However, this does not mean that the regional security dynamics are eradicated, rather, they can reappear when the state of overlay ended. In Figure 1 can be seen that currently no states are in a state of overlay. As mentioned before, penetration occurs when a great power or superpower lays their amity or enmity relations on other RSC's than their own. This arises when a rivalry between two or more units within a RSC asks for security alignments from an outside power to secure the balance-of-power (Buzan et al., 1990; Buzan & Wæver, 2003). One example Buzan and Wæver give is the rivalry between India and Pakistan and the call to the US to support the balance-of-power (Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

#### **4.1.5 Possible evolutions of RSC's**

Buzan and Wæver analysed the different security dynamics during the Cold War and after. By means of this analysis they saw that security complexes are durable, but not permanent (Buzan 1991; Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Therefore, they suggest four different kinds of evolution for RSC's. First, the status quo can be maintained, meaning that there will be no significant changes. Second, there will be an internal transformation, where changes in the anarchic structure, the polarity or the dominance in amity and enmity occur. Thirdly, an external transformation could occur. Here the outer boundaries expand or contract by changing the membership of one or more states (Buzan et al., 1998; Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

A last possible transformation is that a RSC can be overlaid (Buzan, 2003), as explained earlier.

## **4.2 Limitations of Theory**

As this theory is still comparatively new critiques are scarce. This could mainly be explained with the fact that there are only few theories discussing regionalism in general and no acceptable alternative to the regional security complex theory has been found. One point that Buzan and Wæver criticise in their book “Regions and Powers” themselves is the limited research done on insulators and resulting, it plays only a minor role in their original theory (Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

The main criticism by others however is concerned with the used terminology. Thus, Stuart Croft states that the terms used are much “Europeanised”, because states should transform from weak and premodern to strong and postmodern states (Croft, 2005). Another criticism of terminology comes from André Barrinha, who argues that the typology of power is inconsistent and resulting, lacks explanatory power when applying the RSCT to the case of Turkey (2014). Similarly argues Onur Sultan, when saying that RSCT lacks explanatory power, because Russia is not a great player anymore, the shift of Western foreign policies and the hybrid warfare of the NATO (Sultan, 2017).

A second point of criticism is concerned with RSCT being more of a framework than a theory. This is criticised for example by Alice Hills, which argues that RSCT is not able to explain the power dynamics in Africa, but rather presents a static picture of the situation there, which fails to explain why and how various security levels change (Hills, 2008). Similar arguments are stated by Thorsten Wojczewski, who says that RSCT lacks the power to explain power structures and struggles within a state. He argues for the importance of it, as this could influence preferences of a state and the room for manoeuvre political leaders have (Wojczewski, 2014). Moreover, Wojczewski criticises that RSCT does not address conditions and characteristics of post-colonial states. His argument is that the way a state formation occurred and a high degree of internal conflicts can influence the securitisation process (ibid.).

Most of the critiques are posed towards the book “Regions and Powers” in particular and not against the theory itself. Therefore, some of the criticism can be refuted, because explanations can be found in other texts written by Buzan or Wæver. One example is the critique of Sultan, which is concerned with the missing topics of new security issues, such as food security, terrorism or migration) (2017). Buzan explained terrorism and the role of economy, environment and society with the regional security theory in his text “Regional Security Complex Theory in the Post-Cold War World” (2003). Additionally, one has to

consider the fact that terrorism and migration did not become a major concern for most states until after “Regions and Powers” was published.

### **4.3 Application of RSCT by others**

Since its publication in 2003, regional security complex theory has been applied in a number of researches. Some of them merely use it as an analytical tool, such as Barrinha (2014), Hanif (2010), Hills (2008) or Wojczewski (2014). Others use RSCT as a starting point of analysis, but add components to the theory. For example, Kilroy, Sumano and Hataley added the variables of institutions, identities and interests to RSCT (2017). This they think is essential to explain security inequalities in the North America RSC. McLean added the variable of “sectorial divergence”, which means that there are different sectors within a state that pull it in different directions and therefore create insulator states (McLean, 2011). He explains it on the example of Turkey. Hanau Santini on the other hand develops RSCT further by adding “heterarchy” to her studies (2017). Heterarchies are systems beyond anarchy as they have multiple heterogeneous centres. She argues that this term is necessary as there are an increased number of Cold Wars in the Middle East (Hanau Santini, 2017). Lastly, Unal developed a new term called “Nuclear Security Complex” (2014). Taking RSCT as a foundation, her argument is that states should not be grouped according to their geographical location, but rather on their state characteristics. Moreover, did she develop several types of nuclear posture, which can be applied to countries all over the world without being restricted by region (ibid.).

In the English written researches all areas and regional security complexes are covered to some extent, with the South American RSC being the only exception. A majority of the analyses whatsoever were undertaken in terms of the role of insulators, especially Turkey (Barrinha, 2014; McLean, 2011) or with focus on the South Asian RSC (Hanif, 2010; Wojczewski, 2014) or the North American RSC (Kilroy et al., 2017).

### **4.4 Choice of theory**

Regional Security Complex Theory will help me to analyse the security situation in Afghanistan and what role China and Denmark play in the reconstruction process. Additionally, the RSCT is ideal to analyse what interest both countries have in participating in this process, as China and Denmark both feel threatened by terrorism in Afghanistan, which is spreading to their country. As this will be a comparative study, RSCT provides the necessary tools for my analysis, as I will conduct the analysis within the sectors of threats, which are based in the political, economic, military and security sector. Furthermore, provides the RSCT



a good foundation for a discussion on the regional, interregional and global level, and analyse interacting of these levels with each other. Moreover, will I analyse if China and Denmark are acting within the frame of regional security complexes. Its main argument is that threats travel easier over short distances, therefore, I hope to gain a better understanding why China and especially Denmark are involved in Afghanistan. Lastly, Buzan and Wæver identify Afghanistan as an insulator state; therefore this theory will help me to understand the special security situation in Afghanistan.

## **5. Timelines of Engagement**

In this section a brief timeline of the engagement of China and Denmark will be given. The aim is to provide an overview on their engagement, which will support a more comprehensive understanding of the analysis and is not split in the different sectors or levels that are the foundation of the analysis and discussion.

### **5.1 Timeline China**

In the late nineties China agreed to participate in the political reconciliation and peace-building process in Afghanistan in the “6 plus 2” format. Aside from China this group includes the US, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran and Russia (Zhao, 2012). Two years later after the 9/11-terror attack in 2001, China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) agreed to a United Nations multilateral military intervention in Afghanistan.

When China implemented a new neighbourhood policy in 2002 and reopened its embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan became closer tied to China, because China provided aid and started the first investments in the country (Zhao, 2016). This was the start of friendly relations between China and Afghanistan (Zhao, 2012). In the same year all neighbouring countries of Afghanistan<sup>3</sup> signed the Kabul Declaration, which is a non-interference pact for Afghanistan (Ludwig, 2013). However, despite these actions China’s engagement in general was relatively small.

This low-key behaviour changed between 2010 and 2014. Although, the exact time of this change is debated between the scholars of this area. Some, such as Yun Sun, argue it changed in 2010 after the July 5<sup>th</sup> riots in Urumqi (Xinjiang Province) started a rising violence in Xinjiang and terrorism found its way into China (Sun, 2017). Moreover, both countries signed the Sino-Afghan agreement in which they committed themselves to economic cooperation, training in technical areas, tariff reductions and other tariff privileges. Here, they declared a mutual desire for regional security and economic stability (Ludwig, 2013; Zhao, 2012).

Contrary, others, such as Kley, Wishnick and Yu, argue China became more proactive in 2012, when China and Afghanistan signed a strategic and cooperative partnership and had increased other bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Afghanistan and neighbouring countries via which they agreed to combat terrorism and other transnational threats in cooperation (Kley, 2014; Wishnick, 2014). Moreover, Afghanistan agreed to support China in fighting the “three evils” (terrorism, separatism, extremism) (Wishnick, 2014). The increased

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<sup>3</sup> Afghanistan shares borders with China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

engagement in Afghanistan at this time could be explained by the fact that Afghanistan was granted an observer status in the SCO the same year. This is an additional indicator for the stronger focus of China on security (Yu, 2013).

The biggest change in China's behaviour towards Afghanistan, however, can be seen in 2014, where NATO planned on leaving Afghanistan by the end of the year. Hence, China demonstrated its willingness to take the initiative and hosted the Istanbul Process – Heart of Asia<sup>4</sup> (in the following HoA) for the first time in Beijing. This increased proactive involvement in Afghanistan by China could also have been triggered by the Kunming attack of an Uighur terrorist in March 2014, which again showed the instability of China's Xinjiang province and the threat of spill-over terrorism from Afghanistan.

In terms of a more proactive involvement in Afghanistan, China's engagement is also apparent in the arrangement of peace-negotiations. According to Bose and Panda, China implemented meetings with members of the Taliban to start peace-negotiations between the Taliban, Afghanistan and Pakistan (2016). Nevertheless, the policy shift was not only evident by China hosting the HoA and its attempts for peace-negotiations, but also by its commitment to an increased economic engagement (Kley, 2014). This was visible in the acceptance of Afghanistan in the CPEC and will be examined closer in the following chapter.

## **5.2 Timeline Denmark**

Danish NGO's worked in Afghanistan since the 1980's (Ball et al., 2016, p. 30), but the investments in Afghanistan grew significantly after Denmark decided to join the international efforts to fight terrorism in the country. The first troops were sent to Afghanistan in 2002 (Dueholm, 2010) under the umbrella of the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). However, in 2003 Denmark shifted its focus to only support the NATO-led ISAF mission. At this time its troops were deployed in the Northern provinces of Afghanistan (Ball et al., 2016). In 2006 the Danish troops got relocated to Helmand Province (Dueholm, 2010), where they stayed until the end of the ISAF mission in 2014. In the same year Denmark opened an embassy in Kabul (ibid.). From here friendly diplomatic relations with the Afghan government and all DANIDA projects were maintained and coordinated. In 2008 Denmark increased its troop contribution to Helmand Province and firstly implemented its joint military-civilian strategy (ibid.). Although, Denmark withdrew its troops with the ISAF mission in 2014, some soldiers stayed

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<sup>4</sup> The HoA was first launched in 2011 and is a political forum with the proclaimed aim to promote a greater political, security and economic involvement of Afghanistan's neighbours to find a regional solution to the problems of Afghanistan (Kley, 2014; Zhao, 2016). Members of the Heart of Asia include Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, China, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

behind to provide capacity building training to the Afghan Security Forces together with the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) (DMD, n.d.). During the Warsaw summit and the Brussels donor conference in 2016, Denmark pledged to stay committed to Afghanistan until 2020 and will continue to financially support the reconstruction process (DMFA, 2017).

## **6. China and Denmark in Afghanistan a Case Study**

In this analysis I will conduct a comparative case study on the Chinese and Danish engagement in the reconstruction process in Afghanistan. Hereby, the categories of comparison will be the political, economic, military and security, and civil sector. In the RSCT politics and military are accounted for as traditional security threats, whereas economy and terrorism are new security threats. This provides another level of comparison between China and Denmark. The civil sector is not a threat according to the RSCT; however, it cannot be disregarded, because Denmark puts a strong emphasis on this sector.

To give a better overview on each sector, they are divided into the categories “motivation for engaging in Afghanistan”, “methods applied”, “achievements” and “difficulties”. Additionally, because both states are deeply embedded in larger multinational institutions, the engagement of the SCO and NATO will be analysed under the same categories; however, it will still be focusing on China and Denmark. By this, I will complete the case study and be able to see if it makes differences for both countries to be embedded in larger institutions or if they could achieve sustainable results individually.

During the comparison after each section, the previously mentioned hypotheses will be analysed. These state that 1. China and Denmark are both actively participating in the reconstruction process in Afghanistan, and that 2. China’s approach of engaging in Afghanistan is more effective than Denmark’s approach. Moreover, the RSCT will be applied in the comparison of each sector.

### **6.1.1 Political Sector: China**

#### **Motivations**

By participating in the reconstruction process China wants to show that it can be a responsible great power (Sun, 2017; Zhao, 2015). Furthermore, would it ensure that nothing is in its way to proceed on the way of becoming a well-established global power (Bose, Panda, 2016). According to the RSCT, this would be in the sense of a great power with a global reach, therefore, great powers and global powers are the same. Becoming a global power includes another interest China has in a secure and stable Afghanistan, which is to prevent the US from establishing a permanent base in Afghanistan or Central Asia (Small, 2015). Moreover, China wants to limit the influence of India in Afghanistan (Clarke, 2013), which seems to be another annoyance due to its long competition with India over power in the region. Showing its responsibility to the region would also enable China from falling under the subordination of Western forces (Zhao, 2012). If China would simply wait what happens in Afghanistan the likelihood for the US to stay in charge and additionally take charge over Central Asia is

relatively high. This again would turn China into a regular player in the region, which would not be beneficial if it wants to establish the BRI and become a regional power.

## **Method**

In 2015 China started a strategic dialogue with Afghanistan and Pakistan and this way took over the initiative of bringing peace to Afghanistan. Initiating peace-negotiations between the Afghan High Peace Council, the Taliban and Pakistan is China's strongest engagement in political terms (Bose & Panda, 2016). Acknowledging the important role of Pakistan in the Taliban issue, China includes Pakistan in the peace-negotiations, because it considers that a political reconciliation cannot be successful without the participation of Pakistan (Zhao, 2015). In 2014 China initiated the Quadrilateral Coordination Group, which includes China, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the US to find a common ground for peace-negotiations (Small, 2015). The hopes for China succeeding in the peace-negotiations are high and undoubtedly China can play a great role if it manages to get the three involved parties at the same table.

There are various reasons why China might be better suited for holding these peace-talks than for example the US. Some are that China for example never was involved in a war in Afghanistan and therefore has no enemies in the country. Furthermore, China perceives itself as a regional power, and a regional solution might be more feasible, because there is strong security interdependence among Afghanistan's neighbours. This means that the unstable security situation of Afghanistan is linked to its neighbours security, as will be explained in detail later. Being a neighbour also enables China to be a better negotiation partner, because it has a better understanding of the region and its current situation. Moreover, economic investments made by China might open the door for peace-talks that from the side of the US were unsuccessful until 2015. In this investments to China's "all-weather" (Akeret, 2014) friend Pakistan could prove helpful, for example could China use the CPEC as incentive for Pakistan to join the negotiation table instead of becoming a spoiler. Because of its geographical proximity China might be more motivated to find a settlement between the involved parties. A final point is that China already had relations to the Taliban, when they were still in power in Afghanistan, which could make negotiations easier today, because the parties are known to each other.

On December 1<sup>st</sup> in 2017, China's Premier of the State Council, Li Kejiang, stated in a meeting with Afghan government Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah that China wants to play a more constructive role in the peaceful reconstruction of Afghanistan as long as this

process is Afghan-owned, Afghan-led and in line with China's own security and core interest<sup>5</sup>. As long as these conditions are fulfilled China will support all measures that will be undertaken (Wishnick, 2014).

### **Achievements**

As Zhao (2015) states, China can only encourage these peace-negotiations; however, a settlement has to be found within the negotiating parties. Therefore, the Afghan and Pakistan foreign ministers held a meeting in China in December 2017 (Dalziel, 2018). Additionally, the Chinese Ministry of State Security and representatives of the People's Liberation Army went to Afghanistan in 2014 to improve the security situation between China and Afghanistan (Small, 2015). With these visits and meeting China is trying to live up to its own international responsibility and promote good neighbourly relations (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2011).

### **Difficulties**

One challenge for the Chinese engagement in Afghanistan is that Chinese policy makers agree on the fact that a stable Afghanistan is needed to secure Xinjiang Province. However, they cannot agree on the scale of threat that is coming from Afghanistan (Kley, 2014) and therefore are unsure about the intensity of the security interdependence among both states and the region. Some Chinese scholars advice for a limited engagement in Afghanistan due to the security risks Chinese would be exposed to there; still, others state that inactivity is risky, too, because then terrorism can extend unlimited (Wishnick, 2014). This puts China in a state of numbness, because it is torn between different positions. Moreover, China lacks the expertise to become a main player, but at the same time it fears that Afghanistan will turn into a constraining point in becoming a great power (ibid.), as described by the RSCT.

But China is not only internally torn. The Taliban are a problem for China, not just because they threaten China's Xinjiang Province and Chinese investments in Afghanistan, but also because it is a difficult partner to negotiate with due to the high fragmentation within the Taliban itself (Motwani & Bose, 2015). This is a problem, because China would like to get the praise if they succeed in establishing peace-negotiations (Dalziel, 2018), however, should they not be successful China would lose its credibility (Zhao, 2015). Moreover, peace-negotiations proved difficult. The Taliban does not accept the Afghan government, because in their sense it is corrupt and only a puppet of the Americans (Wishnick, 2014).

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<sup>5</sup> China's core interests are state sovereignty, national security, territorial integrity, national reunification.

The great power competition between China and the US over who has the legitimate role as a great power in Central Asia, does not make it easier for China to engage successfully in Afghanistan. On the one hand the US, acknowledges China as a great power and wants it to be more involved and take more responsibility (Zhao, 2015). On the other hand, the US is accusing China of free-riding and trying to fill the power-vacuum (Ackeret, 2014). Nevertheless, the free-riding of China can be easily contested, because China is helping Afghanistan to prevent a terrorism spill-over and did not gain anything from its investments in Aynak or Amu Darya.

These critiques put China in a situation where it would have to decide on a coherent strategy towards the US. However, China is torn between its interests in the US stationed in Afghanistan. On the one side it does not want to get in the way of the US and possibly trigger their anger. On the other hand, it does not want the US to leave completely, because it cannot sustain the security situation in Afghanistan by itself or even with the support of the SCO.

Additionally, to this already complicated situation comes the claims of the West that China is not interested in establishing a democracy and the development of the civil society in Afghanistan and resulting, undermines the efforts of the NATO (Ng, 2010).

A last problem that limits China's activities in Afghanistan is its all-weather relationship with Pakistan. This is a problem, because China and Pakistan have differing interests in Afghanistan. Therefore, it would have to decide for having peace and stability in Afghanistan or keeping its good relationship with Pakistan (Clarke, 2013). Moreover, China is afraid of risking this good relationship by putting too much pressure on Pakistan to join the peace-negotiations (Wishnick, 2014). This could become a problem, because in economic terms China's interest in Pakistan is much bigger than the one in Afghanistan. Also, Pakistan is more reliable, because it has strong military, intelligence and law-enforcement capabilities (Parello-Plesner & Duchâtel, 2015). Lastly, Pakistan is a good ally in terms of being a counter-balance to the US and India in the region (Ng, 2010).

## **6.1.2 Political Sector: Denmark**

### **Motivations**

Despite that Denmark and Afghanistan have no direct security interdependence, because Denmark is embedded in the far away European RSC, Denmark supports to achieve the overarching goal of preventing Afghanistan from becoming a sanctuary for terrorism. This it does by joining the European RSC, hoping to gain sustainable results by engaging embedded in a great power, namely the EU. Afghanistan would have to become a stable country with a lasting peace (Dueholm, 2010; DMFA, 2006). The re-establishing of a stable and secure



country would be a precondition for Afghanistan to rebuild and develop its civil society in the long run. Furthermore, it would be a necessity to receive development aid from international donors (Bornholdt Andersen et al., 2016).

Consulting the official government documents and studies, these overarching aims are underlined by specific goals, which the Danish government set in line with the Danish engagement under the NATO-led ISAF mission. The most important goal of Denmark was to strengthen the Afghanistan-led reconstruction process under international aid support, which in the end would lead to a full Afghanistan-ownership (DMD, n.d.). Therefore, a stable democracy with an efficient and legitimate central government body has to be established (DMFA, 2006; Riis Andersen, 2016). This includes holding free parliamentary and provincial elections and creating a strong parliament with efficient monitoring tools (DMFA, 2006). Moreover, a functioning executive power on the central and local level should be created, and the rule of law should be introduced in all state institutions. In addition, the entire government body would have to be transparent to the population and free from corruption (DMFA, 2006).

## **Method**

Denmark contributed to the UN Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA), which was a political mission (Riis Andersen, 2016), aimed at supporting the reconstruction and development process in Afghanistan. Concerning good governance Denmark had high ambitions. In general it aimed at lightening the administrative burden of the Afghan government by supporting the establishment of a sustainable democracy. Hence, it supported the Afghan government with ca. 130 million DKK annually, which covered for example salaries of public employees (DMFA, n.d.b; Dueholm, 2010). In the public sector management Denmark provided financial support via the World Bank, which again established the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). This fund supports the governmental implementation of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), state-building, the reform of the public sector, promotion of good governance on the national and provincial level, financial control, the fight against corruption and the training of new parliamentarians (DMFA, n.d.b). The ANDS includes various programmes, such as the National Solidarity Program (NSP) or the Law and Order Trust Fund Afghanistan (LOFTA). Most importantly, Denmark supported the drafting of the constitution.

In terms of democratisation DANIDA<sup>6</sup> supported the 2009 and 2010 elections by operational support and voter registration, but also by providing education to voters on their

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<sup>6</sup> DANIDA (Danish International Development Agency) is a sector under the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

rights and possibilities if they attend elections. Furthermore, police training in electoral procedures was given and DANIDA supported the monitoring of the electoral process (DMFA, n.d.b). As empowering women is one of Denmark's focus areas, it supported the Afghan Women's Network in strengthening women's participation in the elections (ibid.). As important as empowering women, was the focus on human rights and civil society. Denmark always put a slight pressure on the Afghan government to follow the human rights. Additionally, it supported the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission in promoting and protecting supported the training of defence lawyers to increase the access to justice for women. Additionally, it supported UN women, which established shelters for women in rural areas, provided psychological and legal assistance for women and informed about women rights (ibid.).

### **Achievements**

Aims that were reached by the Danish engagement were the drawing of the Constitution and the successful implementation and execution of elections. Furthermore, despite not being perfectly in place, the public services were expanded more widely than before the Afghanistan war in 2001 (Bizhan, 2018).

The National Solidarity Programme was probably the most efficient programme of the ARTF (Riis Andersen, 2016). The reasons for that were the high government ownership, the increased transparency and accountability and a great participation of the population in the development, especially in the rural areas.

### **Difficulties**

Corruption was the largest problem Denmark had to deal with when trying to implement projects in Afghanistan. For example was the LOFTA acknowledged to be a failure due to the high level of fraud and corruption, which made this program very inefficient (Riis Andersen, 2016).

Furthermore, Denmark is struggling to provide its aid on-budget. According to Ball et al., it did not reach the aim of the Tokyo Agreement and between 2002 and 2014 it only allocated 46% of its aid via the government, whereas 54% of the aid found other ways outside the official channels (Ball et al., 2016). Contrary, Bizhan examines the numbers from 2002 until 2010 and finds that 58% of aid is delivered on-budget and therefore is within the frame of the Tokyo Agreement (Bizhan, 2018). Moreover, he examines numbers from all states

involved in Afghanistan (not only NATO members) and finds that Denmark is the only country that delivers more than 50% of its aid on-budget (Bizhan, 2018).

### **6.1.3 Political Sector: Comparison China and Denmark**

Comparing both the Chinese and Danish engagement in the political sector it becomes apparent that both states have similar interests, that are connected to security, and are active contributors to the reconstruction process of Afghanistan. Contrary to Denmark, China is focused on finding a peace-agreement between Afghanistan and the Taliban by including Pakistan, who is a strong supporter of the Taliban. By this means, China is remaining with its non-interference policy and not getting involved in the local politics of the Afghan state. Although that does not mean that China cannot have active diplomatic relations with Afghanistan.

Denmark on the other hand is actively supporting the building of a stable democracy, by providing support during elections, but also by supporting to formulate the constitution. In doing so it is actively engaging in the political matters of Afghanistan. China and Denmark could both continue in applying these methods without interfering in the others attempts of bringing stability and security to Afghanistan.

To this point China and Denmark successfully reached steps on their way of achieving the main aim. Although, these are only small steps and a long way is still to go. While trying to achieve results both face certain difficulties. However, they differ to a great extent. China's problem here is connected to external players, namely the Taliban and its fragmentation. Whereas, Denmark is confronted with the internal difficulty by building a government that is not corrupt, but at the same time is channelling aid outside the government and therefore increasing the corruption.

In terms of politics and the engagement of China and Denmark it is wrong to say that China's method is more efficient than Denmark's, because both actions, having a peace-agreement and a stable government, are necessary to make the reconstruction process a success and establish a stable and secure Afghanistan.

By establishing itself as a regional power in Central Asia China shows that it has the ambitions of a great power that can act outside the borders of its own security complex. This also demonstrates that China wants to limit the American and Indian influence in Afghanistan. However, as China is new to this game of great powers, it is still hesitant in its actions, especially when it comes to dealing with Pakistan. By establishing first peace-negotiations it shows its willingness to act upon its role as a great power.

China is considered a great power, because it has all the characteristics Buzan and Wæver ascribe to a great power. This includes that China has a large economy, advanced technology and sufficient capabilities to maintain a military that can defend itself against other global powers. Another characteristic for a great power is that it is considered as a superpower by other states. The criticism that China receives for its engagement in Afghanistan by especially Western powers, hints that they are considering China to be able in becoming a superpower, because they see a certain threat to Western values, e.g. respect for human rights, in the behaviour of China.

Denmark on the other hand is not a great or even a regional power. This becomes apparent when looking at its motivation for getting involved in Afghanistan. Compared to the Chinese aims of bringing peace, Denmark focuses on the improvement of the government capabilities and the living conditions of the local population. However, as part of the European security complex it believes that it can bring change in the Afghanistan issue, in cooperation with other states. Moreover, as the ARTF was one of the most successful programmes, because it was led by Afghans, Denmark learned the lesson that outside power interference is not always the best solution for an internal conflict, especially when the power comes from far away. This could prove to be favourable for China when it wants to become more engaged in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, a more detailed discussion about this issue will follow.

## **6.2.1 Economic Sector: China**

### **Motivations**

Despite the claim that China is strongly involved in Afghanistan's economy, China's economic interests are only a secondary explanation for getting involved in Afghanistan. The security interdependence as explained in the RCST is by far more important. Nevertheless, a stable and peaceful Afghanistan in the long term is essential for the success of the Belt Road Initiative (BRI), because Afghanistan lies at the centre of the northern route via Central Asia and the southern route via Pakistan. This again is only for selfish reasons, because the BRI is supposed to export China's overcapacity to other countries and prepare the access to natural resources in Central Asian countries. This is important for the Chinese regime to survive, because it provides economic security to its population. Nevertheless, Yun Sun argues that Pakistan is more important for China to make the BRI a success (2017).

In the terms of economic interest, I agree with Andrew Small's argument that China has no economic interests in Afghanistan as long as there is no security (2015). However, it cannot be denied that China is interested in Afghanistan's natural resources, as can be seen on

its immense investments on the Aynak Copper mine in 2007 and in the oil field of Amu Darya in 2011.

## **Method**

Disregarding what kind of economic interest China has in Afghanistan, it is an active part of the economic rebuilding in Afghanistan, even that in 2012 it had the lowest profile of all great powers involved in the country in terms of contribution to the reconstruction process (Zhao, 2012). In 2007, China obtained the mining rights for the Aynak copper mine for about 3.5 billion USD (RECCA, 2017). This raised hopes for China's involvement in Afghanistan, because it was the biggest investment ever made in the country. Additionally, the Chinese companies Jiangxi Copper Co. and China Metallurgical Group Corp., who obtained the lease for the mine, promised to build a railroad, a coal and a steel factory for being able to start the mining (ibid.). This was the only major investment China made, because until today the mine is still not operational. Four years later in 2011, China received the right to extract oil in the Amu Darya Basin in northern Afghanistan. However, due to a missing transit agreement through Uzbekistan and an insecure environment the oil field was only operative for a few months before it was stopped in mid-2013 (Donati, 2013). This taught China a lesson and from being the largest investor in 2007 and the fifth largest investment partner of Afghanistan in 2012 (Langhammer, 2016), China decreased its investments from 5.9 million USD in 2014, to merely 2 million USD the following year (Sun, 2017). This shows that the direct economic investment was only marginal.

Nevertheless, new hopes were raised, when China and Afghanistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the BRI in 2016 (RECCA, 2017; Sun, 2017). This means that China wants to establish itself as an economic long-term player in Afghanistan. A start for the regional economic integration of Afghanistan was made only last year, when talks about Afghanistan joining the BRI via the CPEC were started (Mayer-Kuckuk, 2017). Integrating Afghanistan in this economic corridor would be a first step to open Afghanistan for the region economically, increase trade, infrastructure and open up for further investments. Furthermore, integrating Afghanistan into the BRI is very strongly supported by the Chinese and Afghan government. In 2017 Abdullah said that the BRI would create new possibilities and shows a continuous positive progress that both countries will share and that will be increased via cooperation.

Both countries agreed on cooperation about strengthening Afghanistan's economy; a stronger emphasis on the extraction of natural resources, the generation of electricity and the

improvement of Afghanistan's infrastructure (Zhao, 2012). This includes also the building of a hydroelectric dam on the Kunar River (Bukhari, 2012). As the river flows from Northeast Afghanistan to West Pakistan, it will be established in cooperation between China, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The aim is to not only provide Afghanistan with strongly needed energy supplies, which would lead to an enhanced security and establishes more stability. Nevertheless, China usually only starts infrastructure projects, if the security situation is fairly stable and there is no risk of its workers being attacked. This is problematic for Afghanistan; because the Taliban is known to operate from the mountains in West Pakistan and recently Islamic State began to operate in the small areas in Eastern Afghanistan where the Kunar River flows through (Forrest, 2016; Almukhtar, 2017).

Most projects that China is part of are integrated in the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA). This forum was first established in 2005 and focuses on energy, transport networks, trade and transit facilities, communication, business to business partnerships and labour support (RECCA, 2017). It is part of other bigger programmes and can be seen as a completion of projects made by for example the SCO, HoA, BIR, OSCE or the UNDP.

One project that China is supporting via the RECCA is the Five Nations Railway Corridor is another project where China is providing financial assistance via the Bank of China together with the ADB, the World Bank and the US (RECCA, 2015). Nevertheless, in this project China is also a part of the building process, because this corridor will connect China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran by railway. 1148km of the railway will go through Afghanistan (RECCA, 2017). The railway is scheduled to be done within the next two years (ibid.), and is especially important, because there is no direct rail connection between Afghanistan and China and it would provide an important way to retrieve natural resources from Afghanistan.

### **Achievements**

Recent successes that were made under the RECCA framework were the construction of pipeline networks, transmission lines and fibre optic cables, additionally, a transport and transit agreement was finalised and freight trains and cargo flights across the region started operation (RECCA, 2017).

China is also part of some major projects started under the RECCA umbrella. One for example is the Digital Silk Road, which intends to install fibre optic cables to increase the telecommunication capabilities of the region. The Chinese Telecom and Afghan Telecom are

currently building a 480km long connection between both countries and the Afghan Fibre Optic Ring through Afghanistan (RECCA, 2017).

Another project in the area of telecommunications was implemented by the Chinese companies ZTE and Huawei, who installed digital phone switches for 200.000 analogue telephone lines (Roy, 2010). The investment in telecommunications is less risky than for example investments in the extraction of natural resources, which make these more likely to succeed.

Other successful infrastructure projects that China implemented in Afghanistan are for once the Jamhuriat state hospital in Kabul that China financed with 25 mio USD and medical equipment, which made it the most modern hospital in 2009 (Global Times, 2009). Moreover, the Parvan water supplies were reconstructed by rebuilding the hydroelectric dam on the Kunar River, (Bukhari, 2012) to provide especially people in Parvan Province with fresh water.

Lastly, a big success was made in August 2016 when the first trains travelled from China to Afghanistan via Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan carrying commodities with a value of approximately 4 million USD (RECCA, 2017). This freight is part of the “Sino-Afghanistan Special Railway Transportation Project” and aims at reducing trading costs by 30% (RECCA, 2017, p. 18). However, with the big trade imbalance<sup>7</sup> this would mainly benefit China. Around the same time flights between Kabul and Urumqi were resumed (RECCA, 2017). Later the same year Afghanistan became a permanent member of the AIIB (ibid.), which will increase its chances of being included in future infrastructure projects.

### **Difficulties**

Looking at economic challenges China has some difficulties in its engagement in Afghanistan, which are largely connected to the local security situation. Its interest in natural resources is large; however, with the unstable security situation it is almost impossible to start any projects or the needed infrastructure to extract these resources in that area. Attacks on Chinese investments were also quite frequent in that sector, because it is an easy target for terrorist groups, such as previously mentioned the Taliban or Islamic State. This proves the statement of Yu Fu that security is a necessity before any economic investments can be successful, a lesson China had to learn the hard way.

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<sup>7</sup> The trade imbalance between Afghanistan and China in 2014 was worth 370 million USD, as Afghanistan only exported 2.08% to China, but imported 7.7% of its products (RECCA, 2015).

## **6.2.2 Economic Sector: Denmark**

### **Motivations**

The development of Afghanistan and its civil society are part of the Danish agenda, because it is considered an essential part of the reconstruction process of a state. This includes not only to create an environment in which the fight against poverty can bear fruits, but also to build a self-reliant economy in the country (Danish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2017). The increase of employment opportunities for both, men and women, is one of the major steps that have to be taken in this regard. Moreover, when fighting poverty, the improvement of the living conditions of all and the rights for individuals, especially women, are in focus of the Danish actors (DMFA, 2006).

### **Method**

When improving the living conditions of the Afghan population the focus is placed on the development of rural areas, economic facilities and infrastructure. Two projects in this sector are for example the Microfinance Investment Support Facility (MISF), which provides micro-loans for people to start their own business and develops the private sector in rural areas (DMFA, 2006). Another project provides 200 USD to every family in a village, where then all families in the village have to agree on how to rebuild their village. This includes for example the building of wells or water pipes coming down from the mountains, infrastructure and road building or buying a shared generator for energy production in the village (Dueholm, 2010). This project is funded in cooperation with Denmark and other ISAF members and provided 22.000 villages with funds until 2010 (ibid.).

### **Achievements**

Via the National Solidarity Programme Denmark supported the creation of 22 million days of work by improving the local infrastructure (ibid.). Moreover, the Micro-financing created new jobs, because it granted about 400.000 loans (ibid.). This supported the promotion of economic growth drastically. Furthermore, by providing families and villages with financial support to rebuild their villages, the living standards in these villages got raised.

### **Difficulties**

The only major problem of Denmark in this sector is that it is dependent on other ISAF members, as it does not have the capacity to achieve sustainable results independently.



Therefore, it also has to align its priorities to the main contributor of this project occasionally, which means that its own priorities might be undermined to a certain extent.

### **6.2.3 Economic Sector: Comparison China and Denmark**

In the economic sector both China and Denmark focus on infrastructure investments. China is trying to boost Afghanistan's economy by integrating it into larger economic corridors, such as the China Pakistan Economic Corridor or in the Five Nations Railway. In general it conducts larger projects, rather than small-scale projects. One example is the hydroelectric dam on the Kunar River or the projects in the telecommunication sector. The only smaller project China did undertake was the construction of the state hospital in Kabul. Denmark on the other hand focuses on projects that are nationwide, but for the local population directly. Such programmes are for example the microfinance support for people to start their own business or the village support for rebuilding or building infrastructure in their village. Contrary to China, Denmark also did not implement projects that will benefit itself but focuses on the benefits for the Afghan population.

Because China has a stronger focus on the economic development of Afghanistan than for example on the state-building in terms of creating a functioning government, its investment in the Afghan economy is greater than Denmark's engagement. Most of the infrastructure projects undertaken by China aim at the regional integration of Afghanistan. This again would benefit China, because then Afghanistan can connect Central Asia and South Asia and the BRI. That includes not only the above mentioned projects, but also the railway route from China to Afghanistan and the resumed flights from Urumqi to Kabul. Due to not being in the neighbourly proximity, Denmark's ambitions in Afghanistan are focused on increasing the living standard of the local population and less in the regional integration. This it does via the integrated approach, where the aim is to assist the community development under military protection. Military protection is important, as especially Chinese projects can only be implemented if sufficient security is provided. This demonstrates that the different sectors are strongly connected in their security threats.

China is pursuing to become a significant power in Afghanistan by integrating it into the region, where it already has a good stand as a regional power. This is another step of establishing itself as a regional power, but additionally showing that it is a great power that can act outside its RSC's borders. Knowing that it is not a power of any kind, Denmark again, according to its capabilities provides support in small quantities. However, greater results can be achieved in cooperation with other states and even powers, such as the US.

Having differing focus areas is not a problem between the engagements of both countries as they are not overlapping each other and therefore are not a source for conflict. Nevertheless, China's approach might prove more successful, because its motivation of providing economic development, even them being selfish, is stronger than the Danish motivations. Hence, Chinese projects are of a larger scale than Danish projects and result in a greater area of distribution. However, there is always the question of how sustainable the Chinese projects are, as reports from projects implemented in Africa, show that often for example railway tracks start to collapse after a few years. This could prove to be positive for a Danish engagement, as their economic projects seem more sustainable than the Chinese ones.

### **6.3.1 Military and Security Sector: China**

#### **Motivations**

The reason why China is engaged in the Afghan reconstruction process in the first place is purely out of self-interest. Because Afghanistan is a direct neighbour of China, the threat of terrorism coming across the small border is a very real one and only demonstrates the strong security interdependence among both states. This is mainly a risk to its western province Xinjiang, which is home to the Muslim minority, the Uighurs. By wanting to establish their own state in Xinjiang Province, the militant organisation East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) threatens the unity of the People's Republic of China. This is a security threat to the regime survival of the China Communist Party (CCP). Together with the Taliban the ETIM provides extremist Uighurs with an organisation to express their dissatisfaction. According to a Chinese official, the ETIM is responsible for over 260 terror attacks in China between 1990 and 2003, where 170 were killed and 400 wounded (Yu, 2013). Since 2008 major Chinese cities, such as Urumqi and Kunming, were hit by terrorist attacks. Supposedly, extremists Uighurs participated in these attacks (Small, 2015). Unsurprisingly, China is afraid of further terror attacks on its home soil. Because the Taliban and maybe also the ETIM have their base in the border regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan, China hopes to solve the problem of terror threats by supporting Afghanistan in its reconstruction process to a permanently stable and secure country (Zhao, 2012). By this mean, and all authors of this topic agree upon that, the threat of Afghanistan being a safe haven for terrorists and a spill-over of terrorism to Xinjiang can be prevented (Kley, 2014; Small, 2015; Sun, 2017; Zhao, 2015).

Another reason for getting involved in the Afghan reconstruction process is to fight the great amount of narcotics that find its way from Afghanistan to China. In 2016

Afghanistan was the biggest drug provider to China (Zhao, 2016), where most parts first flow in to Xinjiang and from there get distributed in the entire country (Clarke, 2013).

## **Method**

Because China is not only doubtful about the effectiveness of foreign military involvement in other countries, except peace-keeping missions, but also regards it as intervening in another states sovereignty, it did not send any troops to Afghanistan. Furthermore, Kley (2014) argues, that the Chinese military would not be remotely as strong as the ISAF forces, because it lacks the military experience and capabilities for carrying out interventions. Therefore sending troops would not be more efficient than what ISAF did already.

China contributed to security via military in other ways, such as by providing personnel training to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Furthermore, it assisted with material and technology means, strengthened the mutual support between both governments and their security forces and is aiming at improving the defensive capabilities of Afghanistan.

As part of the good neighbourhood policy, it wants to develop its military relations with its neighbours. This occurs by providing small-scale security training to the Afghan security forces in mine clearance and counter narcotics. However, this capacity building did not start until the ISAF mission left Afghanistan. Additionally, China agreed on sharing its intelligence and training with the Afghan National Police (ANP) (Wishnick, 2014). Furthermore, China wishes to support Afghanistan financially with establishing a military base in the North-eastern Province of Badakshan (Dalziel, 2018) and possibly even provide it with weapons and military equipment.

The sharing of anti-terror intelligence started already in 2008 (Cheng, 2015). Nevertheless, by then there was no direct military security cooperation. China and Afghanistan emphasised on that in a meeting December 2017, where they discussed to deepen their security relations to strengthen them for an anti-terror fight (Xinhua, 2017). One example for a deeper cooperation is the cooperation between China, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan, where the national military established a coordination mechanism on counter-terrorism among them. These regional military cooperations enhance the strong security interdependence among the neighbours of the region.

## **Achievements**

Despite that China trained 781 people from the Afghan security personnel until 2012 and another 300 police officers received training in China (Parello-Plesner & Duchâtel, 2015), no other concrete actions occurred so far. Most of what has been achieved is the agreement of military and security cooperation between China and Afghanistan and occasionally with neighbouring states.

### **Difficulties**

The main threat to China is terrorism, which can be imposed on China not just on its own soil specially in Xinjiang Province, but also, as mentioned in the previous sector, to its investments in Afghanistan. Although, there is no direct threat to the Chinese military, China did not send any military to Afghanistan, but rather provided mere financial support. This fear of attacks is also a price China has to pay when it opens the Wakhan Corridor, which is the only direct connection it has to Afghanistan. The disadvantage of opening this corridor is that there are no means to prevent terrorism from spilling over to Xinjiang directly. The likelihood of that is not even very small, because the leader of Islamic State Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi sent an official threat to China in 2015 (Kley, 2014), which therefore has to be on constant alert.

### **6.3.2 Military and Security Sector: Denmark**

#### **Motivations**

The reason why Denmark got engaged in the Afghanistan conflict in the first place was its alliance to NATO. The aim was to establish a national, regional and global security by preventing Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for terrorists (DMD, n.d.). By fighting terrorism in Afghanistan spill-over effects would be prevented and the security of Denmark itself could be assured (Dueholm, 2010).

To achieve that the establishment of an effective, competent and democratically controlled police force that is part of the overall Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) is necessary. The same applies for the Afghan National Army, whose main task is to protect the population from any kind of threat. A main task in both organisations is to establish them in a way that corruption cannot set foot or will be extinguished (ibid.).

#### **Method**

Denmark participated in both the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and the peace-keeping mission under the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) by sending troops to Afghanistan.

The OEF was a pure military counter-insurgent mission, meant to fight terrorism by international allies, which provided military forces and humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan and furthermore train the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) (Ball et al., 2016; Auerswald & Saideman, 2014). Until 2003 Denmark participated in this by dropping bombs and providing assistance to the ANA to force out insurgents. Moreover, Danish troops carried out patrols and talked with locals to obtain information about insurgents (Dueholm, 2010). From 2001 until 2006 the Danish military was stationed in the North of Afghanistan. Afterwards, it moved to Helmand province, which was considered the most dangerous part of Afghanistan (Auerswald & Saideman, 2014). There it stayed until the end of the ISAF mission in 2014. In 2006 the Helmand Plan got established and signed by the provincial government (Bornholdt Andersen et al., 2016), which created the necessary coordination between the allies in Helmand. From 2007 and onwards military and civil advisers were working together in the so-called Afghanistan Task Force, which had an increase in the number of troops as a result (Ball et al., 2016). This again created another step towards a better and more efficient approach to achieve the set aims, as a pure military approach did not bring the results that were wished.

The merge of civil and military cooperation (CIMIC) had the aim to turn away from military engagement towards a pure or at least dominating civil engagement, also called integrated approach (Riis Andersen, 2016). Immediate results could be seen; however, the effectiveness was strongly reduced due to the scattered area where operations were held (Ball et al., 2016).

Another shift that happened during this period was in 2012, when the Danish forces moved away from security issues towards the training of Afghan security forces (Bornholdt Andersen et al., 2016). This shift was at the end of the so-called “surge”, after an expansion of foreign troops in Afghanistan started in 2010 (ibid.).

After 2014 Denmark participated in the Resolute Support Mission (RSM). The Danish contribution to the RSM contains about 150 people, that are employed in training and counselling, transportation and security, support of technical, administrative and logistic capabilities and are general staff (DMD, n.d.). The focus of Danish troops is on raising awareness of human rights, education, security and the fight against corruption (ibid.).

Supporting the police force in Afghanistan was done by contributing to reform the Afghan National Police (ANP), additionally police officers and military staff received some basic training and Afghan police trainers received training in training police officers. To

assure the sustainable salaries of police officers in the ANP, Denmark cooperated with the Afghan Ministry of the Interior (MOI).

### **Achievements**

The ISAF mission was widely regarded as having failed. Also the Danish military contribution did not achieve the intended results. However, as Afghanistan is a highly mined country the Danish organisation Danish Demining Group helped remove more than 2000 mines (Danish Demining Group, 2018), educated over 5000 Afghans in removing mines safely and instructed more than 4 million people in the dangerousness of mines (Dueholm, 2010; DMFA, 2006).

### **Difficulties**

Most problems Denmark faced during its deployment in Helmand were internal nature, certain ignorance towards the agendas of the Afghan government and of course the unstable security situation. Hereby, the CIMIC was a big factor that did not have the intended affects. Because it was only short-lived, the achieved results lasted only as long as a project was underway. Often it only benefitted few people if not even only a single family (Bornholdt Andersen et al., 2016). Furthermore, there was only little institutional learning, due to of a lack of standard procedures, which lead to a huge lack of documentation within the Danish forces (ibid.). Moreover, the Danish engagement was hindered by a combination of insufficient security and infrastructure, which made the implementation and monitoring of projects difficult if not even impossible. Additionally, funding was going into too small and inefficient projects, decisions were taken too fast and uncoordinated by too few people. Denmark was also dependent on UK support, with the UK being the leader of the PRT, when it came to technical assistance for example (Ball et al., 2016; Bornholdt Andersen et al., 2016). On top of all these problems came that advisers coming from Denmark often did not get sufficient training and preparation before coming to Afghanistan and did not have sufficient knowledge of the country in general (Bornholdt Andersen et al., 2016).

Another problem that the Danish troops deployed to Afghanistan faced, was that most of the population, especially in Helmand province and other southern provinces, feared the Taliban and did not cooperate with the international security forces, because they were afraid of consequences from the Taliban (ibid.). This included the Taliban stealing whatever aid came from Denmark or even killing Afghans for their cooperation with Denmark. Moreover,

a severe problem is also the continuous warfare from the side of the Taliban, but also increasingly from the IS branch Islamic State Khorasan.

Concerning the ANP, many criticised that it is highly corrupt and employs “ghost officers” (Farrell & Semple, 2015), which are officers that are listed on the payroll, but do not exist. Both decreased the effectiveness of the ANP.

### **6.3.3 Military and Security Sector: Comparison China and Denmark**

In terms of support for the Afghan National Security Forces, China pledged to provide 1 million USD of military equipment in 2014. Contrary, Denmark pledged about 16 million annually for the development of the ANA, which is considerably more than what China contributes. In general China is more focused on providing equipment, weapons and technical support, whereas Denmark focused on capacity building of the ANSF. With the Resolute Support Mission it continues this approach until today and furthermore focuses on a civilian approach by raising awareness of human rights, education, security and the fight against corruption. China, also conducts capacity building in the ANSF, hence it trained approximately 1000 people on Afghan and Chinese ground already. This shows that China’s engagement is more pluralistic in the actual military area than the Danish engagement. This however, only occurs, because Denmark has a civil-military approach with the aim of shifting to the civil sector completely.

Nevertheless, Denmark sent troops to Afghanistan, when China did not, which was because China was not interested in the Afghanistan issue at first. But since the terror attacks on its own soil occurred, it fears to shift more into the focus of terrorists and attract attacks in China. Therefore, China is keeping a neutral stand, whereas Denmark still has a troops in Afghanistan that support the RSM.

The most important similarity in this sector is the capacity building in mine clearance. Here, both countries are active in conducting mine clearance trainings. Despite the 5000 Afghans that Denmark instructed in this topic, it also raised awareness about the danger of mines. If China, like Denmark, conducted any mine clearing is not known.

In general Denmark applies a more active role in providing security than China. However, as the Danish efforts, at least under the ISAF mission, did not prove to be successful and no data is available on the success of the RSM or the Chinese engagement, it cannot be concluded that the Chinese method is more successful. Nevertheless, the Chinese method of mainly providing financial aid in this sector is less risky.

Concerning military and security China is not behaving according to its stand as a great power. Although, as I will explain more detailed later, China is acting within the borders

of a regional power. Denmark on the contrary is involved to a much greater extent than one would expect it to. The explanation for this behaviour can be found in Denmark's alliance to NATO and not in its aim of establishing itself as a great power.

#### **6.4.1 Civil Sector: China**

##### **Motivations**

Clear aims for why China is involved in the civil sector are not known. Nevertheless, one reason could be that it wants to show its awareness of its responsibility as a great power towards its neighbours. Another reason could be that especially by providing scholarships to Afghan students; it can use its soft power to promote the Chinese way of economic development.

##### **Method**

In the civil sector China provided blankets, tents and other things for victims of the earth quake in 2015 (Xinhua, 2016). Moreover, the Chinese government supplies vulnerable families, such as returned refugees or war displaced families with non-humanitarian aid and supplies (ibid.). Furthermore, 500 students from Afghanistan were provided with a scholarship and the opportunity to study in China (Zhao, 2015).

In terms of civil aid, China provides training of 3000 professionals from various fields in counter-terrorism, anti-drug trafficking, agriculture and diplomacy (ibid.). This is accompanied by more than 800 officials and technical staff that received training on human resources in China (Zhao, 2012). Zhu Yongbiao from Lanzhou University said that China is willing to provide more aid to refugees, invest in crop and seed demonstration projects and textbook and education facilities if the security situation would be improved (Kley, 2014). This demonstrates that China is willing to step up as a great power in this sector, given the improved security conditions, but is against an engagement, when its own people are at risk.

##### **Achievements**

Despite the successful provision of first time aid to victims of natural catastrophes and the financial support China did not achieve any known results in the civil sector.

##### **Difficulties**

As no great efforts were made in this sector and the literature is not elaborative of this sector in the Chinese engagement, it is unknown if China encountered any difficulties when providing its financial aid and other kinds of support to Afghanistan.



## **6.4.2 Civil Sector: Denmark**

### **Motivations**

According to the Danish authorities, the foundation of having security, stability, social and economic development in the future is education. As three out of ten Afghans did not receive an education under the Taliban regime (Dueholm, 2010), new opportunities to attend school need to be build. In this regard Denmark set the goal to improve access and quality of primary education for all Afghan children.

Lastly, Denmark has the aim of reintegrating returned refugees from mainly Pakistan and Iran, asylum seeker from Denmark itself and internally displaced people in Afghanistan (DMFA, 2006). Despite the fear of terrorism spill-over, reintegrating asylum seekers is the only security connection between Denmark and Afghanistan on Danish soil. The reason for encouraging the reintegration of refugees in Afghanistan is that this way they cannot pose a threat to the survival of the Danish regime. This could become a problem, when too many refugees come to Denmark and the local population feels threatened by them, like it happened during the refugee crisis in 2015.

### **Method**

DANIDA is responsible for the civilian aspects of the Danish engagement, hence, its work is focused on education, good governance, the improvement of living conditions of the population and cultural activities in Afghanistan.

DANIDA has supported the Afghanistan Ministry of Education in developing an education programme since 2003. This includes the development of a new and modern curriculum framework, the printing and distribution of textbooks for schools, the building of primary and secondary schools, teacher training colleges, textbook warehouses and vocational schools and the reforming and capacity-building of the ministry of education on the central and provincial level (DMFA, n.d.a).

Another important factor of the Danish engagement are the people employed as Technical Assistance (TA). When schools and other public institutions got built, the realisation afterwards revealed that there was not sufficient staff available to be employed there. Capacity building for staff in these institutions was the task of the TA. Moreover, their task was to give technical assistance and train locals in order to create sufficient capabilities so Afghans eventually can take on responsibilities. However, as will be explained in detail later, the results of the TA were very limited.

To achieve these aims Denmark implemented the so-called “integrated approach”. The integrated approach had the tasks to assist community development, such as police, local government, infrastructure, and services such as water and electricity (Bornholdt Andersen et al., 2016). The aim was to meet basic humanitarian needs, help vulnerable and social outcasts of the population, give assistance to local governments in rebuilding their institutions and promote legal rights of individuals and groups (ibid.). To assure the success of the integrated approach both the military commander and the stabilisation adviser had to confirm actions plans for projects, as both civilian and military conducted these tasks.

Another area where Denmark is involved in is disaster relief and aid for refugees. Denmark contributes by funding the construction of houses and wells for people affected by natural catastrophes or who are refugees. Furthermore, it helps mediating conflicts over landownership and constructing schools in new settlements (Dueholm, 2010).

### **Achievements**

The efforts undertaken by DANIDA are most visible in the building of eight new schools and the rebuilding of a teachers college. Furthermore, in cooperation with US funds over 50 million schoolbooks got printed (ibid.). Together with a Danish scholarship programme, which enables 2000 students from remote areas to go to school in the provincial capital Lashkar Gah, about 50% of Afghan children can now attend school. This improvement from 2001, affects especially girls, which previously could not attend school at all (ibid.). Moreover, did the building of new schools create 72.000 temporarily jobs for builders and many teacher positions (ibid.).

After 2010, the most important result that got achieved by the CIMIC was the establishment of relationships between the local population and the local authorities (Bornholdt Andersen et al., 2016). This resulted in strengthened ties on the regional security level.

By providing food aid to the populations struck by natural disasters, famines were avoided (DMFA, 2006). Furthermore, by providing aid to the construction of e.g. wells, a certain standard for hygiene was created, which again improved the living conditions.

### **Difficulties**

One big problem was posed by the Technical Assistance. Initially they were to stay only for a short period of time; however they stayed and created a parallel civil service. The reason for this is that there was a mutual mistrust between the TA and the tashkeel (organisational local

structures). Hence, the TA did the work, they were supposed to explain to the tashkeel, themselves. Another issue with the TA was that their wages were very high and a high amount of the aid for Afghanistan was spend on the TA salaries. Thus, Denmark reduced the funding for the TA in 2012 (Ball et al., 2016).

Until 2010 CIMIC had only mixed results, because it had no standing CIMIC in Afghanistan. Moreover, civil and military staff was rotating and therefore had no consistency in working with each other (Bornholdt Andersen et al., 2016).

### **6.4.3 Civil Sector: Comparison China and Denmark**

The interest of China in the civil sector seems to be very low compared to the Danish interest. As the civil sector is not part of security threats, this shows that Denmark can focus more on civilian matters, because it is not affected by other security threats as much as China. China again does not focus on the civil sector, because it poses no threat to the regime survival of the CCP. The impression is that China only provides aid for natural disaster relief and scholarships to utilise its soft power and to be seen as a responsible great power. Denmark on the other hand, sees especially education as means to achieve stability and economic development in the long-term and therefore emphasises on that area in great ways.

Concerning capacity building, both countries are very active. China for example trained 3000 professionals in counter-terrorism, anti-drug trafficking, agriculture and diplomacy and another 800 officials on human resources. With the Technical Assistance Denmark was active in this area as well, unfortunately only with limited success. The training of journalist on the other hand showed some success in terms of creating a more free media landscape.

Only in the area of disaster relief and capacity building is a possibility of interference between both actors. However, it seems unlikely that this will be the area where both states clash with their methods, as it seems not important enough for China to risk a confrontation.

Because China seems largely uninterested in the rebuilding and support of the civil sector it is difficult to say that this is the better method of dealing with the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Moreover, the Danish approach of providing an education to the population seems more sustainable, because in the future these people can actively support the economic development of Afghanistan, instead of having to ask for foreign help. This is especially important when China builds its infrastructure, because it needs people that are able to operate the machines that come with infrastructure. Denmark and the Western forces will not stand by and see how China is operating all these without including the local population.

## **6.5.1 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation**

### **Motivations**

In 2002 the SCO published a set of aims for their engagement in Afghanistan, because as the former Russian president stated in 2011 “[The] Security of all SCO member states largely depends on political stabilization in Afghanistan” (Yu, 2013, p. 54). This emphasises on the importance of Afghanistan to the SCO. However, as these aims could not be achieved it set new aims in 2005. These put a stronger focus on the internal political and economic issue, as on the own national reconciliation of Afghanistan. Nevertheless, there was no mentioning of the neutrality of Afghanistan anymore (Zhao, 2012). This shows that the SCO always adopted their strategies to the changing situation in the country and did not have one strict plan that it was following.

The overarching aim of the SCO for all its cooperations, is the fight against the three evils, terrorism, separatism and extremism (SCO, n.d.). Moreover, the SCO has a mutual interest of fighting drug-trafficking coming from Afghanistan. Contrary, the long-term goal for Afghanistan focuses on the engagement of economic aid and cooperation (Cheng, 2015). The importance of Afghanistan and the aims of the SCO in Afghanistan demonstrate that there is a strong security interdependence between both states, which is only natural as four of its six neighbours are SCO members, as can be seen in Figure 2.

### **Method**

Earlier in this chapter I described Chinas policy shifts in the 21th century; however, an earlier shift occurred already at the end of the 1990’s when China shifted from its pure bilateral relations to increased multilateral international relations (Song, 2014). China became more interested in international organisations, initiated international activities itself to a greater extend and was seeking regional cooperation, especially with its neighbours. Xi Jinping explained this change in the following way “Great power relations are crucial, the relationship with neighbouring countries is primary, developing countries are the foundation, and multilateralism is the main stage.” (Zhao, 2016, p.893). This again shows how China sees itself as a rising great power and at the same time is aware of the responsibility that comes with being a great power. This shift was most obvious in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (Song, 2014). China initiated the SCO and formulated many of the guidelines (Rakhimov, 2013), hence many Chinese characteristics can be seen in the SCO agenda. That qualifies to analyse the Chinese behaviour and engagement in Afghanistan via the SCO engagement.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation was established in summer 2001 out of the former Shanghai Five (Fredholm, 2013). However, even though the focus for the SCO was always security, it is not a military alliance and therefore its members did not take part in this war, because they did not want to project Afghanistan's problems on their own countries (Fredholm, 2013; Zhao, 2012). Alone by establishing the SCO, its members showed that there is a certain security interdependence among them. By establishing the Regional Anti-Terror Structure (RATS) to fight the three evils (SCO, n.d.), China emphasises on its role as a great power, because first of all it acts outside the borders of its own security complex; and second, it has sufficient power to influence other states and hence, change their security behaviour in favour of joining China in its activities.

In 2005 the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group was implemented, based on mutual interests of fighting drug-trafficking, international terrorism and ensure the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan (Roy, 2010). This shows the increased importance of Afghanistan for the SCO members (Yu, 2013). During the Moscow Special Conference on Afghanistan in 2009 the importance of the SCO was officially recognised by Western Powers and especially the US, who including with the NATO attended a SCO meeting for the first time (Roy, 2010; Zhao, 2012). This could be interpreted as the official recognition of the SCO as a security complex, which I claim the SCO is (see Figure 2). However, I will elaborate on this issue later. At this conference the SCO agreed upon the SCO-Afghanistan Action Plan in cooperation with ISAF. This was supposed to focus on the fight against drug trafficking, terrorism and organised crime and furthermore on enhancing the efficiency of the ANSF (Roy, 2010; Yi, 2013). A last point of the Moscow Declaration was dedicated to the support of trans-regional projects, especially in the fields of infrastructure, energy, transportation and transit (Zhao, 2012).

In 2012 the SCO repeated its unwillingness to send military to Afghanistan, to fill the power vacuum appearing after the withdrawal of the ISAF forces in 2014 (Cheng, 2015). Rather, the long-term goal should be focused on the engagement of economic aid and cooperation (ibid.). The economic integration could for example be achieved via trans-regional development programmes, such as energy corridors (Roy, 2010). Integrating Afghanistan into the regional economy emphasises that economic threats could occur to the region if Afghanistan would not be included.

Because the withdrawal of the ISAF forces at the end of 2014 posed a threat to the security of the SCO member countries – where most members are direct neighbours to Afghanistan – it prepared itself for a greater engagement after 2014 (Cheng, 2015; Zhao,

2012). Because counter-terrorism was still the number one priority, one way of preparing itself was with a large military exercise (Kley, 2014). The withdrawal of ISAF only increased the security interdependence among the members of the SCO, because now the threat of terrorism and illegal narcotics spill-over seemed even more severe than when ISAF was in Afghanistan with great amount of forces.

As mentioned previously, most of Afghanistan's neighbours are members of the SCO this geographical proximity is the main potential of the SCO. Moreover, the resolution process might be eased, because Afghanistan itself is an observer state in the SCO since 2012 (Zhao, 2012). This goes hand in hand with the hypothesis of RSCT, because the threat to the members of the SCO is more severe than to most other states.

China uses the SCO as an instrument to spread and widen its own influence and maintain the stability in the region and potentially become the new regional power in Central Asia (Cheng, 2015; Song 2014). This can still be achieved, despite the flaws the SCO, which will be explained later, by promoting confidence-building and mutual trust among its members. Furthermore, China can use the organisation to promote economic cooperation and benefit financially thereof (Song, 2014). In general, the SCO is a mean to establish a favourable neighbourhood for China and an international environment for a peaceful development (ibid.), which in the end will be the foundation for China to thrive as a great power that can spread its influence not only in the region, but globally.

All these points are reasons why China formulates the guiding principles for the SCO, which are in accordance with its own foreign policy. It is the main driver for institutionalism and provides direct support for major projects. This great engagement also results from China having the most political power within the SCO, even if it is only a little bit larger than what Russia can offer; however, China seems the most committed (ibid.), because as Cheng states, it even uses its own financial means to promote regional economic cooperation in for example the BRI or supporting the SCO Bank (2015).

## **Achievements**

The results achieved by the SCO in Afghanistan are mainly in terms of creating forums for the mutual interest in Afghanistan, such as the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group or the SCO-Afghanistan Action Plan. In terms of security the SCO established the RATS in 2004 to fight terrorism in the region and additionally, undertook an extensive military exercise in 2014.

What result either of these initiatives have is unknown, nevertheless, in political terms the emphasis of the SCO is great.

### **Difficulties**

The SCO faces various challenges that limit their engagement in Afghanistan. For instance, most SCO members have differing interest and strategies concerning Afghanistan (Kley, 2014). This is even more complicated by a widespread distrust among the members (ibid.). Combined, both limits the abilities to act in joint exercises, non-military training and intelligence sharing. Especially between China and Russia the distrust is apparent (Wishnick, 2014). Furthermore, the need for economic development within the SCO member states is more important, because they could not provide support to Afghanistan when having limited qualifications and capabilities themselves. Nevertheless, Tulibayeva and Sadvokassova (2013) claim that all these problems have been resolved by signing political agreements and historical disputes have been resolved by an increased economic cooperation.

Another difficulty appears concerning the perception of the SCO by Western powers. Especially the US claims that China only established this anti US organisation to have more support for authoritarian regimes that work against Western interests in Afghanistan and Central Asia (Song, 2014; Rakhimov, 2013; Roy, 2010).

That the US has to fear the SCO in taking over the power over Afghanistan or limiting its possibilities there is highly unlikely, as the SCO and so the HoA member states have differing interests to establish effective security cooperation. Moreover, does Roy (2010) claim, that there are already so many actors in Afghanistan that there is hardly any space left for the SCO to get engaged.

## **6.5.2 North Atlantic Treaty Organization**

### **Motivations**

The motivation for NATO to get involved in Afghanistan was the threat of terror attacks in the Western world, initiated by the 9/11 attacks in the US. Because the US is the biggest contributor to NATO and has a rule of collective defence, which states that if one gets attacked the others have to support the defence, other NATO states came to support the US's cause. Therefore, the overarching aim for the involvement of NATO in Afghanistan was to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a breeding place for terrorism under a joint intervention. Despite NATO not being a security complex (see Figure 2), but rather a combination of parts of the North American RSC and the European RSC, strong security interdependences are

prevailing. However, this does not explain why other NATO members joined the Afghanistan war. Hence, the only explanation for the participation is the rule of collective defence.

## **Method**

Denmark contributed military under the umbrella of the ISAF. This mission was meant to provide the necessary security for Afghanistan to transit to democracy (Ball et al., 2016). If ISAF (and the OEF) would have continued their strong military presence in Afghanistan, it could have led to a, by the RSCT described, overlay. However, as both missions left Afghanistan in 2015 an overlay did not occur.

After ISAF forces withdrew from Afghanistan, the Afghan government received the sole responsibility for security. Unfortunately, this was not successful. Therefore, currently the so-called Resolute Support Mission (RSM) is supporting Afghan security forces in capacity building, creating a robust security institution, give security control to Afghan authorities and create a security that is under Afghan and international law (DMD, n.d.). The overall aim of the RSM is to support Afghan government until it can sustain the institutions in these areas itself. It is no combat mission, moreover is it focusing on training, counselling, support for government institutions and security forces. The general idea is to only have a “light footprint” of international forces in Afghanistan during the transmission process (Riis Andersen, 2016). In total it consists of more than 133.000 soldiers.

In the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) tasks got divided between the involved countries in a province. Hence, the focus area of Denmark was mainly development, with a strong focus on growth and employment, education and job creation for parents. While, the secondary focus was the strengthening of democracy and the respect for human rights. Moreover, it focused on consolidation, normalisation and Afghan-ownership of the process (DMD, n.d.).

## **Achievements**

Overall Denmark had a high cooperation with NATO and was the most flexible of all ISAF members with its contingent (Auerswald, Saideman, 2014). This is because there was only limited monitoring on the deployed troops from the government back home. A reason for the minimum required monitoring could be the Danish trust culture, which enabled officers on the ground to take independent decisions without having to report back home and wait a long time for orders. One point that Bizhan (2018) mentions, is that in areas where Denmark had the civil-military cooperation more progress was achieved than in areas where the US was



deployed, e.g. in the health sector, education or state institution building. This hints that a pure military approach, like the US adopted it, is not a sufficient method of providing lasting stability and security for a war torn country.

Despite much criticism on Danish activities in Afghanistan and ISAF in general, some achievements were made and goals reached. Generally, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan was better after the ISAF withdrawal than it was before the war started in 2001 (Riis Andersen, 2016). This includes that the access to education for children increased more than 10 fold and more than half of the Afghan children are now enrolled in schools (DMFA, 2017). Furthermore, there has been increased access to health for ordinary citizens, which in 2017 is at 57% and there has been a decline in child mortality by 80% (ibid.). Additionally, maternity homes and midwife training schools were opened (Dueholm, 2010).

Moreover, the monitoring situation of human rights improved (DMFA, 2006). And the freedom of speech increased. This can be seen on a more diverse media landscape with various new newspapers and TV-stations (DMFA, 2017).

### **Difficulties**

While being deployed in Afghanistan there were plenty of internal problems that limited the effectiveness of the ISAF engagement. As there are numerous problems, only few will be mentioned here. For example, ISAF member states had difficulties in finding a common approach and goals for intervening in Afghanistan. This was especially apparent as the Bonn Agreement, which was held in 2001 to outline the political transition process of Afghanistan (Riis Andersen, 2016). During this conference no representative of the population of Afghanistan was present. This posed problems, because plans were made without taken the cultural background into consideration. For example was agreed that Afghanistan should become a central state. However, the Afghan population had no experience in having a central state, because it is organised in tribes. Hence, a critique made by Riis Andersen is that maybe another state system could have been found that would have been more suitable to the Afghan needs and experiences (2016). The natural distrust towards a central government, also induced by former British, Soviet and Taliban rule, did not lessen also due to the high corruption within the government (ibid.).

Another point was that the international community preferred making deals with former warlords from the north and put them into the local governments. However, these warlords did not intend on building a stable state, but rather exploited the aid from the international donors (ibid.). Additionally, the Taliban were not considered as part of the

Afghan population and did not get invited to the Bonn Conference. Despite that the Taliban are Pashtun and the Pashtun ethnicity is the biggest ethnicity in Afghanistan with approximately 42% of the Afghan population (Sawe, 2016). Because the Pashtuns had only little say in the political agenda, they felt underrepresented, which gave the Taliban a chance to come out strong, by stating that they are the only true representative of the Pashtun population (Riis Andersen, 2016). Hence, the international forces lost a big number of supporters within the population, especially in the southern and eastern provinces. Denmark had to struggle with insufficient popular support in Helmand province, especially when it tried to interfere in the opium economy (Ball et al., 2016).

The aim to create a central government in Afghanistan was undermined by the fragmentation of the PRT and their aims. Furthermore, NATO did not have full control over its member, as every state first and foremost had to oblige to their countries agendas and secondly to NATO (Auerswald & Saideman, 2014). This contradicts the possibility of NATO being a RSC, because there are no security dynamics that show a prevailing interdependence among the NATO members, which would show a coherent strategic approach towards, e.g. Afghanistan. Moreover, is Turkey a member; however, as mentioned previously, various studies show that Turkey has a set place as an insulator between the European, the Middle Eastern and the post-Soviet RSC and therefore cannot be included in a RSC.

When the US decided to shift its forces to support the Iraq War, great capacity limitations were put upon the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. These also affected UNAMA, because the “light footprint” left UNAMA without sufficient staff that could coordinate the international support. This resulted in none of the international forces feeling responsible and the creation of many smaller forums; however, because the Afghan government was not included in these forums, they undermined the Afghan government and created a certain mistrust of the government towards foreign troops (Riis Andersen, 2016).

On the other hand, the international forces did only to a limited extent trust the Afghan government, because the government was highly corrupt. This situation was not lightened by the fragmentation of the PRT, which made it difficult for the Afghan government to communicate with the PRT (ibid.).

Corruption was one of the biggest issues the international community had to handle. But instead of addressing corrupt institutions directly, it channelled its aid outside the government, e.g. via NGO's. In 2010/11 about 80% of the aid was channelled through other means than the Afghan government (ibid.). Furthermore, between 2002 and 2008 71% of the Afghan GDP was foreign aid, which again financed more than 90% of public expenditures in

Afghanistan (Bizhan, 2018). Moreover it shows the high aid dependency of the Afghan government. This however, just increased the corruption, because a second parallel society got created (ibid.), meaning that foreign donors had different strategies, policies and project to what the Afghan government had planned. That created an unconscious competition with the Afghan government, e.g. for higher salaries. The strong aid dependency was problematic also in the sense that the Afghan government was more accountable to the foreign donors than to its own population, which created a feeling of being neglected in the population. This lead also to the problem that an increased number of people felt more attracted to work for the Taliban, as one could earn five times as much as one would earn for being officially employed by the government (Sey, 2015).

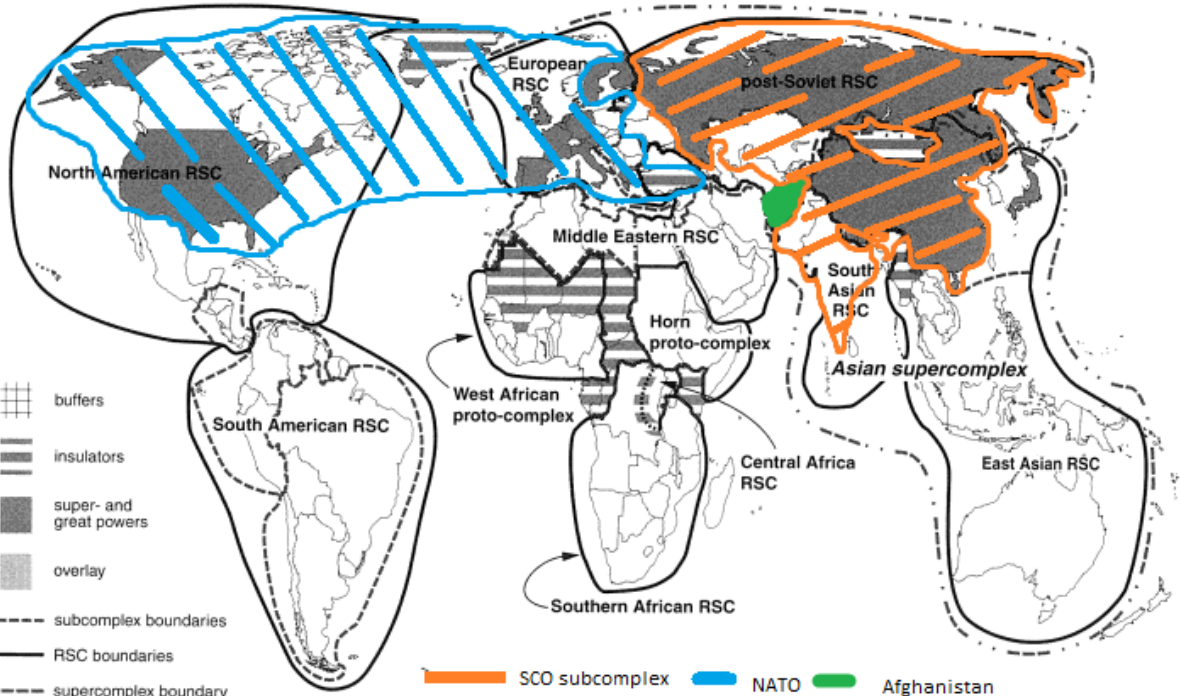


Figure 2: The SCO subcomplex, NATO and Afghanistan in the pattern of RSCT

**6.5.3 Comparison SCO and NATO**

Despite that the SCO was aware of the threat of terrorism, because that was already topic in the Shanghai Five, it did not intervene in Afghanistan with military might. However, that was the approach NATO followed. With the civil-military cooperation it tried to not only to establish security and stability in the country, but also bring democracy to the Afghan state. This again is something the SCO never attempted to do; as it keeps the point of view that every country should choose a state system that suits the local customs and habits. Since the engagement of the SCO with Afghanistan slowly started in 2005 by abandoning the aim of

keeping the neutrality of Afghanistan, it increased a lot especially after the establishment of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group in 2008.

Neither NATO nor SCO created a situation where the former security dynamics of Afghanistan were overlaid. Even though it seems like NATO tried; there were always other actors, e.g. Pakistan, that managed to have a big enough say in the security of Afghanistan, hence, dynamics could not be formed by just one party or in this case security complex. Nevertheless, if NATO would have stayed in Afghanistan with the same amount of troops, like it did during the ISAF mission, an overlay could not have been ruled out, as it usually results from a long-term military deployment in a country.

The SCO always opposed military intervention and seen on the unsuccessful intervention of the ISAF mission, they proved to have a good reason for doing so. NATO also admitted this by withdrawing its forces from Afghanistan and only leaving the Resolute Support Mission in the country. The SCO cannot provide with similar failures, even that the joint anti-narcotics mission with the ISAF did not show any success. However, due to only limited engagement the possibility for big failures is simply not given. But this limited engagement is only partially due to insufficient capacities on the side of the SCO. On the other side it does not want to step on the toes of NATO and particularly the US. Resulting, it focuses on containing the security threats by spreading to its member countries, instead of actually solving them and it does not interfere with NATO. As stated in the RSCT, this shows that Afghanistan is still in the position of an insulator, because the SCO is not capable and willing to transfer its own security dynamics onto Afghanistan, despite that Afghanistan is almost completely surrounded by SCO members, as can be seen in Figure 2.

In terms of aid and economic investments both SCO and NATO enhance the approach of multilateral projects. The Heart of Asia for example is under the umbrella of most SCO countries and many projects are connected to the Chinese BRI. In general there is a strong focus on large-scale transnational infrastructure projects among the SCO member, whereas NATO members focus primarily on projects within Afghanistan, as mentioned earlier.

However, in RECCA aims and methods of both organisations are united, as it is under the umbrella of bigger organisations, such as the CAREC, OSCE or UNDP, but simultaneously still is under the care of the Afghan government. This framework would therefore not only provide Afghanistan with the needed infrastructure and economic integration, but furthermore also be controlled by multiple authorities with different interests. Moreover, would that also fit into the Chinese frame of creating the foundation for more energy corridors, which China wants to utilise to promote economic growth. On the other

hand, some of the projects under the RECCA umbrella focus on the empowerment of women, which fit in the Danish framework.

## **6.6 Summary Analysis**

In the previous chapter I sufficiently proved that China and Denmark are both actively participating in the reconstruction process in Afghanistan and analysed that they have a stake in the country. The second hypothesis was that China's approach is more effective than Denmark's approach. This proved to be only partially true, because on the one hand is Denmark only a small player in the big game of Afghanistan and despite contributing to the democracy building to a certain extent, it did not achieve its goal of creating a stable democracy. This was only partially due to insufficient capacities of the Danish troops deployed to Afghanistan, but even more to the fragmentation of the international forces under the ISAF umbrella, which Denmark as a small country is dependent on.

On the other hand, China did not achieve the successful implementation of peace-negotiations either. Nevertheless, it has better chances of reaching this aim, because it is a great power and therefore has a greater say in these issues. By having a good relationship with Pakistan, it can pressure the Pakistan government in getting the Taliban at the negotiation table, whereas via the SCO it can implement projects that enhance the economic growth of Afghanistan and create a certain stability that provides the Afghan population with a future. Another advantage of China's approach being more successful is simply its geographic proximity compared to Denmark being far away in Europe and the more intense relations that China has with Afghanistan's neighbours and the interest in a stable and secure neighbourhood.

## **7. Discussion: Afghanistan in the Regional Security Complex Theory**

In the following chapter the situation of Afghanistan will be analysed in the light of the Regional Security Complex Theory, with a special focus on the global level and China's and Denmark's role in the Afghanistan reconstruction process. First, however, Afghanistan as an insulator on the regional level will be analysed. Next, the interregional level and how Afghanistan is interacting with its neighbouring regional security complexes will be described. These two levels will only be analysed to a small extent, as they provide an essential understanding for the last part of the analysis, but are not the main focus of this thesis. The last part of the analysis, the analysis on the global level, is divided into China's and Denmark's engagement in Afghanistan focusing on their interaction with Afghanistan as sovereign states. This is based on the case study conducted in the previous chapter. Afterwards, I will take this analysis and compare China's and Denmark's engagement in the broader context of them being part of an international organisation, namely the SCO and NATO. Looking at the broader picture will help me to analyse if China's and Denmark's engagement is only effective when being incorporated into a larger organisation or if they can achieve sustainable results as individual countries.

### **7.1 Regional Level**

According to RSCT Afghanistan is an insulator (as shown in Figure 1); one characteristic of being an insulator is to consist of "one or more units" (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, p. 41). In the case of Afghanistan one could say that it consists of either one unit, namely the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, or it consist of various units, which in this case could be the different ethnicities in the country. Another very apparent division is the one between former war lords and terrorists. Because the former war lords were put into government positions by the international community, the terrorists, especially the Taliban oppose this government for being corrupt and not the true government of the country, due to under representing the Pashtun ethnicity. This relationship shows the security interdependence between both powers very well. On the one hand government officials are dependent on the Taliban not to conduct terror attacks. Whereas, the Taliban on the other hand, needs the government to stay in power, because otherwise it would lose its justification for conducting these terror attacks.

The Taliban on top of having a corrupt government are the main internal reasons for the reconstruction process not being successful so far. However, both are influenced by outside forces, which lead to a connectivity on the interregional and global level. On the interregional level the Taliban is getting support from the southern neighbour Pakistan, by

having a retreat in the Pakistan mountains that border Afghanistan. Furthermore, the Pakistan secret service is accused of supporting the Taliban financially (Schirra, 2016).

On the global level, the corrupt government is influenced by foreign donors from all over the world, but mainly Western countries. As mentioned earlier, donors not providing their aid via the official channels, fuel the corruption of the government and hence, contributed to the deterioration of the security in Afghanistan, because the population did not trust the government. This deterioration also affected the foreign troops in Afghanistan in return, because their troops had a more difficult time establishing security.

## **7.2 Interregional Level**

Another characteristic of an insulator is to be a unit “where larger regional security dynamics stand back to back” (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, p. 41). This can easily be applied to Afghanistan as we have three different security complexes bordering Afghanistan. These are the South Asian RSC, the Middle Eastern RSC (ME RSC) and the post-Soviet RSC with the Central Asian subcomplex (as shown in Figure 1). In terms of the interregional level we can disregard the East Asian RSC, because despite that China is bordering Afghanistan, this shared border is only very small and China, and therefore the East Asian RSC, is sharing a much longer border with the South Asian and the post-Soviet RSC.

In the conducted literature for this thesis, there was only little mentioning of Iran, as the bordering country to Afghanistan of the Middle Eastern RSC. Despite being a port for Afghan refugees and part of some infrastructure projects, such as the Five Nations Railway Corridor. Nevertheless, Iran has formal relations with Afghanistan. When both countries signed a strategic partnership agreement in 2013, their main focus was security, even though economic cooperation is also part of this agreement (Motwani & Bose, 2014). These economic relations can be found in the plan for building the Five Nations Railway Corridor. In security terms Afghanistan is important for Iran as not only refugees find their way to Iran, but also terrorism from the Taliban and al-Qaida spills into the country. On the other hand did the Islamic State come from Iraq via Iran to Afghanistan and established a presence in most parts of the country and even a dominance in Nangarhar Province (ibid.). Terrorism is the main reason for the strong security interdependence between Afghanistan and Iraq. However, only weak relations can be found between other parts of the ME RSC and Afghanistan.

The remaining two RSC’s play an even more important role for Afghanistan. On the one hand there is the South Asian RSC, which contains Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Bhutan. Pakistan is very important for Afghanistan’s security, because one could say that it provides Afghanistan with a non-ending supply of terrorists. The Taliban are known to have

sanctuaries in the west of Pakistan, which is the area of the Pakistan Pashtuns. If there is a solution to the Afghanistan issue, than Pakistan has to be part of this solution, otherwise it becomes a spoiler by continuously supporting the Taliban. Furthermore, Pakistan is important for the greatly needed connection to the Arabian Sea. This is important for Afghanistan, to being included into world economics, because Afghanistan is a landlocked country. Afghanistan could also take the route via Iran, which it already is, but having another alternative is always favourable, especially if Iranian ports get closed as part of sanctions. Obviously the same applies for Pakistan. However, under the current geopolitical situation, the risk of Iranian ports being sanctioned is slightly higher.

India is an important security partner for Afghanistan, because after Pakistan and together with the EU and the US it is one of the biggest trade partners in the Afghan economy (RECCA, 2015). This helps Afghanistan not only in terms of rebuilding its economy and hopefully establishing stability, but also in terms of providing an alternative source to Chinese investments.

Contrary to the South Asian RSC, the Central Asian subcomplex is an important part in the security interdependence, because Central Asian countries are mainly concerned with terrorism (Pan, 2013) and narcotics spill-over from Afghanistan to their countries. Afghanistan on the other hand could profit from being economically integrated in that region and moreover the northern hemisphere, to boost their economy via the BRI, but also to obtain access to the greatly needed natural resources for electricity.

Afghanistan is still in the role of an insulator, because the South Asian RSC and the Central Asian subcomplex have no security interest in each other and therefore stand back to back in Afghanistan, as Buzan and Wæver state. Additionally, Afghanistan plays the role of an insulator and not a buffer, because it is not in the role of having to keep apart rivaling states or security complexes. Also, none of the neighbouring security complexes can transfer their own security dynamics onto Afghanistan. However, as the non-interference pact (Kabul Declaration) from 2002 also shows there is no interest in any of the neighbouring RSC in doing so. Both security complexes have a great potential in deepening their economic ties with Afghanistan and the complex on the other side of Afghanistan. One example is the TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas pipeline, which was inaugurated in 2016 or the CASA -1000, which will provide hard- and software for energy trade between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan (RECCA, 2017). On the other hand the Central Asian subcomplex, being landlocked, is in need of the South Asian RSC to gain access to the Indian Ocean.



When looking at Afghanistan as the connection between the RSC's, the Middle Eastern RSC, does not have a great connection to these two security complexes. This again proves the theory of the regional security complexes. With that in mind I will not say that there is no connection at all, contrary, these structures are too complex to be analysed at this point and do not serve the purpose of this thesis. Hence, I will not go into greater detail here.

## **7.3 Global Level**

### **7.3.1 China and Denmark in Afghanistan**

China and Denmark both have an interest in a stable and secure Afghanistan. In both cases this interest is connected to terrorism spill-over and the fear of their countries becoming destabilised too, due to the constant fear of terror attacks among the population. However, with China having a Muslim minority, which directly borders Afghanistan, it is much more likely to be attacked. Past events have proven that and therefore also prove the hypothesis of Buzan and Wæver, which argues that threats travel better over short distances than over longer distances.

A second aspect of interest in Afghanistan is that China is merely interested in Afghanistan in economic terms, such as exploiting its natural resources, but also integrating it in the BRI. Denmark on the other hand wants to promote democracy and the respect for human rights. Furthermore, Denmark's aim is to fight corruption, whereas China is not interested in any of these points.

In terms of what both countries contributed to the reconstruction process great differences appear. Not only did China not contribute to the ISAF mission with troops, also did China provide merely 240 million USD in the period between 2001 and 2013. Denmark on the other hand provided approximately 750 troops at its height in 2012 and 688 million USD of aid between 2002 and 2014. That Denmark provided more than double than China shows that China was not interested in supporting Afghanistan in this period. Nevertheless, in the period until 2017 a major shift is apparent. China donates around 400 million USD, whereas Denmark only provides 85 million USD. This shift can be explained with the ISAF withdrawal, where Denmark had only few troops left in Afghanistan. Hence, to provide some sense of security, China felt the need to step in. Nevertheless, China still did not provide any troops to support the fight for peace and stability.

Another reason that could explain China's limited engagement in the reconstruction process prior to 2014 is that China spent enormous sums on the Aynak copper mine and the

oil fields in Amu Darya. For obtaining the lease for Anyak alone, China paid 3.5 billion USD, which is much more of what Denmark could ever contribute.

This is a very good indicator on how China and Denmark are contributing to the reconstruction process of Afghanistan. Until 2014 China was only focused on economic investments, however, with only meagre to no success at all. At the same time Denmark was greatly involved in the reconstruction of the Afghan government, by supporting the drafting of the Constitution, fighting corruption and promoting good governance and democratisation; however, also only being successful to a certain extent. China was not participating in these kinds of efforts, because it would contradict its non-interference policy.

Comparing the Chinese and Danish engagement within the different sectors demonstrates that both are present in the traditional (politics and military) and new security sectors (economy, terrorism, migration). Additionally, Denmark is greatly engaged in the civil sector, which is not considered a security sector, but still important for security in the long-term. Contrary, looking at the sectors the SCO and NATO are engaged in a new picture presents itself. The SCO is mainly engaged in the new security sector of economy and only to a small extent engaged in the traditional sector of military. Almost no involvement can be found in the political security sector. NATO on the other hand, has a very strong focus on the traditional sector of politics and military, and despite that terrorism is the main reason for NATO being in Afghanistan in the first place, has only minor engagements in the new sectors of economy and terrorism. This demonstrates that China and Denmark, despite being deeply embedded in international organisations, still have their own approach and can act upon this.

One point that China and Denmark have in common, is that both use the framework of conditional aid for their contribution. This is quite obvious on the Danish side, as it wants Afghanistan to become a democracy that respects human rights and especially women rights. As a result, it always pressured Afghanistan into following these points. China on the other hand wants the Afghan support in the fight against terrorism, separatism, extremism and transnational crime to provide Afghanistan with help in the reconstruction process. The Chinese term “win-win” comes to mind when reading these conditions, but as they are conditions we can easily talk about conditional aid coming from China.

Summarising one can see that both China and Denmark are actively engaged in the reconstruction process of Afghanistan. However, with often differing methods. Additionally, the Danish engagement seems to be larger than the Chinese one, even that China has more at stake in Afghanistan. Its limited engagement can only be explained by its non-interference

policy and the fear of moving into the focus of terrorists, and not by its aim of establishing itself as a regional power.

Applied to the RSCT there seems to be no great security interdependence between Afghanistan and Denmark. The latter supplies the former with development aid and a certain amount of soldiers for fighting terrorism and capacity building. Nevertheless, the threat that Denmark is exposed to is comparatively limited. China and Afghanistan on the other hand have much stronger security interdependences. On the one side China is threatened by Afghan terrorism and narcotics and on the other hand is Afghanistan threatened by not getting included in the BRI in case China decides against it, which again would pose a certain threat to the development of Afghanistan. One could say that there is a terrorism security threat going from Afghanistan to China and an economic security threat coming back from China. This again demonstrates the tight security interdependence among both countries.

The security relations between China and Denmark in Afghanistan are not directly linked. Nevertheless, there is a certain interdependence between them when looking at the bigger institutions behind them, which I will do in the next part.

### **7.3.2 SCO and NATO in Afghanistan**

The importance of comparing the Chinese and the Danish engagement on a higher level, within the institutions of the SCO and NATO, can be explained by them not being a superpower, and only China being a great power. Why Denmark is not a great power is obvious. It does not qualify for any, of the by Buzan and Weaver stated, characteristics of a great power and is fastend in the European RSC, which is dominated by the regional powers of the UK, France and Germany. Hence, I will analyse it from the point of the European RSC. According to the criteria of Buzan and Wæver China does qualify as a great power, however, as it shifted towards a more institutional approach, I will also analyse China's engagement in Afghanistan within a larger institution, namely the SCO.

In my argumentation I will even go as far as stating that the SCO could be an institutional security complex by itself, similar to the EU (as pointed out in Figure 2). I am claiming this on the basis that strong security interdependence led to the foundation of the SCO in the first place. As explained in the previous theory chapter, a security complex has such strong security interdependence that security problems cannot be analysed apart from another state. This interdependence is still apparent today, with terrorism from Pakistan finding its way to Central Asia, and China and Russia being affected by this terrorism too. Furthermore, all member states of the SCO are struggling with non-conventional and non-military or -political security threats that travel within the region. Moreover, there are strong

amity and enmity relations among the member of the SCO, such as the great power struggle of Russia and China, the regional power struggle between Pakistan and India and seemingly more friendly relations among the states of Central Asia. Additionally, this shows that there is a clear power distribution with the SCO-subcomplex, as China and Russia are the two dominant great powers embodying polarity.

As can be seen in Figure 2, all members of the SCO are still connected to other neighbouring countries that are not included in the SCO, hence, I will argue that the SCO is a subcomplex, embedded in the Asian supercomplex and the post-Soviet RSC, and not an independent RSC. Nevertheless, this subcomplex still includes the two great powers China and Russia and the regional powers India and Pakistan. Resulting, I consider the SCO-subcomplex as a great power security complex, because it is dominated by two superpowers and their amity and enmity relation towards each other, rather than being solemnly dominated by the SCO itself, like the European RSC is dominated by the EU as an institution. The SCO-subcomplex being a great power security complex also fits in the categorisation by Buzan and Wæver, which states that this complex is a combination between the regional and the global level. This became apparent when trying to make a clear cut of the regional, interregional and global level during this discussion, which, as shown, was not entirely possible.

Nevertheless, as security complexes are durable but not permanent, the SCO-subcomplex could change. The most likely case for this to happen is via an external transformation. Here, the SCO accepts more members which will change the security dynamics in a way and will lead to the disappearance of the SCO as a regional security complex. Another scenario could be that it integrates states that are already part of the e.g. post-Soviet RSC and then it could turn into its own RSC or even become a supercomplex together with the Asian supercomplex.

The European RSC and therefore also Denmark became active in Afghanistan, because most European countries are also members of NATO and followed the call of the US to fight terrorism in a joint military intervention. Even though there is a certain threat of being victims of terror attacks, as at this point 9/11 showed, the intensity of this threat compared to neighbouring countries of Afghanistan is relatively small. Contrary, a deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan has an immediate impact on the SCO, as neighbouring countries are more prone to become victims of terrorism. This proves the RSCT, because security threats travel easier over short distance than over long ones. Moreover, this will create another mass migration of Afghans seeking refuge in other countries, which then creates a difficult situation for these governments, as they have to maintain the security within their countries. Many

Afghans will seek refuge in Pakistan or Iran, but not so much in China. Contrary, comparatively few will go to Europe, whereas compared to China Denmark might be taking in more refugees, as it did in the past where China did not accept any refugees and Denmark had more than 3000 applications for migrant status by Afghan refugees in 2015 and 2016 (Bendixen, 2018).

Another problematic factor of a deteriorated security situation in Afghanistan is the trade of illegal narcotics. Being a financial source for terrorist organisations, the trade will increase and mainly spill into neighbouring countries as it is the case today already. In the long run it will find its way to Denmark; however, it will spread from Afghanistan to Central Asia and China first. In the frame of the SCO, the Central Asian countries hope to get supported by China in their fight against illegal narcotics, because their own border controls are undermined by corruption and cannot execute their intended function. The likelihood of China participating in anti-drug missions in Central Asia is relatively high, as it wants to prevent the spill-over to its own Xinjiang Province, where the regime survival of the CCP is always confronted with a certain risk. This fight of illegal narcotics creates another tie in the security interdependence within the SCO security complex. Furthermore, non-traditional, non-military and non-political security threats can be found in the SCO subcomplex. These would be for example the competition for natural resources, a sufficient energy supply and environmental issues.

By increasing the economic connectivity in the region the security interdependence becomes tighter too, as investments are at risk of being attacked by terrorists or used as means of transportation of terrorism. However, as long as these infrastructure projects do not reach Denmark and the EU, there is only a minimal threat to them. Different lays the case for China and the SCO. Not only can terrorism travel faster and easier, if necessary power plants, e.g. hydro dams, would be attacked, massive damage can be done to not only the security of the population, but also the security of the regime survival.

Concluding, one can see that the applied methods of the SCO and NATO are similar to the ones of China and Denmark. China clearly influences the behaviour of the SCO, but Denmark being embedded in the European RSC is influenced by NATO, instead of being an influencer itself. This only proves the RSCT and the hypothesis that great powers can act over the borders of their RSC. China is deeply engaged in the SCO and initiates many projects, but also acts upon itself by trying to initiate peace-negotiations with Pakistan and the Taliban. Even with Denmark engaging in Afghanistan it does not do that on its own account, but rather

embedded in the European RSC. With most states in this security complex being members of NATO at the same time, one could say it is the European RSC acting in Afghanistan and not a single country.

## 8. Conclusion

As stated at the beginning of this thesis the intention was to analyse, if the applied methods by China and Denmark are complementary and therefore could be useful for the progress in achieving stability and security in Afghanistan. Or if the approaches are differing in a grave way that cooperation between both is impossible, which even could lead to counterproductive results in the progress of Afghanistan.

The research question I aimed to find an answer to was:

*Why do China and Denmark apply different approaches in the process of building a stable state in Afghanistan, despite having very similar incentives for doing so?*

To answer that question thoroughly, a research in Chinese and Danish government publication was conducted. Furthermore, research in secondary literature was undertaken, which had either the Chinese or the Danish engagement as topic. A comparison of the method of both states had not been undertaken at this point.

Additionally, the theory of Regional Security Complex provides a theoretical foundation for the analysis of why China and Denmark are active players in Afghanistan in the first place. The reason for choosing this theory was its main argument, which states that threats travel only via short distances and as a result, creates strong security interdependence among neighbouring states. Out of this interdependence security complexes get created that do not have a very strong interest in neighbouring complexes. The analysis on the regional, interregional and global level proved that China and the SCO have a much bigger stake in Afghanistan than Denmark and the NATO, because they are in the immediate neighbourhood of Afghanistan and are directly affected by insecurity in the country. The engagement of the NATO only shows that it contains the great powers of the US and the EU, which can become active over the boundaries of their RSC. However, their stake, despite terror attacks on their home soil, is much smaller than the one of China and the SCO.

Applying the RSCT I furthermore claim that the SCO could be treated as a subcomplex of the post-Soviet RSC and the Asian supercomplex. The reason for this claim is the strong security interdependence between the members of the SCO concerning various security issues, Afghanistan being at the foremost front of these security issues. These include not only the spill-over of terrorism, but also the trade of illegal narcotics and the success of the BRI.

The answer to the research question is that China has a non-interference policy, which prevents it from interfering in other states internal politics. As a result, it focuses on the economic reconstruction. Moreover, by being a great power and a direct neighbour it can initiate peace-negotiations between Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Taliban. To increase the likelihood for a success of the negotiations and furthermore, to calm the dominant foreign force in Afghanistan, it included the US in these negotiations when it established the Quadrilateral Coordination Group. Here China can act as a single actor, because it has sufficient influence and political power. However, in the area of economic reconstruction and security it relies on the SCO as the overarching institution to achieve its goal of creating a secure and stable Afghanistan. That promises to be more successful, as other regional states are included and China is not posing as a forceful great power.

The reason for Denmark's choice of method is primarily based upon it being only a small state with little power. Hence, it joined the NATO-led ISAF forces in the hope to gain greater success by being part of overarching institution. Moreover, because Denmark has no non-interference policy it can be an active player in the reconstruction process of the Afghan government, which it also was. After the ISAF mission failed to provide the greatly needed security and create stability in Afghanistan, Denmark joined the Regional Support Mission with the only aim of capacity building within the Afghan security forces.

Denmark's focus was primarily directed on democracy building, the promotion of human rights and providing children with the opportunity to receive education. Only to a lesser extent, it was focused on an economic recreation. Therefore, one could say that the Chinese and Danish method of engagement are not interfering with each other and to some extent are even complementary. However, as China's engagement is not considering the fight of corruption, democracy-building or the respect for human rights, it undermines Danish and Western efforts in the reconstruction process.

Under the current state of Afghanistan still being a war torn country regularly hit by terror attacks, which are not only conducted by the Taliban, but increasingly also by the Islamic State, and the country furthermore being stuck with a highly corrupt government, the current methods for creating security and stability seem ineffective. As the SCO is calling for a stronger regional integration of Afghanistan, a possibility would be for the SCO to be the leading supporter in the recreation process of Afghanistan, supported by NATO and UN only when asked for help. In general, and as the failed ISAF mission showed, a better coordination between all actors in Afghanistan is needed to deliver the highly needed security stability.



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