

Challenges Affecting the Utility of US Aid in Afghanistan during Karzai's Tenure: An Exploration

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Introduction

According to US Congress figures, aid provided to Afghanistan has become the costliest effort United States has ever committed to a single country in its history.¹ Yet according to World Bank estimates in year 2013, Afghanistan will need more than \$7 billion in next decade to be able in to sustaining and funding security forces, keep reconstruction gains and fill the gap between revenues of government and operations and maintenance expenses.²

Reconstruction has cost United States to spend approximately more than \$822 billion³, figures in 20th February, 2020 indicate these enormous funds were used to build National Army of Afghanistan, for good governance, conducting development assistance and engaging in counter narcotics and anti-corruption in which Afghanistan is believed to be on top of the list.⁴ But when investigations on effectiveness of aid are put on, reconstruction aid has been destructive and not only useless to the people of Afghanistan.⁵ Most of the aid has been spent only on security related areas.⁶

It's witnessed that almost 76% of all aid in 2017 has been put to security⁷ and about 308,693 men and women are part of security

¹ Almukhtar, Sarah, "What Did the U.S. Get for \$2 Trillion in Afghanistan?", <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/12/09/world/middleeast/afghanistan-war-cost.html>, (Last accessed 11 Dec 2019)

² Graham-Harrison, Emma, "Afghanistan will need \$7 billion a year over next decade: WB", <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-money/afghanistan-will-need-7-billion-a-year-over-next-decade-wb-idUSTR7AL1TD20111122>, (Last Accessed 24 Dec 2019)

³ Reality Check Tem – BBC, "Afghanistan war: What has the conflict cost the US?", <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-47391821>, (Last Accessed 8Feb 2021)

⁴ USAID report page on countries, "Afghanistan", <https://explorer.usaid.gov/cd/AFG>, (Last accessed 24 Dec 2019)

⁵ Goepner, Erik, "War state, trauma state: why Afghanistan remains stuck in conflict", <https://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/war-state-trauma-state-why-afghanistan-remains-stuck-conflict>, (Last Accessed 24 Dec 2019)

⁶ USAID report page on countries, "Afghanistan", <https://explorer.usaid.gov/cd/AFG>, (Last accessed 24 Dec 2019)

⁷ SIGAR quarterly report, "Afghan National Defense and Security Forces", <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2019-01-30qr-section3-security.pdf>, (Last accessed 14 July 2020)

personnel, and rest of 24% was allocated to reconstruction. Due to lack of job opportunities and unemployment (11.1 percent of total workforce)⁸ in other civilian sectors, more people are encouraged naturally to work in armed forces. At the same time, in some rural areas people are where there are sympathies for insurgents; there is risk of being pushed in to those groups to fight against government.

The stance of government of Afghanistan is somewhat same as critics of aid illustrate the fact. Official stance of government of Afghanistan is as “there is a gap between what the government of Afghanistan asked United States and what they have chosen to invest in.”⁹ It is matter of fact that government of Afghanistan would thank international community and United States particularly for taking leading role but money has been wasted instead of being useful for the people.¹⁰

When the security situation is checked in Afghanistan, Taliban are still not defeated. They are posing great danger to Afghanistan's government while in 2014 they became stronger in the northern areas of Afghanistan too. They challenged government and rule of law in Faryab province, and outset government's control from Kunduz province for fifteen days. According to reports from United States Intelligence Community, Taliban are still capable of challenging US and international goals in Afghanistan.¹¹ Is it a result of United States' commitment to bring peace to Afghanistan or we have heard it wrong?, as points former president Hamid Karzai in an inclusive interview. He doubts all the efforts of United States and calls it a clear double-standard.¹²

Poverty reduction funds are part of what is being spent on military objectives. According to figures, US military was spending \$100 million a day while expenditure for all donors since 2001 on average basis is just \$7 million a day.¹³ The report indicates that huge amount of funds are flowing to the areas where there is

⁸ WBG, “Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate) - Afghanistan”, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?end=2019&locations=AF&start=1991>, (Last accessed 14 July 2020)

⁹ Former President of Afghanistan, Hon. Hmaid Karzai, (30 August 2015), Tolonews Channel, (<https://youtu.be/g2pYA-EkUjE>)

¹⁰ Rachel Cooper, “Aid dependency and political settlements in Afghanistan”, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d0ced7ae5274a065e721702/428_Aid_Dependency_and_Political_Settlements_in_Afghanistan.pdf, (Last access 14 July 2020)

Congressional Research Service, “Afghanistan: Background and US policy in brief”, (5 Dec 2019), p. 13

¹² Former President of Afghanistan, Hon. Hmaid Karzai, (30 August 2015), Tolonews Channel, (<https://youtu.be/g2pYA-EkUjE>)

¹³ Hekmatullah Fayez, “The Role of Foreign Aid in Afghanistan's Reconstruction: A Critical Assessment”, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41720193?seq=1>, (Last accessed 6 Aug 2020)

conflict and aid instead to be used for poverty reduction is used for military and political goals. As there is link between poverty and conflict¹⁴, international community and United States should concentrate on poverty reduction. As Waldman states, “this is a short-sighted policy”, “while there should be strong support for south’s development, other provinces must not be neglected since insecurity could spread there too.”¹⁵ The volume of aid, specifically for rural areas should be increased and donors should cooperate and provide more aid through government of Afghanistan.

The sustainability of millions of dollar projects is posed to challenges by Taliban due to mismanagement in the utilization aid by the government. Taliban are waiting to exploit the vulnerabilities of Afghanistan’s government. Without a standard financial structure to take huge scale of aid, it was a mistake to pour billions of dollars in to a war-torn country.

Prior to 2010, aid provided by United States was mostly through contracts, cooperative agreements and grants which were implemented outside the government budget or to say off-budget that was far more beyond the reach of Afghanistan’s government. However, after 2010, other donors and United States have agreed to increase more assistance and support through on-budget principle and help Afghanistan’s institutions in their capacity for managing funds and providing services. In the mean while international donor community has brought this condition upon government of Afghanistan to fight against corruption and demonstrate the capacity in managing aid funds in a transparent way to be able to receive more aid.

While what real interest of United States in Afghanistan is; ex-president Hamid Karzai accused United States that it never wanted Afghanistan to be in peace. He believed that Washington wants war in Afghanistan because of its own interest and war in Afghanistan is to benefit foreigners, and it’s based on the aims of foreigners, and if United States wanted peace in Afghanistan, it could come already.¹⁶

The special investigator general for Afghanistan reconstruction (SIGAR) says the government of United States is partly responsible and should be blamed for funds which are

¹⁴ Ravi Kanbur, “Poverty and Conflict: The inequality link”, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/126966/poverty_conflict_06_2007.pdf, International Peace Academy, New York 2007, (Last accessed 19 May 19, 2021)

¹⁵ Matt Waldman, “Aid effectiveness in Afghanistan”, https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/ACBAR_aid_effectiveness_paper_0803_3.pdf, (Last accessed 10 Aug 2020)

¹⁶ TOLONews, “Black and white: Ex-president Karzai on his presidential journey,” September 3rd, 2015. Video, 01:46.35, <https://youtu.be/92pYA-EkUhE>

misused. According to SIGAR, the causes are not just problems related to Afghanistan; because they are operating the way United States wants them to do. SIGAR believes that the Pentagon and USAID suffer from poor planning, accountability, oversight and corruption.¹⁷ SIGAR reported that the cost for building a natural gas station in north Afghanistan has reached to \$43 million which is currently not operating because there is no demand for it and yet no one is responsible for it.¹⁸

2. Ongoing Challenges in Afghanistan

2.1. Inadequate Planning

According to Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) there has been lack of inadequate coordination and planning which has resulted in increased expenses, waste, unsustainable projects, delays in them and also not using the facilities which were intended to be used. Some of the programs and projects are failed to get reach their objectives, like supporting efforts in counterinsurgency, improvement in governance and economic development.¹⁹ Special importance is at this time for planning as United States has withdrawn most of its armed forces and transition has taken place. Now what to do next will determine the future of the country.

2.2 Poor Quality Assurance

There has been poor quality assurance especially with regards to infrastructure projects and it continues to be a big issue. According to SIGAR, soil issues, inappropriate site grading and incorrect usage of facilities is one of issues related to quality assurance.²⁰

¹⁷ Sigar report: "Costs and challenges of reconstruction", <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/testimony/SIGAR-18-46-TY.pdf>, p.3 (Last accessed 25 Aug 2020)

¹⁸ Glenn Kessler, "", <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2016/02/01/a-43-million-gas-station-in-afghanistan-not-so-fast/>, (Last accessed 20 Jan 2020)

¹⁹ Sigar report: "Inadequate planning for ANSF facilities increases risk for \$11.4 billion program", <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/2011-01-26audit-11-06.pdf>, p. 1 (Last access 15 Aug 2020)

²⁰ Sigar report: "ANA Garrison at Kunduz Does Not Meet All Quality and Oversight Requirements; Serious Soil Issues Need to Be Addressed", p. 12, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/2010-04-30audit-10-09.pdf>, (Last accessed 20 Sep 2020)

2.3 Poor Security

Another major challenge which affects every sphere of reconstruction effort is poor security; from implementing projects to monitoring and oversight.²¹

There are many reasons behind poor security, however while the first to mention is the unfriendly environment of project sites; where NGOs and contractors have to rely more on their private security services. According to Afghanistan's government, they were required to contract with Afghanistan Police Protection Force (APPF) instead of contracting private companies for security purposes. According to SIGAR report in 2012, on the security sector in projects of US aid, it has found that contracting APPF would result in increased cost due to APPF fee structure.²²

Secondly, when United States and International forces withdrew in 2014 from Afghanistan, it resulted in difficulty for implementing and monitoring projects due to the fact of dangerous security environment. This has brought a challenge both for implementers and inspectors to visit and inspect those projects. The security forces of United States have a policy to only provide security services in those areas which are near to roads at one-hour distance of near one-hour travel to a medical facility, which causes a hurdle for inspection.²³

2.4 Questionable Sustainability

Sustainability itself is another great risk for the efforts of reconstruction. United States has built infrastructures and launched programs that government in Afghanistan has neither technical nor financial ability to operate and maintain. According to SIGAR, United States has poured tens of billions of dollars for everything like from electricity networks to road and to schools, security facilities and clinics.²⁴ However, as we and the World Bank have pointed out, Government of Afghanistan is not capable to

²¹ Sigar report: "ANA Garrison at Kunduz Does Not Meet All Quality and Oversight Requirements; Serious Soil Issues Need to Be Addressed", <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/2010-04-30audit-10-09.pdf>, p. (Last accessed 20 Sep 2020)

²² Sigar report: "Afghanistan Public Protection Force: Concerns Remain about Force's Capabilities and Costs", <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/sigar%20audit%2013-15%20appf.pdf>, p. 6 (last accessed: 20 Sep 2020)

²³ Sigar report: "", https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/testimony/2013-04-18%20SIGAR%20Written%20Testimony_Senate%20State%20and%20Foreign%20Ops%20Sub.pdf, p. 5 (Last accessed 20 Sep 2020)

²⁴ Sigar report: "Challenges Affecting U.S. Foreign Assistance to Afghanistan", https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/testimony/SIGAR%2013-10T_%202013-4-10.pdf, p. 3 (Last accessed 24 Sep 2020)

have enough revenue, human capital and institutional capability to maintain and operate much of this infrastructure²⁵.

Off-budget aid is defined as any assistance spent by a donor partner and implementing agency outside of the Government's national budget; because the funds bypass the core national budget, the government has no control over these funds. On-budget aid, in contrast, is donor support provided directly to the Afghan Government and its national budget, allowing government the discretion to apply the funds to identified national priorities²⁶. Most of critiques are focused on off-budget spending where government was not well aware of the expenses in the name of Afghanistan and in some cases government of Afghanistan was not even asked whether a huge and costly project is needed or not? Or at least what are priorities for the government of Afghanistan. As president Karzai has mentioned that after taking office, government of Afghanistan presented two basic proposals for rebuilding the infrastructure. They were about reconstruction of roads, provision of electricity and building dams for national electricity to provide nationwide. About the reconstruction of road, they were interested, as Mr. Karzai says, "because actually they needed roads for their own needs" so they started reconstruction of roads to link provinces in better way. While in the sector of electrical energy they never assisted us to be self-reliant.²⁷ United States has not taken any sort of firm step to work with government of Afghanistan. At first they responded with "Yes" but then they rejected and stepped back. They told us to approach World Bank and Asian Development Bank while they were also not interested. As Mr. Karzai puts it out, "they (WB & ADB) were also under their (US) influence." According to him, United States was not and is not honest about its war and engagement in Afghanistan.²⁸

2.5 Pervasive Corruption

Entire efforts for construction in Afghanistan is threatened by corruption. It takes away funds from important programs, questions rule of law and decreases public support for the

²⁵ Ibid. p. 5.

²⁶ IDRC | CRDI – International Development Research Center, "Promoting the Effective Use of Aid in Afghanistan", <https://ucentralasia.org/Content/downloads/Promoting%20the%20Effective%20Use%20of%20Aid%20in%20Afghanistan.pdf>, (Last accessed 20 May 2021)

²⁷ TOLONews, "Black and white: Ex-president Karzai on his presidential journey," September 3rd, 2015. Video, 01:46.35, <https://youtu.be/92pYA-EkUhE>

²⁸ TOLONews, "Black and white: Ex-president Karzai on his presidential journey," September 3rd, 2015. Video, 01:46.35, <https://youtu.be/92pYA-EkUhE>

government of Afghanistan. Audits have shown that there have been shortcomings by capacity of Afghanistan's government and lack of political will to fight corruption and it was recommended by SIGAR for United States to introduce an integrated anti-corruption strategy but US embassy in Kabul developed a draft of it while it was left not adopted.²⁹ SIGAR is now working on the draft to evaluate it and implement this draft.

Regarding the matter of corruption which international community and particularly United States believed in Afghanistan, it is debatable to most extent. In an inclusive interview with Tolonews, the ex-president of Afghanistan, Mr. Hamid Karzai refutes this notion. According to his thoughts; he believes these phenomena are normal in all countries and especially in post conflict countries like Afghanistan but he strictly responses upon questioning government under his leadership.³⁰ He says there was corruption in Afghanistan and he does not reject it, but it was not to the extent International Media were quoting. Interestingly, he says all these negative propagandas was to put pressure on him to align his support for all what United States wanted to do in Afghanistan. He says major corruption instances are caused by foreigners themselves.³¹

He further continues by expressing that, "we started from zero, there was not any institution in Afghanistan, and there were no educated staff in country's machinery. We brought advancement to Afghanistan, we handed over organizations to new government, we brought national assembly, freedom of speech, civil services, and we established foundations of national army for Afghanistan."³²

There is no doubt that state-building is a major task, it's not one day or night task. It's neither by chairs, tables and computers but it needs to educate and have talented individuals. Mr. Karzai states that if there was such big corruption that Afghanistan was number one in the world, then how these changes took place? He further defends his government and says, "In 2001 when new government took office, Afghanistan's income per capita was only \$150 and while he was leaving office for National Unity

²⁹ Sigar report: "Challenges Affecting U.S. Foreign Assistance to Afghanistan", https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/testimony/SIGAR%2013-10T_%202013-4-10.pdf, p. 5 (Last accessed 25 Sep 2020)

³⁰ Tolonews, "Black and white: Ex-president Karzai on his presidential journey," September 3rd, 2015. Video, 01:46.35, <https://youtu.be/g2pYA-EkUe>

³¹ Tolonews, "Black and white: Ex-president Karzai on his presidential journey," September 3rd, 2015. Video, 01:46.35, <https://youtu.be/g2pYA-EkUe>

³² Ibid.

government, it was raised to \$700.³³ Afghanistan's foreign currency reserve was less than \$180 million including gold reserves and today it has reached to \$7.5 thousand million which is more than some neighboring countries.³⁴

2.6 Concerns about Direct Assistance

There is a hot discussion in Afghanistan's media and panels about direct assistance. Everyone questions United States and other donors for the matter. Direct Assistance is defined as the aid which is provided through national budget of a recipient state. In the International Conference in London in January 2010, United States and other donors supported this request by Afghanistan to increase the development aid's proportion to 50% over two years.³⁵ This support through on-budget aid was made conditional for Afghanistan. Afghanistan's government was ought to strengthen its financial management system, fighting corruption, improving execution of budget and to develop the capacity of government.³⁶ After six months in Kabul Conference on Afghanistan, United States and International donor community reaffirmed their commitment to channel 50% on-budget support for government of Afghanistan incase government in Kabul has achieved the goal and necessary reforms.³⁷

Due to lack of capacity in governance and accountability for funds, increasingly corruption and the requirement of adequate oversight for long-term, donors believed direct assistance to government of Afghanistan would threaten the objectives of reconstruction.

2.7 Lack of Afghan Capacity

Some studies have indicated that the direct assistance could have better results on Afghanistan's economy the assistance in sense of "off-budget". For example, World Bank has called upon international donors for increasing the on-budget flow of and to manage operations and maintenance with systems of government which will help in aid effectiveness. However same WB has warned that government of Afghanistan would need to overcome serious

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ TOLONews, "Black and white: Ex-president Karzai on his presidential journey," September 3rd, 2015. Video, 01:46.35, <https://youtu.be/g2pYA-EkUhE>

³⁵ Sigar report: "Challenges Affecting U.S. Foreign Assistance to Afghanistan", https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/testimony/SIGAR%2013-10T_%202013-4-10.pdf, p. 5 (Last accessed 27 Sep 2020)

³⁶ Ibid. p. 6

³⁷ Ibid. p 6

capacity hurdles for being able to receive and use aid on budget effectively.³⁸

The execution of budget still remains a problem for government of Afghanistan. In December 2012, House of Representatives of Afghanistan took decision to impeach eleven ministers for their failure to spend at least 50% of their prior fiscal year budgets (Tolonews, 2012).³⁹ According to WB, over next years, there would be a push needed both by government and donors to improve capacity of government to spend the required budget.⁴⁰

2.8 Imbalance between executive, legislative and judicial branches

We discussed much about mismanagement and corruption in Afghanistan due to United States policy, but that is one side of coin. We cannot forget about what government of Afghanistan in two terms of President Hamid Karzai has done. One of major problems in post conflict states is commonly issues related to rule of law and enforcement. Afghanistan has long-lasting conflict due to insurgency. The institutions of Afghanistan were still weak till 2014. After the fraudulent elections of 2009 and 2010, Hamid Karzai, his government and parliament of Afghanistan had deficits in their legitimacy. The balance of power between legislative, executive and judicial branches did not work well. The executive branch manipulated and dominated two other branches which parliament was fragmented. The judiciary was most corrupt among the state institutions.⁴¹

Effectiveness thus was decreasing from center to provinces and district levels. And the constitution was not followed while it was repeatedly breached by executive.

2.9 Pervasive Corruption

However, the government of Afghanistan is committed to tackle the deeply rooted corruption, but to some extent it has remained not very serious to take actions to prosecute officials

³⁸The World Bank, "Afghanistan in Transition: Looking beyond 2014", <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/13107>, p. 20 (Last accessed 28 Sep 2020)

³⁹ TOLONews, "Lawmakers Summon Ministers of Underspent Budgets", <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/lawmakers-summon-ministers-underspent-budgets>, (Last accessed 30 Sep 2020)

⁴⁰The World Bank, "Afghanistan in Transition: Looking beyond 2014", <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/13107>, p. 20 (Last accessed 28 Sep 2020)

⁴¹ Afghan Analysts Network, "Report Shows Judiciary is Most Corrupt Institution in Afghanistan", <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/reports/economy-development-environment/afghanistan-anti-corruption-institutions-too-many-and-with-too-few-results/>, (Last accessed 28 Nov 2020)

who are in high ranking or well connected. According to Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee's (MEC) annual 2017 report, some ministries like Ministry of Finance (MoF) and Ministry of Mines and Petroleum (MoM) has made progress to recommendations of Committee to fight corruption but justice sector has not yet met with the required recommendations⁴². So due to wide range of corruption, the direct assistance would have risks which will create harm and would only benefit those who are well-connected.

About 60% of population in Afghanistan is under 25.⁴³ United States Agency for International Development decided to help this young group of population and believed this group of unskilled and neglected population are more in vulnerable conditions and are prone to join insurgency and so established a 3-year program for this generation to be productive members of society in Afghanistan and allocated for the program \$50 million. But Inspector General found that there is "little evidence" that this program had come near its goals after many years past.⁴⁴ There is a darker image of this summary which shows near-total failure of the program offered. USAID has submitted this project to a contractor while didn't pay little attention to it. This is unfortunate to say that almost every project of foreign aid in Afghanistan has same fate.

In a report by SIGAR it has revealed that total amount of funds of United States for nonmilitary sector, since 2002 it is some \$100 billion which is more than United States has every allocated for rebuilding a country.⁴⁵ This was data of July 2014, and after than Congress has pledged \$16.5 billion more for reconstruction. Saying all those huge amounts, neither Afghanistan's government nor United States has brought one single sustainable program or institution.

⁴² MEC – Monitoring & Evaluation Committee, "Afghanistan's fight against corruption, the other battle field", <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5909d5f34.pdf>, (Last accessed 15 May 2021), p. 3.

⁴³ UNFPA, "Young people", <https://afghanistan.unfpa.org/en/node/15227>, (Last accessed on 30 January 2021)

⁴⁴ SIGAR report, "USAID Spent Almost \$400 Million on an Afghan Stabilization Project despite Uncertain Results, but Has Taken Steps to Better Assess Similar Efforts", <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/2012-04-25audit-12-08Revised.pdf>, (Last accessed on 30 January 2021)

⁴⁵ SIGAR report, "Lessons Learned from Oversight of the U.S. Agency for International Development's Efforts in Afghanistan", <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/testimony/sigar-14-46-ty.pdf>, (Last accessed on 30 January 2021)

2.10 Forms of Corruption

According to surveys conducted by several agencies, over 70 types of corruptions are there which have affected the people which are from public administration and elected bodies to Taliban, international aid and private sector. Most of victims of corruptions are reported to be affected from government institutions.⁴⁶

2.11 Bribery

According to Center for American Progress report⁴⁷, people must pay bribes in Afghanistan to secure most of their public services. Another United Nation study shows that bribes are almost the only source to rely on to complete most of public services. Petty bribes have been one cause of distress amount Afghanistan's citizen⁴⁸.

Teachers, judges, custom officers and prosecutors are those employees who mostly receive bribes. According to a UN estimate in 2012, 50% of population has paid bribes in that year where it believes in some parts of the country the percentage has raised to 70%. Doctors, paramedics and nurses are accountable for 15 to 20 percent of whole bribes. In 2013, 43% of population believed that civil servants are corrupt. In 52% of households, at least one member of them had applied for public jobs while 45% have paid bribes to secure the jobs.⁴⁹

2.12 Education System

The biggest form of corruption exists in education sector which involves “ghost teachers” and sometimes teachers who are double-registered. According to SIGAR report it says that senior officials in this ministry were intentionally falsifying data on number of schools and teachers to over-bill international aid providers. Thus, millions of dollars were used to pay funds for

⁴⁶ Survey report - Asia Foundation, “The growing challenge of corruption in Afghanistan”, <https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/FNLcorruptionchapterOccasionalPaperJuly30.pdf>, p. 7, (Last Accessed on 20 January 2021)

⁴⁷ Center for American Progress, “Tackling Corruption in Afghanistan: It’s Now or Never”, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2015/03/17/108613/tackling-corruption-in-afghanistan-its-now-or-never/>, (Last accessed on 20 January 2021)

⁴⁸ UNDOC, “Corruption in Afghanistan: Current patterns and trends”, https://www.unodc.org/documents/frontpage/Corruption_in_Afghanistan_FINAL.pdf, (Last accessed on 21 May 2021), p. 9.

⁴⁹ UNODC, “Corruption in Afghanistan, recent patterns and trends”, https://www.unodc.org/documents/frontpage/Corruption_in_Afghanistan_FINAL.pdf, p. 2, (Last accessed on 10 January 2021)

those nonexistent teachers and schools which were sort of encouraging dishonest officials of Afghanistan.⁵⁰

According to an article in International War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) in 2012, it has explored that in many schools there are not teachers or there are teachers who do not understand anything about their subjects, and teachers who cannot read or write. 20% of aid budget for teachers' salary in one province to actual teachers and rest went to education officers instead of ghost-teachers⁵¹.

2.13 Graft in Customs System

There is graft within the customs system according November 2014 New York Times report⁵². This phenomenon is the actual reason for the shortfall of revenue in of government. A new report shows Since then little has been done to tackle the issue. Being custom agent is one of most well-earned jobs in Afghanistan and the job may be offered to an individual who is well connected to corrupt officials in the provinces or in center. Experts believe the custom agents are one of primary sources of corruption. According to SIGAR report, there are five major challenges to anti-graft (anti-corruption) initiatives, and most important is the government's failure to remove unqualified and potentially corrupt personnel from anticorruption institutions or to protect reformers.⁵³

2.14 Cash Smuggling

According to Washington Post reported in December 2012, United States had provided to Afghanistan with bulk currency counters in Kabul International Airport to help in preventing the cash smuggling while in response government of Afghanistan provided a way to bypass machines for VIPs.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ SIGAR report, "Schools in Herat province: observations from site visits", <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/special%20projects/SIGAR-17-12-SP.pdf>, p. 6, (Last accessed on 31 December 2020)

⁵¹ Special Investigation IWPR, "Afghanistan: The ghost teachers of Ghor", <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/afghanistan-ghost-teachers-ghor>, (Last accessed 10 Nov 2015)

⁵² New York Times, "At Afghan Border, Graft Is Part of the Bargain", <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/12/world/asia/in-afghanistan-customs-system-corruption-is-part-of-the-bargain.html>, (Last accessed 20 May 2021)

⁵³ SIGAR report, "", <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2020-01-30qr.pdf>, p. 16, (Last accessed on 13 December 2020)

⁵⁴ SIGAR report, "Hamid Karzai International Airport: Despite Improvements, Controls to Detect Cash Smuggling Still Need Strengthening", <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/special%20projects/SIGAR-21-15-SP.pdf>, p. 5, (Last accessed on 30 January 2021)

2.15 Nepotism and Patronage

Getting public jobs is based on nepotism and favoritism unfortunately and merit does not speak here. Overall patronage politics is central route of growing corruption in Afghanistan. Patronage is century-long tradition in Afghanistan and now it has become integral part of society. Because of these issue individuals without connections have enormous difficulties to get positions in government. On the other hand, corrupt officials enjoy impunity, the honest officials are denied from reaching powerful positions. As Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) indicates in its National Corruption Survey, one quarter of respondents stated they have been a victim of nepotism, with the practice most prevalent in the Northern region and least prevalent in the Central Highlands and Central regions.⁵⁵

2.16 Judicial Corruption

According to UN and Transparency International, majority of people in Afghanistan consider judiciary as most corrupt. Judicial corruption is a common issue in the country that affects all levels of legal system. Corrupt individuals in Judiciary can fill their pockets with hundreds of thousands of dollars as bribes. Appointment of judges is as a result of “under-the-table deals” that are largely unqualified with legal standards. Judges are subject to pressure of warlords and other influential individuals in Afghanistan. There is no oversight by other branches of government which gives it open hand and transparency lacks even in Supreme Court decisions.⁵⁶

2.17 Corruption in Police Forces

The Afghanistan National Police (ANP) is considered corrupt and ministry is criticized for being failed to account for billions of dollars allocated for salaries of police through a United Nations administrated trust fund. Corruption of higher officials has rubbed half of the common police which have pushed them to take bribes from public.

According to a survey in 2012 by Asia Foundation it has found that half of those people who dealt with police officers in previous

⁵⁵ IWA, “National Corruption Survey”, https://iwaweb.org/wpcontent/uploads/2014/12/NCS__2018__English__WEB.pdf, p. 60, (Last accessed 30 January 2021)

⁵⁶ Transparency International, “Corruption in Afghanistan: What needs to change”, <https://www.transparency.org/en/news/corruption-in-afghanistan-what-needs-to-change>, (Last accessed 30 January 2021)

years were been forced to pay bribes.⁵⁷ From 2009, policemen in some parts of Afghanistan started to get their salaries through their cell phones which made it safe to skim off part or half of their salaries.⁵⁸ In October 2014 the Fox News reported that police officers have stolen \$300 million from a UNDP fund used to pay to police officers. According to a 2015 report, some police officers have informed Taliban about operations for bribe.⁵⁹

2.18 Corruption in Military Forces

The National Army of Afghanistan is more professional than National Police but unfortunately faces misallocation of resources and bribery. It is also reported that Afghanistan Air Force officials were trafficking opium and weapons.⁶⁰ As a report indicates, due to corruption Defense Department has lost account for 200000 weapons which were allotted to Afghanistan National Security Forces and Afghanistan National Police and report believes that these weapons were sold to Taliban.⁶¹

In another rare case, reported by Aljazeera, the oversight committee of Ministry of Defense reported that more than \$200 million was over paid to fuel contractors and later senior officials were fired and the contracts were cancelled.⁶² In May 2015, another report was revealing that Afghanistan's forces were selling U.S weapons to Taliban and most of light weapons supplied to Afghanistan's security forces were lost.⁶³

⁵⁷ Asia Foundation Survey, "A survey of the Afghan people", <https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/Surveybook2012web1.pdf>, p. 33, (Last accessed 31 January 2021)

⁵⁸ Investigation; "Responses from people featured in The Afghanistan Papers", https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/responses-from-people-featured-in-the-afghanistan-papers/2019/12/08/086864aa-0bed-11ea-97ac-a7ccc8dd1ebc_story.html, (Last accessed on 31 January 2021)

⁵⁹ Joseph Goldstein, "Police Force in Afghanistan Is Studied for Ties to Taliban", <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/09/world/asia/police-force-in-afghanistan-is-studied-for-ties-to-taliban.html>, (Last accessed on 30 January 2021)

⁶⁰ Matthew Rosenberg, "Officials Hinder Inquiry Into Afghan Air Force on Smuggling, Two Americans Say", <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/10/world/asia/afghanis-are-hindering-smuggling-inquiry-2-americans-say.html>, (Last accessed on 31 January 2021)

⁶¹ Parag R. Dharmavarapu, "Corruption and Graft in Post-Conflict Afghanistan", <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1057/corruption-and-graft-in-post-conflict-afghanistan>, (Last accessed on 31 January 2021)

⁶² SIGAR report, "DOD Improved Its Accountability for Vehicles Provided to the Afghan National Security Forces, but Should Follow Up on End-Use Monitoring Findings", <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/2012-01-12audit-12-04.pdf>, p. 3 (Last accessed on 31 January 2021)

⁶³ Jonathon Broader & Sami Yousofzai, "Arming the Enemy in Afghanistan", <https://www.newsweek.com/2015/05/29/arming-enemy-afghanistan-332840.html>, (Last accessed on 31 January 2021)

2.19 Kabul Bank Scandal

The bank was established in 2004 as the first private bank after Taliban. Two individuals were founders of the bank namely, Khalilullah Feroze and Shirkhan Farnood.⁶⁴ The Guardian has named Feroze as an individual who is second in rank to damage Afghanistan after Taliban.⁶⁵ Kabul Bank was put in charge of the payroll accounts for nation's civil servant, police officers and soldiers. Ex-President Karzai's brother Mahmood Karzai became third share-holder.⁶⁶ It is reported that Kabul Bank has spent \$4 million in 2009 second election campaign for Karzai in return to get 430000 government accounts.⁶⁷

According to report, Farnood and Feroze drained the savings of depositors which was almost \$579 million and caused a deadlock so the bank collapsed.⁶⁸ The scandal demolished confidences in public banking system and many foreign aid payments were dried. Feroze was convicted and was imprisoned for his role in Kabul Bank but in November 2015, instead of being kept in prison he signed a new contract with National Unity Government to build a huge real-estate called *Shahrak-Hoshmand* in Persian or Smart City.⁶⁹

However, President Karzai negates his role and other stakeholders in the collapsing of Kabul Bank.⁷⁰ He expresses his views that the actual responsible is Embassy of United States in Kabul. He says in a meeting with General Petraeus and then-ambassador of United States in Kabul, Dr. Rangin Dadfar Spanta chief advisor on National Security. Omar Zakhilwal came in unannounced and during the meeting he pointed out the issue of Kabul Bank to Ambassador. He told that some officials from Embassy of United States were telling senior Bank staff to transfer money from Kabul Bank to Dubai Banks. He says all this was the plan of United States. Through this they wanted to put pressure on him to sign Strategic Agreement. When this was exposed by Omar Zakhilwal, Finance Minister under Karzai, he says he was

⁶⁴ BBC News, "Kabul Bank fraud: Sherkhan Farnood and Khalilullah Ferozi jailed", <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-21666689>, (Last accessed on 31 January 2021)

⁶⁵ Jon Boone, "The financial scandal that broke Afghanistan's Kabul Bank", <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jun/16/kabul-bank-afghanistan-financial-scandal>, (Last accessed on 31 January 2021)

⁶⁶ Jon Boone, "The financial scandal that broke Afghanistan's Kabul Bank", <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jun/16/kabul-bank-afghanistan-financial-scandal>, (Last accessed on 31 January 2021)

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Emma Graham-Harrison, "Afghan government signs huge property deal with shamed ex-banker", <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/05/afghan-government-signs-huge-property-deal-shamed-ex-banker>, (Last accessed on 31 January 2021)

⁷⁰ Ibid.

threatened after the meeting by them and was told not to give any further comments about this.⁷¹

2.20 Zakhilwal Scandal

In August 2012, Omar Zakhilwal who was Finance Minister under Karzai and then Adviser to Ashraf Ghani, committed a huge fraud of more than \$1 million and transferred it to his bank account in Canada.⁷² Zakhilwal was accused of hiring his relatives as senior customs officials.⁷³ Upon impeaching him in parliament of Afghanistan, Zakhilwal charged several Members of Parliament with smuggling flour, processing more than 2000 illegal cars; smuggling oil tankers and alcohol and thus he secured his position. It was then where international aid and military organizations also encouraged corruption. They were granting contracts to Members of Parliament who owned illegal businesses.⁷⁴

Conclusion

As mentioned above working with fragile states is having its own troubles and hardships. In a scenario like Afghanistan, and list of challenges that International Community, particularly United States faced in Afghanistan is not a surprise. One of major issues giving birth to other issues is the lack of planning and coordination. Negligence of recipient government's national priorities and going for what donor believes better than owner of the land. Taking big decisions instead of others may give a donor leading role but it also gives a backlash. We can clearly observe from what United States has done till now from work of SIGAR which is an independent body for oversight of funds provided by United States. In most of the projects SIGAR has indicated that there were inadequate planning, poor quality assurance, and questionable sustainability. While these matters are not alone for one side, both United States as donor and government of Afghanistan are responsible for them. Unfortunate and miserable phenomenon of corruption brought hurdles on the way of advancement. It blocked the assistance in its direct form and on-budget mechanism. Indeed, there were lack of capacity and ability to handle and use aid correct prioritized fields.

⁷¹ TOLONews, "Black and white: Ex-president Karzai on his presidential journey," September 3rd, 2015. Video, 01:46.35, <https://youtu.be/92pYA-EkUhE>

⁷² Rob Taylor & Abdul Aziz Ibrahim, "Afghan finance minister faces corruption investigation", <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-afghanistan-corruption/afghan-finance-minister-faces-corruption-investigation-idUKBRE8710CM20120802>, (Last accessed on 31 January 2021)

⁷³ Margherita Stancati, "Political Battle Lights Up Afghan TV", <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324216004578481274146540516>, (Last accessed on 31 January 2021)

⁷⁴ Mujib Mashal, "Afghanistan's Cycle of Corruption", <https://www.thedailybeast.com/afghanistans-cycle-of-corruption>, (Last accessed on 31 January 2021)

United States and government of Afghanistan must take concrete actions to come up with solutions and pave the ways and hurdles in past to get fruitful results for their join efforts.

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