



**PATRONAGE AND POLITICAL CORRUPTION IN AFGHANISTAN SINCE
2001**

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ABSTRACT

The present thesis about political corruption and patronage in Afghanistan, aims to determine the genesis for the problem of corruption and find out the causes, effects, acts and types of corruption initially. This thesis emphasizes that the main causes of corruption are weak rule of law, lack of transparency and accountability in government expenditures, low wages of public servants, corrupt judiciary, nepotism, the monopoly-power of high-ranking officials that provide opportunities for corruption. The thesis goes on discussing the history of Afghanistan and providing a profound understanding of political corruption and patronage in Afghanistan since 2001. The debates on the effects of corruption on economic growth and public procurement will be discussed in detail. This thesis found that the effects of corruption on economic growth are negative, corruption decreases investment and leads to poor quality of goods and services. This thesis will provide recommendations for eliminating the problem of corruption. Moreover, the failed strategies of government to curb corruption will be discussed for example the attempt of High Office for Oversight (HOO) and the new strategies developed to fight corruption in Afghanistan will be discussed, such as, Afghan National Strategy to Combat Corruption (ANSCC). Corruption is an international problem for both developed and developing countries and both are experiencing various forms and types of corruption. In some countries such as Afghanistan, this problem became a serious obstacle for the development of the country and lead to poverty, unemployment of skillful labor, insecurity, poor government performances and lack of education opportunities. The research aims to find the reasons behind corruption in Afghanistan and show the devastating

effects of corruption on different aspects of life. Looking to the history of Afghanistan the main factors that promoted corruption in Afghanistan were a huge inflow of international capital for the reconstruction of Afghanistan with no or less accountability and three decades of war and brutality lead to erosion of Afghan institutions, furthermore, imposed psychological pressure on the minds of the public. So this situation led to decrease public hope for a prosperous future in the country. Corruption in Afghanistan seriously damaged the trust of the public to government and decreased national and international investment in the country. Corruption perception is different from a country to another country, for example, one person's gift will be another person's bribe. So, even the acts of corruption have no common perception among the scholars.

Keywords: *Afghanistan, political corruption, patronage, transparency, nepotism, petty corruption, grand corruption*

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan is a victim of corruption; according to the survey of Transparency International (TI) in 2016 the country has grabbed its place among 10 most corrupt countries in the world. The study focuses on the relation between corruption and inflow of international capital in the country; it has long been argued that corruption occurs when there are opportunities for it. Massive international inflow of funds for the reconstruction of Afghanistan and the allocation of these funds without accountability and transparency were associated with promoting corruption in the country.

Corruption exists in both industrialized and developing countries, but in transition countries, the change from closed economies to free market economy has provided huge opportunities for extraction of rents, high profits and has usually associated by a change from a well-organized system of corruption to a more chaotic system (Mashal, 2011, p.73). Corruption is a vital issue in the state building policy because it creates major obstacles to political, economic and social development in the country. In the case of post-war countries, this problem is even more serious because of ineffective government institutions of those countries cannot maintaining rule of law (Mohseni, 2006, p.142).

Research Methodology

Different types of research methods will be used to make a better conclusion and have an appropriate approach to the subject. To obtain the correct approach to the problem of patronage and political corruption, I will collect the data through analysis of government documents and published reports and secondary data analysis to find the existing and newly published information and being able to write a well-organized academic thesis research. The primary data will be collected through analysis of government documents and published reports. Furthermore, secondary data will be collected from national and international surveys, books, journals, articles, newspaper and governmental data. Afghanistan is the field of my study, but I will also analyze international scholarly researches about this subject, to be able to find sufficient information and obtain reliable consequences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Definition and Conceptualization of Corruption

The definition of corruption and majority of the studies point out that corruption is an illegal act which is done by individuals or groups in public office or private sector to gain personal profits by breaking laws. Transparency International defines corruption as the “abuse of entrusted power for private gain”. Consequently, corruption is the abuse of public office and resources for private or personal benefit. The term "abuse," in this sense, can happen by officials hold public positions or by those who seek to influence them (Johnston 1986, p.460).

Torabi describes the problem of corruption from a wider perspective; he claims that corruption is both about action and inaction. He states that "When someone is in a position of power that allows him or her to make certain decisions on behalf of others, and if these decisions provide gains to individuals or groups that generally accepted rules do not otherwise allow, and then corruption is implied" (Torabi, 2012 p.2). Graaf claims that corruption creates negative images in the majority's mind since it is associated with bribery, nepotism, patronage and procurement, etc. Corruption is a phenomenon that exists in societies from an early age and then mechanisms for fighting corruption are initiated.

2. Types of corruption

Corruption involves a various set of behaviors and practices which have their own determinants, results, and possible cures. Corruption can be examined from different angles such as political, economic, bureaucratic and legislative. According to Mohseni and Mashal along with other scholars classifies corruption into two categories a low-level, administrative or petty corruption and higher level, grand or political corruption.

First type of corruption is low-level or petty corruption is affecting directly the daily-life of citizens because it is associated with daily work of people and undermine citizen's confidence moreover decrease their trust in government bodies. In other words, low-level or Petty corruption generally concerns the people in their daily administrative relations, for example, the amounts of bribes and kickbacks which makes corruption enormously popular and spread a very wicked perception about the integrity of government institutions with civil society (Mohseni, 2006, p.142-143).

Second type of corruption is high-level corruption is related to political corruption which is also called grand corruption. Mashal claims that political corruption has been associated with high ranking officials or political decision makers who abuse the laws and regulations to acquire personal satisfaction. This type of corruption is difficult to identify and measure especially when at least some segments of the population gain from it. Political corruption will most probably have severe and disastrous consequences for a society since this type has serious results for a nation that's why it is called grand corruption (Mashal, 2011, p.72). Grand corruption is defined by Transparency International as "The abuse of high-level power that benefits the few at the expense of the many", concerning higher levels of corruption, both in amounts and practices.

3. Acts of corruption

There are many acts of political corruption which involves small and big deals of money and also lead to bigger problems in the country. There is no commonly accepted list of corrupt acts and no definite explanations for acts of corruption. Each scholar is interpreting the phenomenon from their own cultural, political and economic understanding while this perception can change from country to country. So, each country has different experiences from the phenomenon of corruption (Zyck, 2012, p.5).

Torabi claims that corruption has various forms for example; the head of the international agency that get the money allocated for reconstruction and development of a country and abuse these funds to enhance the comfort of his/her colleagues. There are too many forms and acts of corruption and my thesis will not include every act of corruption, but I provided some of the main acts according to popular scholars in the field of corruption. Everything that a person is doing by breaking law, to get benefit in terms of money, asset, position, promotion and any other favor is considered as corrupt act.

4. Causes of Corruption

Causes of corruption can be different, for example, low salaries of public officials, a weak judiciary, patronage, lack of transparency, the monopoly power of politicians etc. can be considered causes of corruption. Tanzi claims that in many countries, the lack of transparency or complexity in rules and laws (lack of standard norms) creates a plentiful basis for corruption.

The most important factor causing corruption is weak legislation and the inefficiency of law enforcement institutions (Tanzi, 1998, p.20). There are four institutions of corruption; low salaries, monopoly power, discretion, and lack of accountability. There are four incentives of corruption; non-democratic political structure, lack of effective legal structure, weak rule of law and cultural differences of corruption (Rose-Ackerman, 2016, p.28). In case of political structure, Rose-Ackerman states that in democracy politicians and leaders who are engaged in seeking private interest and personal income can be expelled and voted out of office.

According to Zyck low salaries paid to public officials had led them to engage in extracting a small amount of bribes which is considered as government poorness. Lambsdorff emphasizes finding the causes of corruption. In some societies, the loyalty to families and friends is high, where it clashes with official duty and cause political patronage and nepotism.

Impacts of corruption are diverse, since the phenomenon carries a vast set of behaviors. Thus, the consequences of corruption are examined by different approach such as social, economic and political. Majority of scholars accepted corruption has a major negative impact on the country political, economic and social environment. Corruption is likely to increase income inequality because it allows well-positioned individuals to

take advantage of the government activities at the cost of the rest of the population (Tanzi, 1998, p.26).

5. Effects of Corruption

There are various effects of corruption on political structure and politics, economic performance and growth, and social integration and social trust among the population. Rose-Ackerman in 2016, who classifies consequences of corruption into 12 factors which are varying from country to country and from society to society. Rose-Ackerman claims that corruption has devastating effect and leads to slow economic growth, low investment, inflation, monetary devaluation, tax evasion, high inequality, low trust, poor education, low-quality infrastructure, high crime rates, trafficking, greater environment harms and increased health and safety risks (Rose-Ackerman, 2016, p.28). Lambsdorff states that corruption will create inequality among society and it will decrease the incentive to invest in a particular corrupt country. Corruption will bring a situation and keep the poor in a circumstance that they will not be able to ask for justice to keep powerful and rich accountable to the public.

Mauro also claims that corruption deteriorates economic growth by decreasing the incentives for investment and lead to poverty due to corrupt and complex bureaucratic procedures where opportunity is created for rent seeking. Mauro argues that corruption has a negative correlation with economic growth, corruption leads to poor institutional performance and poor public or private services are provided as a result of the rent-seeking behavior of public office holders.

Investors may avoid investing in a highly corrupt country because of complex bureaucratic steps and lesser facilities of doing business in such countries, which reduce domestic and foreign direct investment (FDI) (Mauro, 1995, p.682). As World Bank (WB) states, in the long run, expectations of bribery may distort the number and types of contracts placed for bidding, the method used to award contracts, and the speed or efficiency with which public officials do their work in the absence of bribes. As a consequence, corruption is a big obstacle for economic growth and development of the country.

6. Perception of Corruption

According to Transparency International (TI) the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) in 2016 the measurement of corruption through a worldwide survey, which shows us the corruption perception based on comparative scales. In the following Table 2.1 will provide TI's data for the 20 most corrupt countries of the world in 2016.

Table 2.1: TI's data for 20 most corrupt countries of the world in 2016.

2016 Rank	Country	2016 Score	2015 Score	2014 Score	2012 Score	2011 Score	Region
154	Turkmenistan	22	18	17	17	17	Europe and Central Asia
154	Zimbabwe	22	21	21	21	20	Sub Saharan Africa
156	Cambodia	21	21	21	20	22	Asia Pacific
156	Democratic Republic of Congo	21	22	22	22	21	Sub Saharan Africa
156	Uzbekistan	21	19	18	17	17	Europe and Central Asia
159	Burundi	20	21	20	21	19	Sub Saharan Africa
159	Central African Republic	20	24	24	25	26	Sub Saharan Africa
159	Chad	20	22	22	19	19	Sub Saharan Africa
159	Haiti	20	17	19	19	19	Americas
159	Republic of Congo	20	23	23	22	26	Sub Saharan Africa
164	Angola	18	15	19	23	22	Sub Saharan Africa
164	Eritrea	18	18	18	20	25	Sub Saharan Africa
166	Iraq	17	16	16	16	18	Middle East and North Africa
166	Venezuela	17	17	19	20	19	Americas
168	Guinea-Bissau	16	17	19	19	25	Sub Saharan Africa
169	Afghanistan	15	11	12	8	8	Asia Pacific
170	Libya	14	16	18	15	21	Middle East and North Africa
170	Sudan	14	12	11	11	13	Middle East and North Africa
170	Yemen	14	18	19	18	23	Middle East and North Africa
173	Syria	13	18	20	17	26	Middle East and North Africa
174	Korea (North)	12	8	8	8	8	Asia Pacific
175	South Sudan	11	15	15	14	N/A	Sub Saharan Africa
176	Somalia	10	8	8	8	8	Sub Saharan Africa

ANALYSIS OF CORRUPTION IN AFGHANISTAN

1. Overview of Corruption in Afghanistan

According to USAID the main reason of corruption in Afghanistan was the political violence and government inability to monitor the development projects which were

funded. The problems behind the availability of opportunities for corruption and lack of monitoring were insecurity to monitor funded projects and devastating impact of political violence. The government system was not well-organized and monitored so it led to the involvement of public officials in corruption and abuse of the public offices for private benefits and main motivation behind this was the weakness of government control and the lack of law enforcement (USAID, 2009, pp.5-7).

According to Zyck, the poor governance and lack of transparency resulted in creating corruption opportunities in public institutions. Moreover, the salary of official and especially military officials and soldiers were too low, this became another reason for them to involve in a small amount of bribery or petty corruption. The Afghan government also established some institutions to prevent corruption, but these efforts were not sufficient to stop corruption. Actually, it was also too late for reforms because the corruption was embedded along with patronage in Afghan society and it was admitted as an existing factor of everyday-life. The people were all aware that corruption is unjust and immoral but still, corruption was admitted and popular all over the country (Zyck 2012 p.6).

Corruption is one of the biggest reasons to have weak governance, political instability and weak rule of law in Afghanistan. Corruption has spread in almost all parts of the Afghan government and became an acceptable norm for the society where everyone discusses it openly or they experience in their everyday life. Moreover, widespread corruption prevents the Afghan government to deliver basic public services, improve welfare or to maintain security within Afghanistan. Corruption has a significant effect on various sectors of Afghanistan which in return prevent Afghanistan from being self-reliant (World Bank, 2009, pp.1-3). The result of civil war and violence had some negative effects on people mind first that Afghans became very far on accepting each other by the common ground; they became more separated as the results of long-lasting war. Clash of ethnicities was also inherited to the new generation over the time.

Pike and Brown argue that the culture or characteristics of patronage affect the function of government which results in the weakness of government. In corrupt countries patronage leads to the domination of patrons and creation of leaders based on language, ethnicity or religion. According to Pike and Brown the Afghans must find allies to sustain their living standards and guarantee their job in public offices, this situation

creates patronage networks around Afghanistan (Pike and Brown, 2011, p.5). The USAID survey in 2009 indicates that corruption is involved between institutions which are working to deliver direct public services to the nation. In these institutions, there is unnecessarily lengthy and complicated procedure to extract bribes and continue to work as a broker in the government. Those people giving bribes and those who have the support of patrons get ahead in lines and able to speed up their work or get the job (USAID, 2009, p.7).

The perception of corruption will be explained from the perspectives of the World Bank, Mohseni, USAID and other scholars. According to the survey conducted by Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) in 2010 63% of Afghans believe that corruption is a result of weak accountability system, 57% believes because of low civil salaries and 49% says that the existence of large circulations of money and international funds and pressure to allocate them as soon as possible created opportunities for corruption due to lack of transparency (Zyck 2012 p.5).

USAID claims that the High Office for Oversight (HOO) is working to reduce these bureaucratic steps and decrease opportunities for corruption also increase public awareness against corruption. Unfortunately, the HOO attempts were not successful to solve the problem of corruption in Afghanistan because of various reasons, such as the involvement of high-ranking officials in corruption and lack of sufficient independence (USAID, 2009, p.5-7).

The phenomenon of corruption is widespread in the country and once this problem spreads it hinders development. Thus, corruption is one of the biggest threats to the self-reliance of the state. Corruption shows itself in different forms since it takes place under different conditions. There is a plentiful ground for corruption to exist in Afghanistan, which is mostly caused by the inability of government. Corruption is complex by any means, so that various forces have contributed it to spread everywhere, thereby main factors responsible for corruption in Afghan state and society have been described under various subtitles by many scholars and researches.

Weak rule of law is also an important factor that causes corruption, Afghanistan has a very corrupt judiciary system where this organization serves to implement the law, but it is the most corrupt institution of the country declared by a survey done by Integrity

Watch Afghan in 2010. Foreign aid and lack of transparency are two connected factors that promoted corruption in Afghanistan. With the intervention of NATO and USA in Afghanistan, a huge sum of money was injected to rebuild the state and its institution and also pressure was on government to allocate the development aid as soon as possible (Mohseni, 2006, p.142).

Furthermore, Patronage is a serious problem of the Afghan government and it is also considered as the main factor that hinders development in the country and boosts the motivations for corruption. Unnecessary lengthy bureaucratic procedures also create an opportunity for a public official to demand a small amount of bribe and speed-up the process.

2. Corruption in procurement

Procurement is an important part of government spending and without well-organized monitoring system, the institutions will be vulnerable to opportunities for corruption. In the construction projects, the result may be disastrous, that it will lead to cost lives. The author claims that corruption leads the higher ranking official or politicians to purchase goods from best briber instead of eligible and best quality provider. Such corruption in construction project will lead to poor quality and rebuilding the same project several times and it will be very much costly for the government. Sometimes purchased goods are not needed, a waste of money and create opportunity for corruption (Søreide, 2002, pp.1-2).

The effects of corruption can be very serious on the life of the people looking at a survey done in 2011 by Ambraseys and Bilham showed that 83% of all deaths from the collapse of buildings and homes in the last 30 years were occurred in the most corrupt countries (Ambraseys and Bilham, 2011, p.153). In conclusion, procurement is a complex issue and has two different dimensions. First, it includes the reconstruction of huge projects and purchase of everything, for example, construction of an airport or purchase of a pencil.

STRATEGIES FOR COMBATING CORRUPTION

Afghanistan has developed a set of regulations to prevent corruption and has also signed and ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in

2008. Moreover, the new strategic plans of Afghan National Unity Government (NUG) to combat corruption which is established in 2016 and 2017 to prevent this immoral phenomenon will be discussed and prioritized to find out the best preventive strategic plan for eradication of the problem. According to the survey of transparency international (TI) in 2010, Afghanistan was one of the most corrupt countries in the world. The TI that Afghanistan was failed to prevent corruption and patronage. International perception of corruption evolution for Afghanistan suggests a pervasive increase and generalization of corruption since 2005. In 2010 Afghanistan was rank as the 3rd most corrupt country (RANK 176/178). Moreover, the recent report of CPI shows that Afghanistan is 169th out of 176 countries in 2016, which means that corruption has been decreased compared to 2010, but it is still a major problem of the country. The strategies used to curb the phenomenon of corruption in the country were not implemented correctly or the obstacles didn't give permission to the implementing organization to execute their job effectively.

1. Afghan Government Failure to Prevent Corruption

Afghanistan government and the international community attempted to curb corruption in Afghanistan. There are three main problems in the country and because of corruption none of them can be eradicated which are insecurity, poverty (unemployment) and illiteracy.

Corruption is like cancer for the country; because of corruption, the public of Afghanistan do not see a prosperous future for the country. In 2014 the National Unity Government (NUG) held the government and signed the contract. The president and executive director of the country gave promises that first of all, they will try to bring transparency, accountability and eradicate the problem of corruption and after that, they will execute the rest of the obligations. The National Unity Government has promised to give priority to fight against corruption; in the Inaugural of President Ashraf Ghani's, in September 2014, he claimed that "Our people cannot tolerate corruption anymore," said the president that he will start to curb corruption from his own office. President Ghani emphasized on zero tolerance for the corruption and declares that first priority and the main goal of the government will be to reduce and completely cure radically the country from this problem. He also claimed that no one will be secured if involved in

corruption starting from him and his officials, furthermore emphasized on the elimination of the causes of corruption.

Several signs of progress were made in the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy; Mohseni has listed nine strategies for combating corruption in Afghanistan, a list of institutions and mechanisms created aimed to prevent corruption in the country. As listed below: (Mohseni, 2006, pp.149-154).

- Creation of the High Office of Oversight (HOO)
- Anti-Corruption Units established within the Attorney General Office (AGO) in order to investigate corruption cases
- Anti-corruption tribunals established in Supreme Court in order to deal with crimes of corruption
- Development of ministries anti-corruption strategies
- Strengthening complaints and investigation capacity with MoF and MoI (Fraud Investigation Unit, Anti-Corruption Unit)
- Launching the implementation of asset registration policy and system
- Launching review of anti-corruption laws and regulations (Penal Code)
- Launching a public awareness campaign
- Implementation of the anti-money laundering system and creation of the Financial Intelligence Unit. (Mohseni, 2006, pp.154).

To investigate the cases of corruption and deal with the crimes of corruption in the Supreme Court some institutions and anti-corruption tribunals were established but none of them was successful to execute their job correctly. The hotline of 119 was created to hear the complaints of public about corruption and public awareness campaigns were launched to curb corruption but the lack of rule of law and lack of authority lead to the failure of these all attempts. Mohseni also claims that the HOO was responsible for the registration of assets of high-ranking government officials before office and after office, furthermore rules and regulations were reviewed about corrupt acts but unfortunately, the lack of independence and lack of enforcing anti-corruption rules didn't change anything. The main reasons behind the failure of attempts to prevent corruption in Afghanistan are; first weak judiciary which cannot enforce the law, second corrupt police officials to implement rule of law and third the

lack of public trust in government to support the government in the implementation of its strategies.

The High Office of Oversight (HOO) was believed to be able to eradicate the problem which was established in July 2008. The President would appoint the Director General of the HOO. The High Office for Oversight was established to curb corruption in Afghanistan and develop a national strategy for anti-corruption. The HOO was established to conduct initial inquiries of corruption reports and one of its important tasks was to list all the assets of senior Afghan officials before their term of office and after their term of office.

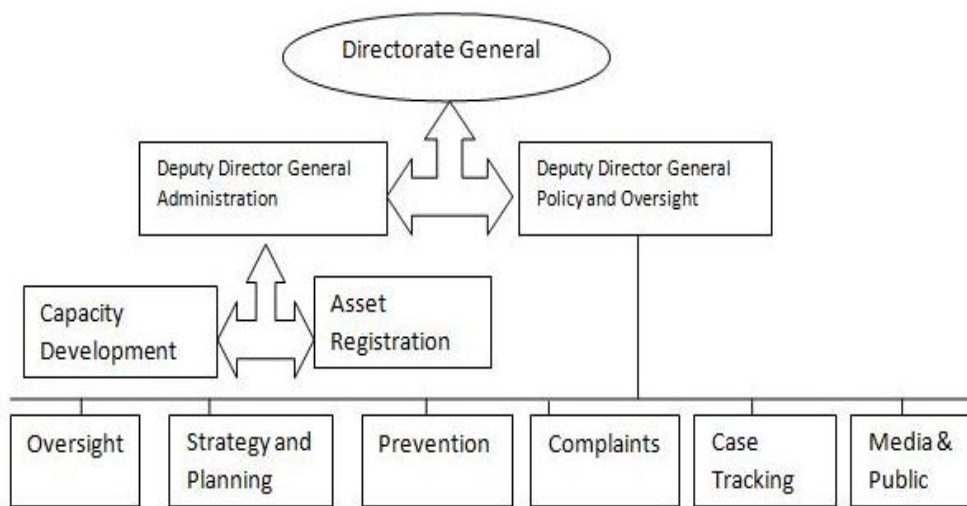


Figure 4.1: The organizational structure of the High Office of Oversight.

The number of corruption cases detected and investigated cannot alone indicate the extent of corruption in a country. In fact, a corruption case comes to light only when there is a failure of preventive mechanisms.

Article 75, item 3 of the Afghan Constitution (2004) states the Government is in charge of “eliminating every kind of administrative corruption”. This article emphasizes the responsibility of the government to eliminate the administrative corruption otherwise it will annul and override the social contract between public and government. The legitimacy of a government remains when it enforces the rule of law and gives some right to the public in return of taking authority from the public. The Afghan government has many attempts to prevent corruption and various institutions have been established

to overcome the problem. Mohseni, who researched about corruption in Afghanistan, traces the efforts of Afghan government curbing corruption and most of these efforts were failed due to various reasons.

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To fight corruption in the country, the National Unity Government inaugurated the ACJC on June 30, 2016, based on the decree of President Ashraf Ghani. The ACJC is consists of Specialized Trial Court, Specialized Attorneys and Specialized Police. Establishment of Anti-Corruption Criminal Justice Center (ACJC) has been an important step against the reign of corruption in Afghanistan, aimed to prevent corruption and to prosecute government servants accused of corruption by the justice. Afghanistan was not able to prevent the problem of corruption so once again the government attempted to combat corruption by the Anti-Corruption Justice Center (ACJC), which was established to increase the rule of law, trust of people toward government and increase the revenues of the country from taxes, also decrease bribe collection of government officials.

There are many strategies used by different institutions to eradicate the problem or at least decrease the opportunities of corruption and increase the threats of being caught, but unfortunately these efforts were not able to achieve their goals so most of them short-came in executing their responsibility. The main strategy used to curb corruption by ACJC is that it will bring reforms in the judiciary branch but surely the ACJC should be provided with enough authority to execute its duty effectively, otherwise, it will also become ineffective as the previous attempts of the government to prevent corruption.

The judiciary branch will follow up the corrupt cases presented to them by the ACJC and take the criminals to court.

CONCLUSION

Corruption in Afghanistan is explained by analyzing empirical studies, the government published data and reinterpreting of surveys conducted about corruption in Afghanistan to find out the determinants of the problem along with cause and consequence of corruption in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is ranked as the third most corrupt country of the world in 2010, while in 2016 Afghanistan was considered less corrupt, but among 10 most corrupt countries in the world compared to 2010 Transparency International data. Corruption spread all over Afghanistan and it has become an embedded phenomenon of daily life; to some extent, corruption is considered as the reason for the weak governance, underdevelopment and insecurity. According to the survey conducted by Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) in 2010 63% of Afghans believe that corruption is a result of weak accountability system, 57% believes because of low civil salaries and 49% says that the existence of large circulations of money and international funds and pressure to allocate them as soon as possible created opportunities for corruption due to lack of transparency (Zyck 2012 p.5).

Corruption has many causes in Afghanistan such as; decades of war and its direct effect on the psychology of the people.

Corruption is a big obstacle for the development and reconstruction of Afghanistan along with security and lack of job employment. The government lack very essential organ to implement the law and ensure the rule of law, the country is suffering from too much political interference and lack of independence to enforce laws and regulations. Corruption is decreasing the incentive of investors to allocate their funds and start a business. The strategies used to curb the destructive phenomenon of corruption in the country were not implemented correctly or the obstacles didn't give permission to the implementing organization to execute their job effectively.

Combating corruption in the judiciary branch, security sector and public procurement is very essential and has to be prioritized. In the judiciary, the law should be implemented to everyone justly and there should be no exception before the law. Security sector should get strengthened because corruption in the security sector cost the lives of the

soldiers and people. Public procurement should be monitored step by step and the firm winning the contract should provide the best quality for everything procured, especially construction projects.

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