

**Re-Examination of the Nexus between Grand Corruption and Human Capacity
Constraints in Afghanistan's Civil Service Sector**

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Abstract

This research attempts to answer the main question of *how* the political dynamics of Grand Corruption in Afghanistan's civil service sector are affected by the human capacity deficit. Throughout this research, we employ a combination of theoretical approaches such as 'public choice' explanations, and 'rational irrationality' concept. These approaches attribute Grand (elite) Corruption to a number of important variables resonating with the current political, economic and social atmosphere in Afghanistan. The main part of our investigation and analysis draw on primary data gathered through our in-depth interviews, direct observations, in-country internal reports, and surveys conducted across several regions of Afghanistan. Besides this, our research develops a theoretically sound and practically feasible foundation for absorbing the currently available and published data by international and national organizations and entities. We further supplement our research by policy document analysis, and by drawing on the direct and indirect experiences of international diplomatic missions and donors deeply engaged with Afghanistan's problems via consultations. Our research hypothesis presumes a dialectal relationship between the human capacity deficit and institutional constraints directly affecting the level and magnitude of Grand Corruption in the public service sector in Afghanistan. This relationship is a non-linear, subtle, and much more sophisticated than often expected one, and it could be partially undetermined.

In a conflict-engulfed state, as noted in previous chapters, "light" represents peace and "evil" epitomizes war. The blaze of "evil" exterminates civility. The existence

of war begets destruction. Revenge, anger, and retaliation stimulate the sphere of war. War creates one value: More warriors. Snake generates one value: More snakes.

Destruction calms revenge, cools anger, and nourishes retaliation in a warrior. War depletes man's morality and the destructive environment turns man into a wild animal. An animal sees his emotional satisfaction, his physical existence, and his vision in the suffering of his powerless victims, dying bleeding and in pain.

War creates warriors and school creates thinkers. Warriors destroy and thinkers build. Therefore, the gunman goes into each inch of space of the surrounding border to eliminate the thinker. As war erupts in a state, its gulf quickly circles around cities to bring signs of terror and instability.

Hatred and hostility are particularly the engine of civil war. The tornado of civil war often stays in rural areas, but its volcano quickly erupts into the metropolitan and cosmopolitan sides of the country. Why? Cities, where a variety of people come together to live, result in bringing together the flavors of combined cultures of the different inhabitants. Cities are the right places to victimize masses of people if the intention is to zoom in on terrorizing quickly and to receive compounded attention from the media. Finally, disintegration of a nation begins by attacking the cities where there are functional institutions and fundamentals of governance are

intact. The educated force of the country runs the institutions and leads the structure of the government. In the past three decades in Afghanistan, warriors have concentrated earth-shattering explosions and terrorizing gunfire at the cities causing the thinkers, the educated force, to either get killed, imprisoned or to flee the country.

The fled human capital possesses talents but has no accumulated wealth or power. They try to use their talents in foreign neighboring states or regions to make a living for themselves and their families. As a result, a country in civil war faces a brain-drain. As war takes a toll on cities and governmental institutions, the physical structure of government and economic means get demolished.

Consequently, cities turn into graves and or burn to ashes. No human capital and no institutions. That is the first and foremost ugly side of civil war, taking the thinkers out! Targeting institutions to bankrupt a nation of structural mechanisms!

The Early Stage of Post-Conflict of Afghanistan:

The hypocrisy of man is not new in the self-profit-driven world environment: The Taliban atrocities (1996-2001), the decades-long civil war, and the interference of neighbors in Afghanistan did not shake the conscience of man strongly until the event of September 11, 2001 took place in New York. Then, the suffering of Afghans received a court hearing in the world stage.

The reconstruction of the country seriously began in 2002. International advisors, military forces, and financial aid poured into the country in unprecedented numbers. Building Afghanistan suddenly became the top priority of the world as all consciences were magically awoken.

Although the money, will, and support were there, the implementation of agendas did not pick up speed as desired. The educated force was not there to execute the plans. Civil war had already driven the human capital out of the country and thus, work has not been done accordingly. For instance, billions of aid money got spent and after more than a decade of the reconstruction efforts, international auditors still call coordinating aid “an elusive goal”¹ in Afghanistan.

Civil War and the Unity Elements:

The Bonn Agreement (December 2001) brought many warring parties together to share power for the sake of bringing peace to the country. Powerful elements, warriors, and strongmen all asked for share of power and got it for keeping the sounds of their guns silent.

As the bags of the money moved into country for reconstruction by donors, the rise of new phenomena in the history of the country was taking place: Grand

¹ SIGAR’s Quarterly Report of The United States Congress, Jan,30,2015, P:1

Corruption—stealing big money, not in the hundreds but the thousands and millions of dollars, by the international contractors and powerful Afghans assuming power in the government or commanding authority through possessing of guns. The educated capitals were not there to lead and the institutional structures were gone as there was not the human capital to protect and to lead them during decades of war. No structural base means no governmental body. As a result, no system of check and balance was in place.

Therefore, the lack of human assets has increased the opportunity for the Grand Corruption in post-conflict Afghanistan. Reconstruction funds have not been effectively used as there has not been a sound system in place to control cash flow, oversee procurement processes, lead the prosecution office, and manage the court and so on. From the judicial to prosecution and from finance to accounting, there is need for human capital to run the branches accordingly. In the absence of such human capital, Grand Corruption is going to eat away the allocated financial resources of the reconstruction period of the fragile Afghan state.

It is numerically proven as well that there is strong relationship between the deficit of human assets and the increase in the level of Grand Corruption. Countries that have been through both safe and secure environments such as Denmark or Norway, have stable human assets and those educated forces run the proper system of check and balance. As a result these countries are constantly making it to the least

corrupt states in world. Quite on the contrary, failed states, such as Afghanistan and Iraq², persistently make it to the top of the list of the most corrupt nations as their human capital was diminished throughout the civil war.

The reconstruction period is the make or break time of a fragile state. In such a period, international donors want quick results from their money in order to bring stability so they and their armed forces can leave Afghanistan as soon as possible. The global financial status of major donors shows that they do not have the monetary strength to fund Afghanistan indefinitely as the US runs a deficit, Europe faces recession, and the standard of living of EU members is getting rocky as a singular currency and a tight fiscal policy are being implemented. Not to mention that donors would like to call their forces out of the country in order spare their soldiers' lives and to control their skyrocketing military expenditures. Additionally, the more bags of money that were being sent to Afghanistan, the more the donors attached conditions to expenses. Guess what? The single most common attachment has so far been (The Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan 2012 and the London Conference on Afghanistan 2014) to control corruption if Afghanistan wants the delivery of the promised installments of financial support for reconstruction.

Getting specific; the Capacity Building Training:

² Please see the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index for 2014, 2013, and 2012

In the face of the donors being impatient on demanding to control Grand Corruption and the urgency of reconstruction, Afghanistan needs to work on the skill sets of its existent civil servants, in building up the human capital for running the governmental institutions. The buildup of the human asset is a direct factor in controlling the Grand Corruption in the country, by running a sound financial controlling system among other matters. To build such social capital there is a need for capacity training. Capacity training is the proper avenue in the post–conflict era in order to sharpen the existent civil servants’ skills to take on the challenge of Grand Corruption.

Training of the Five Common Functions:

Allowing Afghanistan to have a faster and better recovery and to take on Grand Corruption specifically requires the implementation of Five Common Functions, which are basically five approaches in different fields of trainings. These functions are:

- ✦ *Human Resources Development*
- ✦ *Fighting Corruption*
- ✦ *Financial Management*
- ✦ *Project Management*
- ✦ *Policy and Strategy Development*

Human Resource Development:

Over the course of decades of war in Afghanistan, the so called “intellectuals” of the country, if been given the opportunity, have fled. A failed state without the proper human capital required to run the major operations of the government is an impossible endeavor. Therefore, human resource training is an essential part of the government capacity building strategy as the teaching methods of capacity training was covered in Capacity Building Chapter.

The human resource classes teach employees how to take care of and be receptive to ordinary people, who come to the government’s offices seeking support. These classes remind the government employees that personal data must be treated with the utmost sincerity and should not to be compromised for self-interest and promotions. The human resource classes, moreover, teach the employees to be mindful of women’s rights and to be respectful of female colleagues’ rights as well as those of the female clients. These major issues, if not addressed properly through human resources training classes, will certainly prevent the country from moving forward with the proper working force to serve the country.

Fighting Corruption:

Anti-corruption training will aim to curb and control the rising issues of corruption in Afghanistan. The teaching of ethics is an essential part of the training; as well as the idea of how corruption's destructive tendencies can lead to the debasement of the foundation of an economy. For example the working capitals leave the corrupted country to a safe-heaven, to a more stable state, leaving a major fiscal hole in the country.

On the technical side of the matter, processes of simplification will be taught to the civil servants in order to fight corruption on all levels of the government. These simplification processes have helped countries such as Singapore and will certainly condense the often long and torturous bureaucratic processes of administration in Afghanistan.

Financial Management:

Another essential part of capacity building is the training of financial management. To cut costs, lower expenditures, and ensure sustainability, government employees (especially those who deal with budgets and accounting in Kabul as well as in the provinces) need to be trained in both budgets and accountings. Billions of dollars have been invested in Afghanistan; however, there are not sufficient financial reporting or balance sheets to reflect those international expenditures. On the same token, developing budgets, allocated annually by donors, have mostly not been

spent to their maximum capacity, as few government employees really understand the budget cycles and how budgeting works. Financial management training will cover both accounting and budgeting and it is certainly necessary for young government employees to be familiar with those financial basics in order to execute them properly.

Project Management:

The next area of capacity building is the teaching of project management. Afghanistan is still at war. When many villages or districts are emancipated, through heavy combat and millions of dollars of cost, the local villagers need at least basic public services and support. In most cases and because of continuous conflict, many government employees have not been trained properly and can't write adequate reports to reflect the needs of those villagers. As a result, confusion, frustration, and disappointment replace hope.

Project management training is so intricately and thoughtfully deep that it prioritizes the betterment of the writing skills of government employees systematically. These kinds of trainings teach data-mining to analyze the facts, understanding the reality on the ground, and the ability to properly report the needs of the locals to the central government. Such objective reporting assists the central government to not only understand the needs of the ordinary people but also

allows for further development of the relationship between the government and the local people. The Project Management will take on another vital concept in fighting corruption as a whole and Grand Corruption in particular. The Project Management will teach how to simplify, clarify and purify the unnecessary bureaucratic administrative practices that provide an easy road to Grand Corruption.

Policy and Strategy Development:

It is obvious that capacity-building efforts in the absence of a relevant and effective national strategy to fight poverty and Grand Corruption will yield little impact. To fight them, there should be a focus on how to develop a proper national strategy that can be implemented in the medium to long run. Of course, the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) serves as Afghanistan's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. However, there is little discussion on how it is linked to the improvement in reducing the corruption in the Afghan public sector. Fighting poverty should be part of a broader mechanism of capacity building. Vocational training and teaching classes should be taught on how to make effective use of the national policy of poverty reduction and create a space for implementing the national strategy on all departmental and managerial levels in engaging Grand Corruption. The evaluation of these trainings, teaching classes, and modules may perhaps assist planners and policy makers on how to better understand the

underlying dynamics of poverty reduction and design and develop demand-driven strategies to fight Grand Corruption across the nation.

The Afghan national strategy operates within the framework of the national policy to tackle the issue of poverty and corruption both on macro and micro levels. As the public sector in a given failed state such as Afghanistan is often the major source of employment, investing in private sectors to create job opportunities is inevitable. In Afghanistan the private sectors largely do not exist or are severely underdeveloped and informal. Given such a difficult environment, training government managers on how to combat poverty plays an important role as the increased public servants' skills serve the purpose to find them better jobs within the public sector and increase competition. It is evidently clear that government leaders and managers need to be more creative in encouraging private sectors to design and develop new mechanisms in order to grow and absorb youth. Doing so would ease the burden of poverty on citizens, fight corruption, and set the stage for creating a dynamic private sector.

Don't Rock the Boat:

A post-conflict state is like a small, broken sinking boat in the volatile ocean. Just like the small boat in turbulent waters, the post-conflict state is pummeled by the public and international (sometimes unrealistic) expectations and chaotic environment of fragility. In such a period of reconciliation and reconstruction,

intimidating, infuriating, and irritating the newly joined powerful armed elements in the united government means dooming the peace process, inflaming violence, and burying the delicate stability.

The proper way is to use the process of training and educating the powerful ones that was described in the Capacity Building Chapter: Creating a peaceful environment by training in ethics combined with cultural values, increasing their set of skills, acknowledging their presence, and showing respect to their thoughts at the same time. Criticizing the past, emotionally attacking and ridiculing their past violent manner and vicious acts is like a punch at their newly born humanity. Therefore, don't rock the boat. Care for the newly born souls of these warriors that recently joined the reconstruction by: "Thinking good thoughts, saying good words, and doing good deeds!" Rocking the boat will get the nation back to square one, where "evil", war, replaces the "light", the peace!

Consequently, building up the human capital or training the government civil servants to run efficient governmental networks will ensure transparency and accountability. In return, transparent and accountable oversight severely limits the chance of Grand Corruption as cash flow gets documented, accounting takes care of balance sheets, and procurement ensures proper processes of bidding, and the policy makers timely check benchmarks.