
From Security Sector Reform to Endemic Corruption: The Case of Afghanistan

Abdul Rahman Yasa
OSCE Academy, yasa@osce-academy.net

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jss>
pp. 99-119

Recommended Citation

Yasa, Abdul Rahman. "From Security Sector Reform to Endemic Corruption: The Case of Afghanistan." *Journal of Strategic Security* 13, no. 3 (2020) : 99-119.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.13.3.1755>

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jss/vol13/iss3/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Access Journals at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Strategic Security by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.

From Security Sector Reform to Endemic Corruption: The Case of Afghanistan

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to express my very great appreciation to several sophisticated experts and researchers, both in and out of Afghanistan, who dedicated their time and granted me interviews in regard to their corresponding areas of expertise and provided me a great deal of information.

Introduction

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, a military operation (Operation Enduring Freedom in U.S. military parlance) of predominantly Western countries led by the United States of America invaded Afghanistan.¹ The military carried out the operation when the Taliban denied the United States' demands for delivering Osama bin Laden "the mastermind of the 2001 attacks" to the United States' authorities.² Osama was under the protection of the Taliban Regime at the time.

Following the collapse of the Taliban Islamic Emirate, the United States started its state building package based upon the "liberal peacebuilding" paradigm.³ Building productive and effective government institutions, bringing Security Sector Reforms (SSR), which included building the Afghan National Army (ANA) to maintain security and the Afghan National Police (ANP) to provide law and order, was at the heart of the involvement in Afghanistan.⁴ After nearly seventeen years since then, all the public institutions, particularly, the security sector is grappling with tremendous challenges such as omnipresent corruption.

This research will review the literature produced on the international coalition efforts, strategic fallacies, and challenges in building the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF). Additionally, this will delve into how international engagement with the money influx gave birth to corruption in the security sector, which has resulted in the current ANDSF crisis. In other words, this research tends to examine the following key questions:

- How has the United States-led international involvement in Afghanistan enabled corruption to flourish in the security sector in the country?
- How has corruption undermined counterinsurgency in Afghanistan?

The United States Scrimmage for Building ANDSF

Going through the literature on international involvement in Afghanistan, raises many questions about their policies for building the ANDSF: Did the international community have a realistic understanding of the size and the

scope of forces needed for Afghanistan? If so, how has this policy been consistent, and supported by adequate resources? While there are many obstacles to reform the security sector in the Afghan context itself, much of the literature, in this part, takes critical positions on the role of international coalitions in building effective ANDSF—one that could provide security, law, and order, and run counterinsurgency campaign in the long term.

Many observers draw criticism that, initially, the international community did not have a long-term and well-structured strategy for building the Afghan National Army. Instead, it had always been hesitating whether or not to establish such forces, and the absence of such a strategy resulted in the present crisis of the ANSF. The U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) describes this as such: “The United States and international coalitions were ill-prepared to conduct Security Sector Reform (SSA) programs of the size and the scope required in Afghanistan.”⁵ What Ahmed Rashid has written in his book, equally demonstrates the absence of such programs and long-term policy in Afghanistan:

The Pentagon had been stuck with the task of building a new Afghan army, but it seemed extremely reluctant to get on with the job. Rumsfeld was certainly not been on the idea. He expected General Fahim to create an army, so why should the United States bother to invest in a new one. Fahim continued to be feted by the Pentagon, while the CIA continued to pay lavish salaries to warlords and their militias. There was little incentive from either side to change this cozy relationship and build a professional Afghan army.⁶

Despite the United States disinclinations, in February 2002, the Pentagon started training a brigade-sized infantry unit of eight hundred Afghan soldiers with around six hundred additional men trained separately by ISAF, which constituted the preliminary building of Afghan security forces structure.⁷ Following to that, in June 2002, at a conference in Geneva on security-sector reform, the international community agreed on a framework to build an army of sixty thousand men, and ANP, a force of sixty-two thousand men for which the United States and Germany

committed to training them respectively.⁸ To train the ANA, the United States assigned the Special Forces; however, later recognized that this task was beyond the Special Forces' capacity, and the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division took the responsibility. Subsequently, with the invasion of Iraq, the Army National Guard assumed the training responsibility. Consequently, according to SIGAR, despite lacking preparation, a well-defined doctrine, and strategy, the United States took the lead for training the ANA.⁹

In 2002, Germany had been delegated the responsibility of training the ANP, but it did not provide sufficient facilities and resources. Building a police academy in Kabul in 2002, Germany sent only 41 trainers to train 3500 new Afghan police officers over three years.¹⁰ Moreover, Ahmed Rashid argues, "there was no plan for the countrywide training of 62,000 policemen and almost no equipment handed out to police stations, which lacked radios, vehicles, and even weapons."¹¹

In 2003, when the United States decided to undertake this responsibility, the training process continued with delays. Since the United States does not have any particular state-owned structure for training police forces, the State Department subcontracted this to DynCorp International,¹² a private company that recruited retired American police officers with no knowledge about Afghanistan.¹³

Training a professional, effective, and efficient police is different and time consuming from that of the army. However, the United States' decision for assigning a private military entity to train the Afghan police forces "has further blurred the distinction between military and police."¹⁴ The United States trained the ANP to fight insurgency rather than win the hearts and minds of the communities or represent an effective law enforcement body.¹⁵ Between 2003 and 2005, the United States appropriated \$860 million dollars for training forty thousand ANP, yet it yielded a poor result.¹⁶ When DynCorp took the task to train the ANP in 2003, the corporation scheduled three-week training courses "which were too short with no follow-up or monitoring" to ensure effectiveness and standards.¹⁷ "The U.S. training program (for the police) under DynCorp is an appalling joke, a complete shambles," said Richard Holbrooke.¹⁸

Besides, the former U.S. ambassador further argued that the American financial efforts to train the ANP have resulted in a force characterized by

corruption and incompetence.¹⁹ At the same time, there are serious criticisms on the United States for using its private companies and contractors in the SSR of foreign security forces– the private security companies, which design short tactical training programs that proved largely ineffective outcomes with little oversight.²⁰

According to the United Nations (UN), building and training of police due to its direct engagement with law enforcement, security, and the capacity to build up trust between the government and the people in a failed state proved to be more difficult than that of the army. However, the centrality of law enforcement and justice sector reforms were absent in the international community agenda for several years to come to help stabilize Afghanistan.²¹ Tonita Murray²² brings a similar argument about the significant role of police in security and peacebuilding, but it is the weakest of security forces in Afghanistan.²³

Meanwhile, the system of developing and training a well-functioning Afghan military had suffered from serious flaws as well. For example, lack of continuity and rapid rotation of the international trainers have undermined their training processes to build a well-functioning Afghan military.²⁴ SIGAR's First Lesson Learned Report uncovers similar fallacy. "The constant turnover of U.S. and NATO trainers impaired the training mission's institutional memory and hindered the relationship building required in SSA missions."²⁵ The precipitous and constant replacement trend did not only cover the trainers but it also took place at the leadership level. In 2010, for instance, when Gen. Stanley McChrystal, the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan at the time, was relieved soon after the Rolling Stone Magazine published his bitter remark about the White House and replaced with Gen. David Petraeus, as the newly appointed figure for the mission.²⁶ Following that, the replacement had been (creatively) justified as "a change in personnel, not a change in policy" by the Obama Administration.²⁷

Moreover, like the ANP, lack of equipment and resources for the ANA had remained a major concern, which threatens their combat operations. In 2006, according to SIGAR findings, the ANA was "miserably under-resourced" and such conditions were becoming a "major morale factor for the force," General Barry Concluded.²⁸ Three years earlier in 2003, following the intensification of terrorist attacks on different Afghan and international targets, the Afghan security forces were suffering from the

lack of resources on the battleground. Many observers had characterized this as a possible failure and further asked for broader engagement in supporting the Afghan forces in countering the insurgency. Brahimi warned the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in December that “the international community must decide whether to increase its level of involvement in Afghanistan or risk failure.”²⁹ Anthony H. Cordesman has equally cited in his article that “the United States failed to seriously fund and staff the training of the Afghan security forces until 2009, and police were so poorly paid, and police officials had so much authority, that police corruption became a nightmare for many ordinary Afghans.”³⁰

Lack of facilities had not only undermined the counterinsurgency capability of the Afghan forces but also did lead to unnecessary casualties of these forces in the battleground. According to an interviewee, the case of badly paid and supplied soldiers who cannot defend themselves against the Taliban is a case in point as it happened in Kunduz and Ghazni provinces. Many brave but undersupplied soldiers (likely most coming from poor families) died which is a sort of war crime by itself.³¹

Furthermore, the ANDSF understaffed its training missions over the years. SIGAR has covered some of these staffing shortfalls in its First Lesson Learned Report. The report contends that one year later after the establishment of NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) in 2009, as a partner body to Combined Security Transition-Afghanistan (CSTC-A), in February 2010, “when NTM-A/ CSTC-A became fully operational, only 1,810 of the required 4,083 trainers were in place, and similar shortages remained as time went on.”³² Accordingly, lack of human and technical resources has negatively affected the ANDSF development and their performance in the counterinsurgency campaign. General John Craddock describes NATO and its involvement in Afghanistan as such:

The crux of NATO's operational problems is that its ambition outstrips its political will to resource that ambition. Afghanistan is the textbook illustration. Since mission inception, NATO nations have never completely filled the agreed requirements for forces needed in Afghanistan.³³

The lack of a long-term vision, consistent policy, and cracks in international strategy for building the ANDSF have always been a

serious issue, which has undergone several time-to-time changes. In 2006, for instance, at the NATO summit in Riga, the NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer set the year 2008 as a deadline for the ANA to take the security responsibility. When insecurity increase, the U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates started criticizing the NATO countries for not sending more soldiers. Gates said, “Our progress in Afghanistan is real but it is fragile.”³⁴ Similarly, in March 2009, the Obama Administration announced a new Comprehensive Strategy, which was moving from Surge (sending additional thirty thousand forces) to Transition (security responsibility handover) all the way to Drawdown phase (foreign troop’s withdrawal) by 2014 from Afghanistan.³⁵ However, when President Donald Trump took the power, there was a shift in U.S. foreign policy. Unlike his predecessor, Trump’s approach involved sending 4,000 additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan plus reorienting the definition of success from the timetable to a condition-based approach.³⁶ Meanwhile, Donald Rumsfeld, the former U.S. Secretary of Defense, has also highlighted the crux and lack of congruency in the international mission in Afghanistan. According to Rumsfeld, “the mission no longer determines the coalition in Afghanistan, instead, the many coalition members determine the mission” that resulted in incoherence and contradiction.³⁷ As a consequence, incoherent and lack of a jointly long-term policy for building the ANDSF has compromised the capacity of the forces to function properly on the ground.

Enabling Corruption in ANDSF: Shortsighted Policy or Intended-Policy

The development of the ANDSF has been the bedrock of the international community policy, in particular, that of the United States in Afghanistan. From 2002 through 2017, the United States has devoted over \$ 70 billion (60 percent) its reconstruction funds to building the ANDSF.³⁸ Despite that, however, the Afghan’s defense security institutions remained at the high risk of corruption and that this has severely affected their engagement in counterinsurgency.³⁹ In addition, this has led to serious questions and uncertainties about the role of the international coalition in building the ANDSF: What went wrong? How could powerbrokers become overnight-millionaires, through their own recalcitrance or external support? Did the international community fight corruption or enabled corruption?

If so, was it a shortsighted policy or intended policy?

Much of the literature takes critical positions toward the international coalition's role in fighting corruption, particularly, in the security sector. Sarah Chayes, for instance, argues, "the international community has enabled and encouraged corruption through agreement and silence, and often the active partnership."⁴⁰ In its most concerning form, Sarah further describes this scenario as such:

Some countries in the international coalition had a historic relationship with criminal powerbrokers that they were reluctant to break. Most problematically, officials whose abusive behavior poisoned relations with the population were the favored "assets" of some Western intelligence agencies.⁴¹

It may come with no surprise that in some cases, the C.I.A. has paid money "wrapped package of bills" directly to some of the powerbrokers in the last seventeen years in Afghanistan.⁴² Matthew Rosenberg uncovers a similar story that how the C.I.A. flowed American dollars to the men of their choice in Kabul. According to Rosenberg, tens of millions of dollars have flowed from C.I.A. to the office of President Hamid Karzai in the last several years to get influence the C.I.A. was seeking.⁴³ As a result, the cash has "fueled corruption and empowered warlords."⁴⁴

Although corruption dates back to 2001 in Afghanistan, the United States has made it worse than ever.⁴⁵ Since 2001, the international community led by the United States has been dealing with what Sarah calls counterproductive men – the term implicitly denotes corrupt officials in Afghanistan.⁴⁶ SIGAR has equally noted, "The United States contributed to the growth of corruption by injecting tens of billions of dollars into the Afghan economy, using flawed oversight and contracting practices, and partnering with malign powerbrokers."⁴⁷ While in 2010, the United States created the Combined Joint Interagency Task Force known as *Shafafiyat* to work with the Major Crimes Task Force of Afghanistan to understand the corrupt network. Due to the lack of sustained Afghan and United States political commitment, it did not work well.⁴⁸ According to Stephen M. Walt, "we could not get Karzai to reform because he was the only game in town."⁴⁹ This simply means that the international coalition has accepted such a notorious partnership. Sarah Chayes believes that working with

corrupt officials in Afghanistan means that writing them a blank check.⁵⁰

Additionally, lack of an evaluation and monitoring body to provide an independent and objective assessment of international activities and their financial spending has always been another serious concern long after their involvement in Afghanistan, which has led to growing questions about accountability and transparency of foreign aid in the country. For example, it was on July 2, 2012, when the United States selected John F. Sopko as SIGAR to conduct an audit, inspection, and investigation to detect and deter abuse of taxpayer dollars.⁵¹ Prior to this, there was not any formal entity to monitor the implementation of projects in Afghanistan systematically and exclusively. As David Francis states, the American presence in Afghanistan since 2001 “helped grow corruption by injecting tens of billions of dollars into the local economy with poor oversight and broken contracting practices.”⁵² Therefore, as many observers have asserted, corruption in Afghanistan, by at least 2009, had become systemic, pervasive and entrenched affecting the courts, the army and police, banking, and other key sectors.⁵³

After SIGAR was established, the issue of lack of monitoring and oversight of international aid mainly in the security sector has continued to remain a challenge. Nevertheless, despite SIGAR’s investigative reports, there have been two key challenges and limitations:

1. SIGAR’s investigations are confined mostly, if not all, to the U.S. taxpayers and funded projects, and does not cover other NATO partners’ backed projects;
2. SIGAR has always provided post-corruption scandal investigative reports, rather than a timely and follow-up oversight of the development projects in Afghanistan.

For example, the international partners made a donation of approximately \$3.17 billion since 2002 to cover the salaries and pensions of employees in the MoI. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) took the charge of oversight of this project known as Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA). However, SIGAR released its investigative report concerning over \$200 million the authorities had stolen and misappropriated in the MoI in 2014.⁵⁴ Therefore, the report released by SIGAR was late, which did not provide preventive measures in tackling corruption.

Since most of the foreign aid goes to the security sector in Afghanistan; therefore, one can infer that this body is more involved in corruption scandals. For example, the United States allocated over \$70 billion (60 percent) of its reconstruction aid to building the ANDSF through 2016 and committed to paying over \$4 billion annually to that effort.⁵⁵ A large percent of this donation has been embezzled which will be covered later in this research.

Thus, over much of the literature, it demonstrates that limited oversight has seriously resulted in foreign financial forfeitures. After 2005, the international coalition commenced specialized police programs including the Afghan Local Police. However, “with limited oversight from and accountability to the Afghanistan government and the United States, these police forces were reported to have engaged in corrupt activities, ultimately serving as a net detractor from security.”⁵⁶ According to Lieutenant General Todd Semonite, former commanding general of CSTC-A, the United States had no conditions on funds flowing through CSTC-A to the Afghan defense and interior ministries before 2014.⁵⁷ In May 2017, at the Third Annual European Union Anti-Corruption Conference, President Ashraf Ghani obviously acknowledged “the Ministry of Interior is the heart of corruption in the security sector.”⁵⁸

Given the fact, acute corruption within the security forces and the associated ministries has catastrophically marred the ANDSF’s functions on the battleground. SIGAR describes that corruption is officially a serious threat to the U.S. missions in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, despite consistent reports of entrenched and rampant corruption in the security sector, the U.S. allocated its financial resources with little oversight.⁵⁹ The United States former ambassador to Kabul, Ryan Crocker, had expressed his concerns about systemic corruption as a grave threat to international success in Afghanistan. According to Crocker, “the ultimate point of failure for our efforts was not an insurgency. It was the weight of endemic corruption.”⁶⁰

Meanwhile, from an anti-corruption standpoint, one main source of insecurity in Afghanistan includes corruption in the ANDFS that ranges from lack of merit-based system in recruitment and promotion, political influence, lack of transparency in contracts and procurement of security sector to ghost police officers.⁶¹ According to the chief of police in

Helmand province, for instance, out of ten thousand police officers, only five thousand are available in this province, which has undermined the legitimacy of the state.⁶² This is perhaps one in several cases of as such. In the most scandalous report, Integrity Watch Afghanistan has found that “the actual number of police and soldiers might be around 120,000 while official figures state there are around 322,638 assigned personnel.”⁶³

Moreover, the dilemma of ghost police and soldiers does not only include their physical absence on the ground, but it does also embrace their payments on the ghost payroll that has brought about serious insecurity and financial losses. For example, around \$200 million of \$3.17 billion which had been donated by the UN, between 2002 to 2014, had been misappropriated from the ANP salaries by the Afghan Ministry of Interior when the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA), the program to fund the ANP with their payments and pensions under the poor oversight of UNDP.⁶⁴ While SIGAR requested basic information from UNDP based in Kabul about this corruption scandal, the response shows that 121 out of 300 ANP officers got paid through LOTFA funds, were listed as on-stand-by. However, such personnel had not been available in the Afghan *Tashkil*, which serves as the basis for the ANP salary payments.⁶⁵ Furthermore, SIGAR describes the theft and rampant corruption of MoI as such:

From December 21, 2012, to December 20, 2013, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) of Afghanistan could not account for 17.4 million in pension withholdings and \$9.9 million in cooperative fund withholdings. The audit continues to identify 4,579 improper ANSF payroll payments made during the same period by the MoI totaling approximately \$40 million.⁶⁶

Meanwhile, SIGAR has expressed its little confidence for UNDP’s lack of interest in taking meaningful steps to address the issue of dubious deductions and corruption from the ANP salaries and payments to ghost personnel and officers.⁶⁷ Therefore, in the face of such shortfalls, it can seriously put the integrity of LOTFA and UNDP into question as well.

Likewise, over the literature and reports, there are horrible cases of rampant corruption in contracts and procurement of the Ministry of Defense (MoD) of Afghanistan, which has produced big financial and

security implications. According to SIGAR, the security sector “has been plagued by corruption, fraud, and accountability issues. Fuel theft has become a lucrative business in Afghanistan. Corruption throughout the Afghan fuel industry may even benefit the Taliban and other insurgent or terrorist organizations by supplying funds and fuel to those organizations.”⁶⁸

The MoD of Afghanistan has become a corrupt syndicate while the United States-led Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan was and continues to be responsible for supplying fuel to the ANDSF, using a portion of the Afghan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) annually. In doing so, CSTC-A has used two different methods of funding fuel to the ANDSF over the past several years:

1. Funding DOD-administered contracts of the United States, also known as off-budget assistance, and
2. Paying ASFF funds directly to the Afghan government to pay for its own contracts also referred to as on-budget assistance.⁶⁹

In both mechanisms, CSTC-A is responsible to review all related documents and ask for regular based reports. In 2014, CSTC-A moved fuel procurement fully to on budget; however, in December 2016, it moved the fuel procurement back to off-budget for the MoI and in February 2017 for the MoD. The change took place because of serious issues related to mismanagement, fuel quality, and rampant corruption.⁷⁰

In 2015, almost two years after the enormous corruption scandal took place in the fuel contract of the MoD, the follow-up investigation disclosed over \$200 million fraud and misappropriation.⁷¹ According to SIGAR’s Investigation Directorate, the four favorite winning contractors had colluded with themselves and several top military personnel at the MoD, contracting officials and financial advisors to jack up their bidding prices above the competitive levels that existed in the MoI fuel contract.⁷² Ghazanfar Oil, Abdul Wase Faqiri, North One Logistics Services, and General Logistics – the four winning contractors, Hazrat Omer Zakhailwal, and Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal (top members of the Special Procurement Commission of the MoD when signing the contract) had bribed their way through the process.⁷³

In 2016, President Ghani launched an investigation on the scandal.

However, the investigative committee has not yet shared the result of the investigation with the Afghan public.⁷⁴ Humayon Humayon, head of the Defense Committee in parliament said:

I have reviewed the fuel contracts of MoD, not only Afghan Nationals but also international citizens are involved in the corruption cases of the MoD fueling contracts. The contracts were given to the former contract holders that means corruption is huge within the contracts.⁷⁵

This is not the only case of theft and corruption in fuel contracts of the ANDSF. According to alleged report, on January 9, 2017, Major General Abdul Wase Raoufi, received around “\$150,000 bribe in exchange for awarding one of that ministry’s fuel contract.”⁷⁶ Due to the lack of oversight over the influx of money from aid and military contracts with insufficient control to prevent theft and fraud, both Afghan and international actors drained resources from the reconstruction effort.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, SIGAR’s investigations on fuel contracts of MoI and MoD indicate that weaknesses and lack of monitoring from CSTC-A in accounting for fuel provided to the ANDSF through both on-budget and off-budget mechanisms have contributed to more corruption and theft in procurement and contract processes.⁷⁸

Therefore, SIGAR in its Second Learned Report articulates challenges in reconstructing the ANDSF as such:

The ANDSF monitoring and evaluation tools relied heavily on tangible outputs, such as staffing, equipping, and training levels, as well as subjective evaluations of leadership. This focus masked intangible factors, such as corruption, which deeply affected security outcomes in classified U.S. intelligence assessments.⁷⁹

Moreover, a former senior U.S. official described the problem of monitoring and oversight over foreign money influx for reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan as below:

In a conflict environment, oversight is difficult, but our systems of accountability are also poor. Therefore, when you push large amounts of money through and there is no way to pull it back, it creates an incentive for corruption. The

environment in which you are operating shifts and corrupt actors create ways to bleed the system for all it is worth, because they know the money will keep flowing no matter what they do, and they can make more by being corrupt than non-corrupt. This is a dynamic we have to change if we want to use our money well and effectively achieve our goals. The U.S. officials on the ground have to be appropriately authorized and encouraged to pull money back if it is not being used well, and these decisions need to be politically supported in Washington.⁸⁰

In its part, along with the Afghan individuals, several foreign nationals including their military officers and civilian contractors have massively involved in corruption, fraud, kickbacks, and bribes during their mission in Afghanistan. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, for example, a former employee of a U.S. government contractor in Afghanistan named Christopher McCray engaged with a case of corruption. An American company that was moving cargo for the Army and the Air Force Exchange Service from Bagram Airfield to Military bases through Afghanistan had hired Mr. Christopher as the country manager. He had received illegal kickbacks from an Afghan subcontractor in return to his assistance in obtaining contracts from the U.S. government.⁸¹ McCray and the Afghan subcontractor agreed to give him 15 percent of the revenues it would receive on the contract. Thereafter, McCray was fabricating the invoices of the contract continuously from 2012 to 2014.⁸² In another case, a former U.S Army officer named Jimmy W. Dennis, who was working in the Humanitarian Aid Yard at Bagram Air Field from March 2008 through March 2009, with his friend's complicity, James C. Pittman in the same company received \$250,000 bribe from each Afghan vendor in return for steering contracts to them. These two examples of the many in here are the manifestation of serious financial mismanagement and fraud in foreign aid to Afghanistan. As Dr. Karin von Hippel has cited in his article:

The international financial aid “has not gone directly to the Afghan people. Rather, it has been channeled through layers of contractors and implementing partners, each of which takes a slice of the pie along the way. The international contractors receive three-quarters of U.S. development assistance in Afghanistan and nearly 60% of all international assistance.”⁸³

Today, many experts in and out of Afghanistan believe that international contractors with their Afghan partners are directly involved with corruption scandals that have, too, given much room for resource draining by the local stakeholders. Some observers put the blame, in particular, on the United States for pursuing a wrong policy in fighting corruption in Afghanistan. The observers contend that this could have been impossible without the direct collusion of foreigners involved in the contracts. As one researcher said:

The United States should first focus on its own ‘de facto’ corrupt foreign aid programs where contracts are given to a narrow set of agencies and individuals and where actors in the military-industrials foreign aid complex are recording massive profits from the ongoing crisis and human tragedy in Afghanistan. How can an entity, which has major problems of corruption on its own, be able to solve corruption in another country? The mere pumping of massive amounts of money in obscure projects is bound to promote corruption on either end (U.S. contractors and Afghan implementers).⁸⁴

Furthermore, some observers have cited that due to systemic corruption in the security sector of Afghanistan, the ammunitions procured by the Pentagon to the ANDSF have fallen into the Taliban hands.⁸⁵ Also according to The New York Times, arms and ordnance collected from dead insurgents are identical to those of the ANDSF. Because of poor governance and outright corruption within the ANDSF, the corrupt network might have sold those military facilities to the Taliban and may have helped the group stay supplied.⁸⁶

Over the literature, there are serious concerns about the existence of malign actors associated with the terrorist groups within the security sector who do not only hand over the army facilities to the enemies but also pave the ground for them to infiltrate the security systems. As a result, they can carry out bloody assaults (known as an insider attack in Afghan military parlance) on Afghan and international security forces. On April 22, 2017, several terrorist associates, dressed in Afghan military uniform, driving military vehicles, made their way into the Afghan Military’s 209th Corps compound in Mazar-e-Sharif and started opening fire which claimed over 150 lives and many wounded.⁸⁷ This attack, in particular, left

serious questions unanswered: How could the enemy easily pass several security gates and barriers without any challenge? In addition, did they have any insider help? Additionally, as the result of the insider attack on February 11, 2017, in *Greshk*, the district of Helmand province, one security member who had joined the Afghan National Army before, gunned down his security colleagues, which left sixteen-security forces death, and the Taliban took responsibility for the attack.⁸⁸ According to the Christian Science Monitor, in March 2012, an Afghan policeman shot down his colleagues in their sleep killing nine of them.⁸⁹

Therefore, security sector corruption has, in particular, produced dire consequences and undercut the readiness and effectiveness of both the ANP and the ANA over the last several years.⁹⁰ These three cases (insider attacks) are among the many that the terrorist affiliates could carry out through infiltrating the security system by disguising as security forces.

In August 2009, General McChrystal, the commander for the ISAF (International Security Assistance Forces), expressed his concern about the existence of corrupt networks inside the government who collude with the terrorist in different circumstances. According to McChrystal: “There are no clear lines separating insurgent groups, criminal networks, and the GIROA officials. Malign actors within the Afghan government support insurgent groups directly, support criminal networks that are linked to insurgents, and support corruption that helps feed the insurgency.”⁹¹

Sarah Chayes, who had extensively been engaged in different processes of building the ANDSF for the last several years, articulates her thoughts about militaries when grappling with corruption as such:

The militaries in acutely corrupt countries are often poorly trained, equipped, and their roster is full of ghost soldiers. Officers sell materials even to the same enemies they are supposed to be fighting. Military professionalism and capabilities are inadequate to protect borders, leaving such countries vulnerable to attack.⁹²

Sarah further spells out how corruption what she calls was vertically integrated in the government of Afghanistan during President Karzai. She says, “Any move against any officials, no matter how lowly, would reverberate all the way up to the chain to Karzai.”⁹³ Nevertheless, the United States and its allies have supported such corrupt government

sitting in Kabul and equally share in outcomes, and should either admit their faults or correct them.⁹⁴

Figure 1. A Vicious Cycle of Corruption and Insecurity



Source: Author

Conclusion

Following the defeat of the Islamic Emirate, the United States-led intervention had kicked off the process of state building in Afghanistan. Among other things, conducting SSR, which entails the ANP and the ANA both known as the ANDSF, was an integral part of these endeavors. In doing so, the international community committed to donating a tremendous amount of money. However, after more than one and a half decades the Security Sector is grappling with several crosscutting issues including, but not limited to, corruption, low capacities, lack of facilities, and unnecessary casualties.

The incongruent policy between the United States and its European allies wherein the former placed emphasis on militarized police, while the latter developed the idea of civil police had further blurred the distinctive line between the two different but interconnected security establishments. It is found that this disparity jeopardized not only the potentials of police in law enforcement including their anti-corruption efforts but also obstructed the legitimacy of the government before the community in providing law

and order in which the primary responsibility falls on police role. When the United States put into forces its alternative on building police as the first line of operation, one can argue that due to lack of advisors, technical and logistic support, and inadequate resources, resulted in inauspicious consequences for the Afghan police. Ultimately, neither could the police build up their law enforcement capacity nor were they able to deal with the insurgency.

The plan drafted by the international community in conducting SSR in Afghanistan also suffered from several other fallacies. Their lack of preparations and short-term policies for that ends along with privatization of SSR did not produce desired outcomes on the ground. Privatization of SSR, which might have resulted from lack of preparation, horribly affected the operational capacity of the Afghan Security Forces. The two gigantic United States private military corporations such as Blackwater and DynCorp International, which were in charge of training, advising and equipping the Afghan Security Forces for several years after the engagement, had designed insufficient and ineffective training programs that had negative implications on the operational capacities of the Afghan Security Forces. This has ultimately undermined the counterinsurgency campaign on the ground.

Conducting SSR is a long-term process, and it requires a long-term mission and vision considering the size and scope of the forces necessary in a certain post-conflict country. The absence of such a policy in Afghanistan has marred the process of SSR in the country. Along with the privatization of SSR as mentioned, the issue of constant turnover of the international military advisors for training the ANDSF produced unintended results. The constant transition of military advisors who were shuttling between Kabul and Europe or Washington impeded the smooth training processes over the past several years. In addition, it to put at risk undertaking effective monitoring steps required for SSR that could help come up with effective strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis. In contrast, the approach applied in building the Afghan security forces impaired the training process and recognizing the possible threats such as corruption.

Lack of transparency and oversight mechanism for monitoring the implementation of projects, contracts, and procurement by the United States and other international partners have given rise to an atmosphere

conducive to the corruption that is omnipresent in the security sector. This has led the foundation for a systemic corrupt bureaucracy in the security sector in which different stakeholders and contractors embezzled a tremendous amount money. The issue of badly- paid, under-resources, ghost soldiers, corrupt systems of recruitment, and other malfeasances have happened and continue to happen under the direct supervision of the international community without taking effective and preventive measures.

Endnotes

¹ Mujib Mashal, "Taliban Offered bin Laden Trial Before 9/11," *Al Jazeera*, September 11, 2011, www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2011/09/201109115334167663.html.

² Mashal, "Taliban Offered."

³ Oliver P. Richmond, "The Problem of Peace: Understanding the Liberal Peace," *Conflict, Security and Development* 6, no. 3 (November 2016): 304, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14678800600933480>.

⁴ Barnett R. Rubin, "Peace Building and State-Building in Afghanistan: Constructing Sovereignty for Whose Security?" *Third World Quarterly*, 27, no. 1 (2006): 176, www.jstor-org.ldb.osce-academy.kg/3443/stable/pdf/4017666.pdf?refreqid=search:4e5eb810d50110451885b2d66aba46ec.

⁵ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," (Arlington: Government Printing Office, 2017), 2, www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/sigar-17-62-ll.pdf.

⁶ Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Threat to Global Security* (New York: Penguin Group, 2008), 201.

⁷ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 201.

⁸ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 202.

⁹ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," (Arlington: Government Printing Office, 2017), 3, www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/sigar-17-62-ll.pdf.

¹⁰ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 204.

¹¹ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 204.

¹² DynCorp Corporation trained bodyguards to protect President Hamid Karzai.

¹³ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 205.

¹⁴ "International Crisis Group," Reforming Afghan Police, accessed August 30, 2007, www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/reforming-afghanistan-s-police.

¹⁵ International Crisis Group, "Reforming Afghan Police."

¹⁶ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 205.

¹⁷ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 205.

¹⁸ Pravda.ru, "Unpopularity of Karzai Government Threatens Afghanistan War Effort," accessed April 28, 2007, www.pravdareport.com/news/world/90660-afghan_karzai/.

¹⁹ Pravda.ru, "Unpopularity of Karzai Government Threatens Afghanistan War Effort."

²⁰ Lauren Spink, "MPCs and Security Sector Reforms: A Mismatch," *World Peace Foundation*, March 15, 2015, <https://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/2015/03/16/pmcs-and-security-sector-reform-a-mismatch/>.

²¹ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 203-204.

²² Tonita Murray is Senior Ministerial Advisor and Deputy Team Leader of the Strategic Support to the Ministry of the Interior of Afghanistan, and Consultant to the Coffey International Development, the United Kingdom.

- ²³ Tonita Murray, “Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan, 2002-2011: An Overview of a Flawed Process,” *International Studies* 48, no. 1 (January 2011): 43, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/002088171204800103>.
- ²⁴ Murray, “Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan,” 48.
- ²⁵ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “*Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*,” (Arlington: Government Printing Office, 2017), 3.
- ²⁶ Zachary Laub and Kevin Lizarazo, “The U.S. War in Afghanistan,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, September 9, 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.
- ²⁷ Laub and Lizarazo, “The U.S. War in Afghanistan.”
- ²⁸ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “*Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*,” (Arlington: Government Printing Office, 2017), 4.
- ²⁹ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 248.
- ³⁰ Anthony H. Cordesman, “How America Corrupted Afghanistan: Time to Look in the Mirror,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, September 8, 2010, 8, <http://docplayer.net/89945022-How-america-corrupted-afghanistan.html>.
- ³¹ Anonymous, Regional Expert, in discussion with the author, August 17, 2018.
- ³² Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “*Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*,” (Arlington: Government Printing Office, 2017), 5, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/sigar-17-62-ll.pdf>
- ³³ Arnaud De Borchgrave, “Commentary NATO Caveats,” *UPI*, July 10, 2009, https://www.upi.com/Top_News/Opinion/de-Borchgrave/2009/07/10/Commentary-NATO-caveats/47311247244125/?ur3=1.
- ³⁴ Laua and Lizarazo, “The U.S. War in Afghanistan.”
- ³⁵ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,” *Congressional Research Service*, December 13, 2017, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>.
- ³⁶ Julia Macfarlane, “Why the United States Persist in Afghanistan after 17 years of Fighting,” *Eyewitness News*, February 3, 2018, <https://abc7chicago.com/>.
- ³⁷ Davood Moradian, “The Mistakes Trump Should not Repeat in Afghanistan,” *Aljazeera*, February 7, 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/02/mistakes-trump-repeat-afghanistan-170205115216293.html>.
- ³⁸ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “*Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces*,” 1.
- ³⁹ Sayed Akram Afzali and Mohammad Naser Timory, “Combating Corruption in Afghan Defense and Security Sector,” *Integrity Watch Afghanistan*, July 31, 2016, <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/combating-corruption-afghan-defense-and-security-sector>.
- ⁴⁰ Sarah, Chayes, *Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security* (New York: Norton, 2016), 43.
- ⁴¹ Chayes, *Thieves of State*, 48.
- ⁴² Chayes, *Thieves of State*, 51.
- ⁴³ Matthew Rosenberg, “With Bags of Cash, C.I.A. Seeks Influence in Afghanistan,” *The New York Times*, April 28, 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/29/world/asia/cia-delivers-cash-to-afghan-leaders-office.html?hp&_r=0.
- ⁴⁴ Rosenberg, “With Bags of Cash.”
- ⁴⁵ David Francis, “Watchdog: the United States Made Corruption in Afghanistan Pervasive and Entrenched,” *Foreign Policy*, September 14, 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/09/14/watchdog-united-states-made-corruption-in-afghanistan-pervasive-and-entrenched/>.
- ⁴⁶ Chayes, *Thieves of State*, 50.
- ⁴⁷ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “*Corruption in Conflict: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*,” (Arlington: Government Printing Office, 2016), 20, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-16-58-LL.pdf>.

-
- ⁴⁸ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Corruption in Conflict," 21.
- ⁴⁹ Stephen M. Walt, "The Real Reason the United States Failed in Afghanistan," *Foreign Policy*, March 25, 2013, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/03/15/the-real-reason-the-u-s-failed-in-afghanistan/>.
- ⁵⁰ Sarah, *Thieves of State*, 50.
- ⁵¹ "About SIGAR," SIGAR. <https://www.sigar.mil/about/index.aspx?SSR=1>.
- ⁵² Francis, "Watchdog."
- ⁵³ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Corruption in Conflict," 4.
- ⁵⁴ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "SIGAR-14-98-SP Inquiry Letter Titled UNDP LOTFA Oversight Response," 4.
- ⁵⁵ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Reconstructing the ANDSF: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," 4.
- ⁵⁶ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Reconstructing the ANDSF: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," 5.
- ⁵⁷ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "*Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*," (Arlington: Government Printing Office, 2015), 3, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2015-07-30qr.pdf>.
- ⁵⁸ Sayed Sharif Amiri, "Ghani Vows to Reform MoI as EU, UN Warn against Corruption," *TOLO News*, May 8, 2017, <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/ghani-vows-reform-moi-eu-un-warn-against-corruption>.
- ⁵⁹ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Reconstructing the ANDSF: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," 6.
- ⁶⁰ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Corruption in Conflict," 10.
- ⁶¹ Naser Timory, Head of Advocacy and Communication of Integrity Watch Afghanistan, in discussion with the author, July 22, 2018.
- ⁶² Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Corruption in Conflict," 1.
- ⁶³ Azali and Timory, "Combating Corruption in Afghan Defense and Security Forces."
- ⁶⁴ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "*Inquiry Letter: UNDP Oversight of LOTFA Program to Fund the Afghan National Police*," (Arlington: Government Printing Office, 2014), 4, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/special%20projects/SIGAR-14-99-SP.pdf>.
- ⁶⁵ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Inquiry Letter," 5.
- ⁶⁶ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Inquiry Letter," 2.
- ⁶⁷ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Inquiry Letter," 2.
- ⁶⁸ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "*Quarterly Report to the U.S. Congress*," (Arlington: Government Printing Office, 2015), 3, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2015-07-30qr.pdf>.
- ⁶⁹ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "*Management and Oversight of Fuel in Afghanistan: DOD is Taking Steps to Improve Accountability, but Additional Actions are needed*," (Arlington: Government Printing Office, 2018), 4-5, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/inspections/SIGAR-18-41-IP.pdf>.
- ⁷⁰ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Management and Oversight of Fuel in Afghanistan," 6.
- ⁷¹ TOLO News, "MOD Contract Corruption Exceeds \$200 Million," accessed April 12, 2015, <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/mod-contract-corruption-exceeds-200-million-usd>.
- ⁷² Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Quarterly Report to the United States Congress," 4.
- ⁷³ TOLO News, "MOD Contract Corruption Exceeds \$200 Million."
- ⁷⁴ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Quarterly Report to the United States Congress," 5.
- ⁷⁵ Rafi Sadiqee, "Procurement Law Ignored on MOD Fuel Contracts," *Ariana News*, February 10, 2016, <https://ariananews.af/procurement-law-ignored-on-mod-fuel-contracts/>.
- ⁷⁶ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Quarterly Report to the U.S. Congress," 5.
- ⁷⁷ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Quarterly Report to the U.S. Congress," 7.

-
- ⁷⁸ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “Management and Oversight of Fuel in Afghanistan,” 8.
- ⁷⁹ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “Reconstructing the ANDSF: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan,” 3.
- ⁸⁰ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “Corruption in Conflict,” 9-10.
- ⁸¹ The U.S. Department of Justice, “Former Employee of U.S. Government Contractors in Afghanistan Pleads Guilty to Accepting Kickbacks from Subcontractor,” accessed March 5, 2018, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/former-employee-us-government-contractor-afghanistan-pleads-guilty-accepting-kickbacks>.
- ⁸² The U.S. Department of Justice, “Former Employee of U.S. Government Contractors.” <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/former-employee-us-government-contractor-afghanistan-pleads-guilty-accepting-kickbacks>.
- ⁸³ Katherine Tiedemann, “Combating Corruption in Afghanistan,” *Foreign Policy*, September 30, 2009, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/09/30/combating-corruption-in-afghanistan/>.
- ⁸⁴ Anonymous, Regional Expert, in discussion with the author, August 17, 2018.
- ⁸⁵ Hussain Rezaei, Senior Researcher in Independent Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, in interview with the author, July 22, 2018.
- ⁸⁶ C. J. Chivers, “Arms Sent by the United States Maybe Falling into Taliban Hands,” *New York Times*, May 19, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/20/world/asia/20ammo.html>.
- ⁸⁷ BBC News, “Mazar-e-Sharif Attack: Afghanistan Mourns Deadly Taliban Assault,” accessed April 22, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-39680101>.
- ⁸⁸ TOLO News. “16 Security Force Members Killed in ‘Insider’ Attack in Helmand,” accessed February 11, 2018, <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/16-security-force-members-killed-%E2%80%98insider%E2%80%99-attack-helmand>.
- ⁸⁹ Tom A. Peter, “Afghan Policeman Attacks Colleagues, Undermining Cornerstone of U.S. Strategy.” *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 30, 2012, <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2012/0330/Afghan-policeman-attacks-colleagues-undermining-cornerstone-of-US-strategy>.
- ⁹⁰ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “Corruption in Conflict,” 10-11.
- ⁹¹ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “Corruption in Conflict,” 10-11.
- ⁹² Chayes, *Thieves of State*, 186.
- ⁹³ Chayes, *Thieves of State*, 144.
- ⁹⁴ Anthony H. Cordesman, “How America Corrupted Afghanistan: Time to Look in the Mirror,” 2.