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Main Factors of Lack of Economic Development in Afghanistan

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Abstract

Afghanistan has lost its economic, social, and political infrastructures during almost four decades of war. The huge damages are seen in traditional administrative and legal systems that failed in economic development. This is a qualitative study, which aims to find and address the main factors of the lack of economic development in Afghanistan. Lack of economic development recognition requires comprehensive study, and limitations of national literature and data are the key problems that researchers normally face. Despite all obstacles, the current review study tried to explain the determinants of development in Afghanistan and utilized well-known academic resources, like books, articles, and prestigious websites.

Keywords: Afghanistan Economy; Economic Development; The Main Factor; Lack of Economic

Introduction

One of the issues that each country tries to achieve its economic development. Every country's effort to reach economic development leads to social welfare in society. Development is a general concept used in social, political, and cultural development as well, and economic development forms one of its sections. (Lipset, 1959; Yu, 2021). This topic emphasizes on main factors of non-economic development in Afghanistan. Among many factors that could be the reason, only war, and violence during four decades are considered basic factors of non-economic development in Afghanistan(Haidery).

Constantly, the war caused poverty and withdrawal in Afghanistan by destroying economic infrastructure. Hopes for economic development increased when social, economic, and political situations changed at the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century(Akaev & Pantin, 2018). Unfortunately, despite the countless financial assistance of international society not only social and economic situation of people did not change but it increased insecurity, administrative and financial corruption, unemployment, and poverty. It will be impossible to achieve economic development without a wise social and economic policy(Couch, 2019).

Researchers ha recognized economic insecurity as one of the main factors of non-economic development and the second factor is not the existence of perfect and effective programs to develop basic sectors of the national economy such as agriculture, crafts, and mines that caused poverty and economic backwardness of the country. The increase of corruption in the administration, unequal distribution of property, lack of facilities for mining, and misuse of international communities' assistance are the other factors for non-economic development(Yusefzehi, Farzanehpour, & Bakhshi, 2019).

Recognizing the main factors of non-economic development requires vast investigations. The most serious challenges for researchers in Afghanistan are the lack of accurate information sources, standard, major-oriented, and equipped libraries to use them effectively. The weak assistance of governmental agencies with people and researchers for sharing the necessary data and information are other challenges that lead researchers to face problems. On the other hand, because of many decades of war in Afghanistan, economic and social surveys based on facts have not been done(Taheryar, 2017). Therefore, it is difficult and sometimes impossible for researchers to access accurate statistics. This deep overview of many new articles will give the address and be an effective resource for researchers and college students to go done more research on economic development.

1. Concept of Development and Economic Expansion

In the definition of economic expansion, we have to differ between economic development and economic expansion. Some people realize them as one concept, but the truth is economic development is quantitative, and in simple words, it is the increase of national products of a country compared with the amount of last year. According to Simon Cozintes, economic development is the ongoing and long period of impure national product of a country(Am Marcel, 2019). Economic expansion is qualitative and is economic development with basic changes in the economy and an increase of productive potentials such as physical, human, and social resources. In economic expansion, less development is gained, but social institutions will change, opinions will change, the ability to utilize available resources will increase and everyday renovations will be done. Besides, we can say that compound of the product and relative shares of institutions in the process of the product will change too. Economic growth is a preliminary step of economic expansion and every economic expansion can contain economic development, but every economic development cannot contain economic expansion (Bloom & Prettner, 2020).

2. Economic Expansion Indexes

According to the educational, economic, social, hygienic, environmental, and political characteristics, countries can be divided into two categories of developed and undeveloped countries. In this sense, people are considered the real resource of a country. The development aims to create a circumstance that people utilize for long and sound life opportunities. Therefore, the human development index is a compound of features for comparison of every country's success in three norms: human development as long and sound living conditions, access to education, and suitable level of life (Destek & Sinha, 2020). It is the opposite of previous norms that explained economic processes and tools based on the human community's development. The aim of these indexes is broader than financial aspects for comparison of long period life people long life and is different for human development in societies for



human by human. Therefore, the aim of development programs should be to create sound, innovative and satisfying conditions of life for every human (Mensah & Casadevall, 2019).

1. Unsecure Economics

One of the factors of less economic development in Afghanistan is insufficient security for economic activities. Because of a long period of war in Afghanistan, the people have never had security to work on the economy and they have lost everything in this war (Sadat & McChrystal, 2017). In a country with no secure situation, no intellectual, cultural, and economic activities can be done properly. The only main cause of all economic, education, crafts, political, and commerce destruction is war. During the war, the culture of war is dominating society rather than the construction and development culture (Kaszynska, 2020). The efforts for economic development which were done by governments throughout history were also defeated because of the insecurity situation. For example: in 1946 the first attempt at economic development program was applied, but it was defeated due to a lack of financial resources and economic insecurity. The other programs in 1953 and 1986 were applied by governments, because of war it was ended with no specific results. Lack of security in a country has caused foreign and national investors to refrain from investments. Furthermore, private sectors and public activities face economic and social problems because of insecurity (Junxia, 2019).

2. Unemployment Factors and Problems

Decades of war and destruction of economic fundamentals increased unemployment, meanwhile, lack of professional skills is another reason for unemployment. In recent years no remarkable and serious work was done to solve unemployment (Figure 1). Whereas, basements building and vocational skills are the most important priority of the Afghan nation (MENTEŞ & TALAS, 2021). In addition, insecurity and a decrease in investments can be other causes of losing a job in a country. Besides that, the increase in population and migrant's return has affected the job market as well (Mohabir, Jiang, & Ma, 2017). The tense insecurity situation not only affected the increase in joblessness but also cause the displacement of more people from villages to abroad countries. Unemployment is more seen among low-skilled people and illiterate workers are under the poverty level. Limited development and continued pressures on the population aggravated the employment situation (Figure 1). Considering the 3 percent annual increase of population and approximately entering of 400000 workers in the market require more economic development to improve the annual income of people and create job opportunities (Fernandes & Sridhar, 2017).

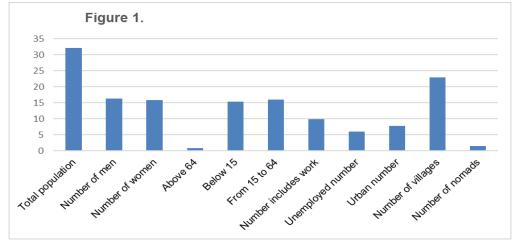


Figure 1. showed the population by age, sex, and number of people including workers and unemployed people in 2019 (million tons)

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According to the above graph, 6,064 million people are unemployed from 16 million qualified workers which shows the unemployment crisis in Afghanistan. A decrease in economic development, an increase in population, and insecurity have added to the job crisis and this problem is much more in the villages than in cities.

3. Unbalanced Distribution of Resources and Incomes

Water and earth are two important resources in Afghanistan, but unfortunately, their distribution was not just from the beginning and the tribal system was unable to effective distribution of land. Afghanistan government under the leadership of Zahir Shah in recent years, the Afghanistan government under the leadership of Dawod Khan and the democratic government of Khalq made some lands reforms, but for some reasons, they did not succeed(Shroder, et al., 2021). There was racism on conditions to reach social levels, sometimes tribal racism, sometimes urban and rural racism, sometimes racism of rich on the poor and sometimes racism of some religions on some religions. These factors failed the goals of an unbalanced distribution of resources and incomes (Rahmani & Ali, 2009).

Tax is one of the factors in the balanced distribution of resources and incomes. But unfortunately, the tax system is not transparent in Afghanistan, people with low and fair incomes pay more taxes. Taxes are paid indirectly by the poor on the selling of goods. But the rich that gain more money from different parts are without taxes bills. Therefore, these people without considering roles and regulations from the government's punishment disobey paying taxes. If the correct tax system is imposed and lawful distribution is applied, the differences between the rich and the poor will decrease (Habib, 2014).

The increase in the unbalanced distribution of income has created a bad and ruinous situation. Unfortunately, there are no real statistics to consider the changes in Afghanistan in recent years. The report of the World Bank estimated the coefficient of 0.29 in 2008 which is not real and not logical. Maybe this low coefficient in Afghanistan is because of more poverty. Besides Afghanistan, there are other poor countries with a low coefficient their population is also poor(Shafiei & Puttanna, 2021). The increase in luxurious houses, modern buildings, commercial markets, rehabilitation cities, modern cars, and dollar-based salaries for less percent of a country, all are examples of an increase in the unbalanced distribution of income. Besides these luxurious houses and palaces, the poor are living and they are deprived of the basic needs of life (Habib, 2014).

The unbalanced economy has remarkably increased during the last two decades after receiving world society's assistance. The largest amount of this helps was applied via foreign advisers and employees' salaries, different foreign contract costs, and importing of necessary goods from other countries. Also, goods that were consumed in the country are under the control of personal companies that relates to powerful and official figures. The most usurped wealth of the country has been invested in profitable projects out of the country which benefits less our country (Amiri, 2020). A big part of the assistance of Afghanistan has military goals instead of improvement and rehabilitation priority. Most of the time decision-making on allocating resources is not in the authority of the Afghanistan government (Bergman, 2021).

4. Non-Improvement of the Agricultural Sector

Agriculture has a strategic role in the economic improvement and rehabilitation process. If we consider the history of economic development in developed countries, we find that the agricultural revolution occurred before the industrial revolution in Europe and most researches show that the improvement of the agricultural sector paved the way for the industrial revolution. In America and Japan, the improvement of the agricultural sector stated before the industrialization of these countries had a remarkable role in the process of industries' improvement. Agriculture is the backbone of the economy in



Afghanistan(Amiri, 2020). Approximately 70 percent of people are busy in agriculture and more than 80 percent of this country are busy in agriculture and herding (Amiri, 2016). On the other hand, this vital economic sector of the country has been damaged during devastating war decades and incorrect agricultural policies have damaged a lot (World Bank 2017). Before the war, the agricultural sector produced 72 percent of exports and 34 percent of the government's investment was absorbed by this sector. Different factors such as lack of required budget for irrigation of big projects, dependency on weather, tough geography, and weak agricultural techniques have prevented this sector to improve. Agriculture of country after 1357 war revaluation and continuing of war up to Taliban's fall in the last of 2001 seriously damaged that affected a lot on the poor (Amiri, 2020).

The way of utilization and using of lands and resources, also a way of growing and collecting the products are done on the old and classic method by farmers that cause less benefit to the agriculture industry (Figure 2). Because of misusing resources, not supporting farmers, and finally not accessing modern technology, agricultural products are less that cannot afford from necessary needs of the country (Noor, 2017). On the other hand, one of the serious obstacles that challenge agricultural development in Afghanistan is not accessing land. Accessing agricultural lands is considered economic ammunition that most growing land is not cultivatable (Table 1).

 Cultivatable land
 Uncultivable land

 Km²
 Hectare
 Acre
 Km²
 Hectare
 Km²

 78267,6
 7826760
 39133800
 14088.168
 1408816,8
 7044084

Table 1. Shows the cultivated and uncultivated lands

According to Table 1, most useable and cultivatable lands were not utilized because of the non-existence of enough irrigating basements, mismanaging of water resources, being simple of agricultural tools, tough geography, dependency on weather, continued flood, and drought.

According to Figure 2, there is shown that extremely not using the most agricultural potential of the country that only 23.7 percent of usable lands are cultivatable and another agricultural potential of the country has not been used yet. Different factors such as lack of agricultural tools, experts, not paying attention the government to the agricultural sector, not support of the government from personal investment in agriculture, insecurity, not strong intention to make the country self-sufficient in food, and other problems played important roles in not improving the country (World Bank, 2017).

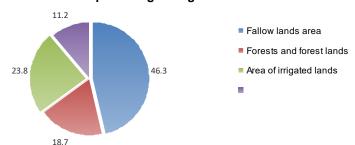


Figure 2. Shows the percentage of Agricultural lands in 2019

5. Not Investing in Natural Resources and Mines

One of the factors of non-economic improvement in Afghanistan is less investment in natural resources, mines, and basements and not properly and efficiently utilizing natural factor endowments. Afghanistan is considered a rich country based on natural mines, but most of these natural mines are untouched and unknown (Saberi, 2013). Afghanistan is rich in different unutilized mines that are considered as one of the factors of weak improvement and the cause is weak political management, poverty and not having professional human potential (Rahmani & Ali, 2009).

Afghanistan's mines which were recognized by America's institute on geology services contain mines of fuel, gas, copper, iron, uranium, lithium, and chemical elements that form the basic pillars of a powerful economy for the future of Afghanistan. America's geologist and center of geology named Afghanistan as "Lithium of Arabistan". Now monopoly of world lithium is in the hand of China which has 90 percent of the world market. Afghanistan can also share with the west and use this situation. Thus, Afghanistan can be one of the big pillars of economic improvement that supply the required lithium for the world's electronic markets (Noor, 2017).

6. Non-Improvement of Industry and Lack of Economic Investment

Weak industrial technology is considered one of the other factors of non-economic improvement in Afghanistan. However, it contained some productive workshops in the past, but importing foreign goods is never accepted as a factor of improvement, just internal industry can be accepted as a factor of improvement this process was weak in Afghanistan (Rahmani & Ali, 2009). Handicrafts of Afghanistan were very remarkable in the past and still, it has more value but has damaged because of war in the last years (Habib, 2014). Improvement of industry like other phenomena needs economic security, and cultural and political stability which due to lack of one factor, improvement of the industry is delayed. Afghanistan's history witnessed that useful management, economic investment, human potential, security, and political stability were not supplied (Rahmani & Ali, 2009).

7. Lack of Electricity

Energy is one of the basic needs of every county that without it, sector of industry and social life will face difficulties. Afghanistan with possession of abundant water resources still could not become self-sufficient (Habib, 2014). Economic development has a direct relationship to energy. This energy is used in the process of every economic sector. Supplying enough resources and reliable energy at a reasonable price based on immune way and stability according to areas with matching economic and social development are considered important elements of durable improvement. supplying enough energy is one of the basic needs for the welfare of humans and a high level of life (Ministry of Economy, 2015). Afghanistan is capable to produce 23 Gigawatt power, but unfortunately, its much-required power is supplied by neighboring countries, however, most citizens do not have access to power. Lack of power not only made people face problems, but caused less activity in economic sectors such as industry, agriculture, and services that made non-economic improvements in the country (Habib, 2014).

8. Obstacles to Economic Improvement

One of the other factors of non-economic improvement in Afghanistan is not professional commerce. This country is limited according to this factor and it was under the control of England and sometimes the guarantor of Russia. This country relies more on imports (Rahmani & Ali, 2009). Although, Afghanistan possesses an important trade position, foreign interference, continued wars, and some other reasons affected badly on economic development. Afghanistan has endured a lot of damage during the war decades. As a result of that, internal industry, agricultural production, and the agriculture



service sector fell and changed Afghanistan as a consumer market (Habib, 2014). Basic obstacles that challenge economic and industry development in Afghanistan are insecurity, extended administrative corruption, limited sovereignty of law, the existence of weak basements, lack of access to financial services, and insufficient human potential (Ministry of Commerce and Industries, 2016). One of the key problems of improving countries and the third world is being an importer and economic dependency on elementary and raw materials and negative results of economic, social, political, and cultural in international commerce.

Table 2. Value of exports and imports of the country during 2017-2019 (thousand dollars)

Year	Exports	Imports	Deduction
2018	774531	7438901	-6664370
2019	875241	7406590	-6531349
2020	863833	6776781	-5912948

Afghanistan's share is very less in world trade than other countries. There are also problems with imports and exports that shows a consumer country (Table 2). Even agricultural and elementary needs are supplied by foreign countries (Ministry of Commerce and Industries, 2016). Economic insecurity, no support for internal products, and being less of internal products of the country have caused a deduction in the trade balance (Table 2).

9. Non-Improvement of the Transport Sector

Approximately, Afghanistan is high 1400 m from the river and does not have transportation by air to transport goods from the capital to provinces, from provinces to capital, from provinces to provinces, from the capital to the borders and ports of neighboring countries, from foreign countries to our country (Ministry of Commerce and Industries, 2016). All this transportation is done by land with personal and official sectors. However, air transportation serves in conveying goods and passengers that are very important, but air transport services in comparison with land transport are very less (Asian Development Bank, 2017a). Thus, Afghanistan is a country whose main transportation is done by land, therefore land transportation is very important and has a remarkable role in national economic development. More than two decades of war destroyed transportation basements in Afghanistan making empty human resources and weakening the potential of transport sector management (Asian Development Bank, 2017b).

10. Lack of Infrastructure

Lack of infrastructure caused weakness in the process of economic improvement and getting a job. More people, especially in rural do not have access to power energy. Highways are in a bad situation and have not been asphalted. Not paying attention to the agriculture sector caused a decrease in agricultural products and a challenging process of getting a job (Asian Development Bank, 2017b).

11. Non-Improvement of the Private Sector

rivate sectors in Afghanistan were not as effective as foreign assistance as the economic improvement association. It was estimated that the private sectors of Afghanistan are only 10 to 12 percent effective in the production of internal raw materials. According to Afghanistan Islamic and Republic, the constitutional government is responsible for supporting personal sectors; "Government supports personal investments based on market economy, law and guarantees their ammunition. Article 10, point 1, constitution"; but, unfortunately, it was not paid attention seriously. Factors like weak law, violations, weakness of administrative reforms process, administrative corruption, lack of basements, limited access to land, and preliminary financial sector caused the formation of a weak commerce

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environment that resulted in limited improvement of the personal sector (Asian Development Bank, 2017b).

12. Administrative Corruption

Corruption is considered one of the basic challenges in countries of post-war and war. Corruption deranges regulations and effectiveness of official administrations and damages rehabilitation, and stable economic policy including disarmament programs, rebuilding projects, economic improvement, and other building programs (Amiri, 2016). Since 2008, the international transparency organization has put Afghanistan among the five most corrupted countries in the world and it is because of insufficient efforts to eliminate corruption in Afghanistan. Corruption as a big threat is an obstacle to economic improvement and a decrease in foreign investments in the country (UNDP, 2015).

Millions of invested dollars in Afghanistan have been lost or officials and politicians misused them. Corruption is so high and expanding in Afghanistan that is considered as) economy in the economy)in this country. Of course, the level of all corruption in contracts, selling, and collecting incomes of government is still not estimated that can be a big threat to a long period of peace for the country (Noor (2017). After insecurity and unemployment, corruption is the third biggest challenge for economic improvement. On the other hand, unjust distribution of programs and improvement projects, and financial, administrative, and political corruption caused instability in the economic development process. The increase of corruption in Afghanistan made this country the most corrupted country in the world (Amiri, 2016). Based on a report by the United Nations narcotic and crimes organization, 59 percent of the population worry about administrative corruption, however, they considered 54 percent insecurity and 52 percent joblessness as the biggest challenges. Factors that deteriorate the situation in Afghanistan are corruption responsible for supplying justice and applying regulations. The main problem that Afghanistan faces is that official and nonofficial powerful persons influence judicial and executive organs that they continue their corruption without punishment (UNDP, 2015).

13. Mismanagement of Utilizing World Society's Assistance

Afghanistan has experienced big internal and foreign wars in its history a series of wars has been going on up to 2021. War resulted that most parts of economic fundamentals being destroyed and become an obstacle to economic development in the country. Therefore, Afghanistan never became self-sufficient and inevitably depended on foreign organizations and countries. After the 11th event of 2001, world society helped Afghanistan and about 40 countries based on NATO and the world coalition directly announced their campaign against terrorism and sent soldiers with ammunitions. Foreign countries are also supporters of improving budgets, we cannot find any sectors that without the assistance of foreign countries become self-sufficient (Kaszynska, 2020).

14. Un-Official Economy Including Commercial Goods and Contraband

The unofficial sector forms the big economic activities of the country. Disorder and unofficial trades from Pakistan, Iran, and central Asian borders continued for a long time. The goods were transported without tax by contrabandists from the borders of the country and exported to Pakistan and Iran markets (Amiri, 2016). The World Bank classified the unofficial economy in Afghanistan into four parts that include economic activities of persons for themselves and do not enter to market, activities that enter markets and are lawful, and product and distribution of unlawful goods. Paying attention to the World Bank report as it is seen, the unofficial economy is expanding all over Afghanistan (World Bank, 2017). For example, small wooden shops beside the streets, and carters selling different goods, are some examples of the unofficial economy in the country. It is mentionable that an unofficial economy not only includes the above activities but also includes unlawful activities. These activities are contraband of



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narcotics, ancient sculptures, robbing, contraband of humans, fake documents and money, contraband of children, usurping of lands, and building unlawful homes (Ministry of Economy, 2013).

15. Summary and Perspective

Insecurity is one of the important challenges for economic improvement in Afghanistan. Insecurity is caused by not applying for developing programs and increases at cost of applying for these programs. Applied projects also fell because of insecurity. Economic development directly relates to security and political stability. On the other hand, the government did not pay attention to employment opportunities. There are more jobless people in the country and youth form more percentage of it. Not logical using of mines and not being effective programs for expanding the industrial sector are other factors that caused an increase in unemployment and dis-improvement in the country. By applying for logical programs for extracting mines and supporting internal industries that cause an increase of internal products and influence getting job policy, reaching economic development becomes easier.

Non-agriculture improvement is considered another factor of non-economic development. Not supporting farmers, not the existence of fair markets for agricultural products, transportation problems, not accessing agriculture productive technology, being simple of agricultural tools, and not accessing farmers to chemical elements and reformed seeds are considered factors of non-agriculture improvement. Administrative corruption caused lots of problems to reach economic improvement goals. Corruption caused the dishonesty of government and made a lot of space between people and government. Also, corruption caused financial and public assets to be embezzled.

Government should perform a policy of just income distribution to remove obstacles to economic development; strengthen economic infrastructure, and spend world society's assistance on infrastructure and building projects that paves the way for work and suitable income for people to achieve the economic development policy's target. On the other hand, by interfering with the government in the market, monopoly is prevented and the investment situation is paved.

The validation history shows that Afghanistan was in a better economic situation than neighboring countries before Russia's invasion, but all these achievements were destroyed due to four decades of war and caused economic programs to befall. Furthermore, war became the main obstacle to building and caused illiteracy, administrative corruption, joblessness, and other problems.

Insecurity challenged investments in basic national economy sectors and caused embezzlement of public properties. On the other hand, insufficient government and illogical and effective programs increased administrative and financial corruption and created many serious challenges for the policy of just income distribution.

The agriculture sector as the economic backbone of Afghanistan is not in a good situation. The tools that farmers use are very simple, also accessing land in Afghanistan is very difficult. The government does not have effective programs for farmers, not accessing financial resources, chemical elements and cultivatable seeds are other factors of agriculture's back warding. Government can pave the way for the improvement of agriculture by managing world society's assistance and land reform policy. Just in case of a better security situation and political stability with logical programs we can eliminate all these obstacles and challenges to economic improvement in Afghanistan and use logically potential opportunities.

Conclusions

Afghanistan possessed a better economic situation in the past, but these achievements were destroyed because of war and colonialism. This topic aimed to recognize the main factors of economic development in Afghanistan. According to the findings of this article, the basis of all economic, social, and cultural misfortune and problems are wars and violations that were imposed by some countries. Insecurity and political instability failed all developing programs and made lots of challenges for people. The agriculture sector which counts as the base of Afghanistan's economy and has more potential is busy in this sector and has less share in producing internal raw materials because of administrative and financial corruption that challenged economic improvement policy. Not paying attention to mines and industry sector, and unjust distribution of income are other challenges for economic development. Not paying attention to the basic national economy causes limitation of work and increased unemployment. More qualified people are jobless or do not have suitable jobs. The unofficial economy and corrupted government are other factors that caused developing programs to fail.

Conflict Interest

The author declares that no conflict of interest exists in this publication.

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