

**Title: *Sustainable Development Goals and the Situation of Afghanistan***

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**Abstract**

Sustainable development has been one of the fundamental Goals pursued by Afghanistan after 2005 when the country implemented its national Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in order to achieve its 17 goals by 2030. However, Afghanistan has faced problems in designing and implementing of MDGs and SDGs from the very beginning; finding the roots of the obstacles need studying the process. In August 2021, the Taliban occupied the country and Afghanistan faced a humanitarian crisis. The republican regime was replaced with a radical religious one in which Parliament, legislation, human rights and even existing laws were suspended. The national program for sustainable development was also suspended. This paper explores the obstacles for implementation process of SDGs in the country and tries to propose a solution for it. The findings of the research show that their reviving and restarting implementation is possible only by returning political power to a legitimate elected government. International community can help in this way.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Development Goals; Millennium Development Goals; Afghanistan; Taliban control; Implementation.

**1 Introduction**

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, wars affected in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa and even in Europe. The humankind still needed to achieve peace, freedom, development, law governance, environment and food.<sup>1</sup> These all caused life on the planet to be in danger and human felt a big threat. There was only one of the two ways, either continue the current process or to seek change and think of a solution. The solution was "sustainable development". Gro Harlem Brundtland, Chairman of the World Commission on Environment and Development, in 1987 defined the sustainable development as "meeting the needs and aspirations of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs".<sup>2</sup> This was in accordance to the principle of intergenerational equity for promotion of prosperity and quality of life for all. At the beginning of the 21st century, the world chose the path of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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<sup>1</sup> Kates W. Robert, Thomas M. Parris & Anthony A. Leiserowitz (2005). What is Sustainable Development? Goals, Indicators, Values, and Practice, *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, 47:3, 8-21.

<sup>2</sup> Brundtland, G. H. (1987). Our common future—Call for action. *Environmental Conservation*, Cambridge University Press 14(4), 291-294.

Sustainable development goals is doubly important for an undeveloped and crisis-ridden country like Afghanistan. It is a landlocked country in Central Asia, which has been involved in war, drought, poverty and injustice from 1978 until now. After the second round of Taliban control in 2021, the national program for SDGs has completely discontinued.<sup>3</sup>

The reason for choosing this topic is that the SDGs refer to the most basic worldwide development program for all and its situation in Afghanistan is critical. Therefore, it was needed to have a brief look at SDGs and to examine the implementation of the national SDGs in Afghanistan before 2021 and also to find a mechanism for its revival. Findings show that because of the war and of the regime change, Afghanistan joined the process four years later in 2005.<sup>4</sup> Late starting and the continuation of the crisis caused the process not to be implemented accordingly. With the occupation of the country by the Taliban in August 2021, the process has discontinued. Afghanistan has returned to the same situation that led to the issuance of resolutions No 1378 (2001) and 1383 (2001) by the UN Security Council regarding the necessity of forming a national legitimate government system in 2001.<sup>5</sup> Of course, under the rule of an armed and irresponsible regime it is not possible to achieve SDGs. This research has glanced on SDGs in general and explored the process of SDGs in Afghanistan. It also offers the way for its revival.

## **2 Sustainable Development Goals for people and planet**

The basis of sustainable development has considered inseparable its three dimensions: economic, social and environmental sustainability. Sustainability in economic development is long-term and inclusive development, in interaction with social and environmental sustainability.<sup>6</sup> Equitable distribution of resources, improving the quality of life, reducing social tensions, supporting women and racial, ethnic, and religious groups, supporting social values and rights and the right to education, health and shelter are among the main axes of sustainable social development.<sup>7</sup> Environmental sustainability means supporting biodiversity, climate stability and ensuring the survival of limited resources for future generations.<sup>8</sup>

Efforts to achieve sustainable development goals began in the second half of the 20th century. The first world Conference on the Human Environment, held at Stockholm on 5-16

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<sup>3</sup> The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (New York, 15 June 2022) UN General Assembly Seventy-sixth session. Accessed at: <https://unama.unmissions.org/secretary-general-reports>

<sup>4</sup> Najafizada, S. A. M. (2017). Policy research institutions and the health SDGs: building momentum in South Asia-country report, Afghanistan. Accessed at: <https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/bitstream/handle/10625/57091/IDL-57091.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 1378 (2001) Adopted at its 4415th meeting, on 14 November, And Resolution 1383 (2001) Adopted by the Security Council at its 4434th meeting on 6 December.

<sup>6</sup> Brimnejad V. and Sadr al-Ashrafi M. (2005). Modelling sustainability in water resources using multi-criteria decision-making techniques. *Agricultural Sciences*, 11(4), 1-18. SID. <https://sid.ir/paper/8004/fa>.

<sup>7</sup> Mohammadi S M, & Shakoui, H. (2002). Assessing the social sustainability of Qom city development. *Geographical researches*, 43(0), P 31. <https://rb.gy/ljfdx>

<sup>8</sup> Harris, J. M. (2000). Basic principles of sustainable development. *Dimensions of Sustainable Development*, 21-41. <https://sites.tufts.edu/gdae/files/2019/10/00-04Harris-BasicPrinciplesSD.pdf>

June 1972<sup>9</sup>. In 1992 The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The outcome of the conference included the adoption of 27 general principles for determining the duties of governments towards development and environment. These principles related to the international cooperation for the following matters: the environment, the human rights, specific rights of women and natives, green economy, poverty reduction, and creating an international framework for sustainable development.<sup>10</sup>

Sustainability suggesting the equitable distribution of wealth, and it aims at the eradication of global mass-poverty, keeping options open for the future.<sup>11</sup> Designing the sustainable development goals by UN lead to the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000<sup>12</sup> and then to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015; the second was affirmed in the meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on September 27, 2015 in New York, as: “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.<sup>13</sup> People, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership were the five focal points in both MDGs and SDGs. In MDGs these five, composed of eight Goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators to be implemented from 2001 to 2015. In SDGs after 15 years of experiences, the plan expanded to 17 goals, 169 targets and 232 indicators. Its’ implementation period was determined from 2016 to 2030. According to paragraph 55 of the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs are global model that should be implemented all over the world. In particular, Goal 16 of SDGs and Paragraph No 35 of the 2030 Agenda affirms: “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”.<sup>14</sup>

SDGs have not directly mentioned the role of the international economic system in sustainable development, while the 2030 Agenda seeks to transform the entire world as an inseparable unit into sustainable development. On the other hand, powerful international organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBTs) and similar institutions often operate through bilateral treaties, while there is a need to a coordination between SDGs and the international economic system. International law can fill this gap and build a bridge between these two categories. International law directs the development of the international economy towards sustainability by raising the dimensions of human rights, environmental rights, protection of global common resources, and regulating responsible relations between developed and

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<sup>9</sup> Concluded with the adoption of the, UN Conference on the Human Environment.

<sup>10</sup> Declaration on United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, (Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992). Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Conference No: A/CONF.151/26/Rev. I (Vol. I)

<sup>11</sup> Jones, N., O’Brien, M., & Ryan, T. (2018). Representation of future generations in United Kingdom policy-making. *Futures*, 102, 153-163.

<sup>12</sup> UN General Assembly Resolution: 55/2. United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/55/L.2), 18 September 2000.

<sup>13</sup> UN General Assembly Declaration, Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UN Doc A/RES/70/1, 17 September 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

developing countries. Because the international economic system has set without regarding to the protection of natural resources and comprehensive human development, while sustainable development considers development based on economic, social and environmental sustainability.<sup>15</sup>

### **3 The situation of Sustainable Development Goals in Afghanistan**

Sustainable Development Goals in Afghanistan has followed a different path from other countries, it has its own challenges and obstacles that will be explored in this paper.

#### **3-1 Afghanistan from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

##### **3-1-1 Late starting in an Exceptional Situation**

In September 2000, at the United Nations Millennium Summit, 189 States, by approving the "Millennium Declaration", pledged to participate in achieving the "Millennium Development Goals" (MDGs) until the year 2015. Eradication of poverty, promoting human dignity, expanding justice, peace and social freedom, and environmental stability were among the goals insisted in the declaration. The leaders pledged to cooperate with each other to implement specific goals to promote development and reduce poverty by 2015. These issues provide a policy-based approach to achieve the MDGs.<sup>16</sup>

The pyramid of MDGs were composed of eight Goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators.<sup>17</sup> The connection between the paradigm of the statement, i.e. "provision of meeting the human needs" with goals and indicators was designed in a completely systematic way. Reducing the mortality of children under the age of five in indicator 13, maintaining the health of pregnant mothers in indicator 16, or improving the ratio of education of girls to boys from primary school to higher education, women's participation in legislation, managerial jobs and political power in indicators 9 12 are mentioned. The realization of these indicators naturally leads to development. The data used to calculate the indicators were clearly defined and the method of their collection precisely specified.<sup>18</sup>

In 2001, when the UN started MDGs implementation, Afghanistan was into one of its worst periods under the rule of the Taliban (their first time ruling 1996-2001). No one even was

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<sup>15</sup> Ebbesson, J., Hey, E. (Eds.). (2022). *The Cambridge Handbook of the Sustainable Development Goals and International Law*, Cambridge University Press.

<sup>16</sup> U N Development Program (2003). *INDICATORS for Monitoring the Millennium Development Goals*, New York. P III.

<sup>17</sup> The Goals were: (1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; (2) achieve universal primary education; (3) promote gender equality and empower women; (4) reduce child mortality; (5) improve maternal health; (6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; (7) ensure environmental sustainability; and (8) develop a global partnership for development.

<sup>18</sup> World Health Organization, (2015). *Health in 2015: from MDGs, Millennium Development Goals to SDGs, Sustainable Development Goals*. Geneva, Switzerland, WHO Press, p3.

thinking of development. In 2001 and even years after that, Afghanistan was still in the shock of the crisis. To explain the issue, there is a need for a historical flashback: in 1978, the communist party gained power with a bloody coup in Afghanistan and was in power until April 1992 that led to a civil war and the invasion of the former Soviet Union forces into Afghanistan. From April 1992 to 1996, various groups named "Mujahedeen" came to power. From 1996 to 2001, the Taliban rebellion group dominated Afghanistan. In all these years' mass killings, forced displacement, discrimination, and destruction continued.<sup>19</sup> Afghanistan turned into a ruin, and millions of people killed, injured and displaced.<sup>20</sup> An agreement was signed at the Bonn-Germany Conference in December 2001 after the terroristic attack on September the 11th, 2001 in the United State, and the intervention of the international community in Afghanistan.<sup>21</sup> The structure of the political system was determined in the Bonn Agreement.<sup>22</sup> The interim and transitional government lasted until 2004, and there was nothing to deal with the issue of MDGs.

On March 2004, the Afghan President announced Afghanistan's readiness for MDGs to Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations. In the same year, an ad hoc committee was established to draft the MDGs plan, composed of domestic and international experts with the cooperation of Jean Arnault, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General for Afghanistan.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, Afghanistan joined the MDGs caravan about five years later, with many problems left over from 20 years of war, drug production, poverty and severe effects of climate change. Despite the mentioned problems, the influx of aid and the global attention to the Afghanistan issue at that time gave hope for development.<sup>24</sup>

### **3-1-2 The Implementation of the Afghanistan's National MDGs and its Obstacles**

The National Millennium Development Plan was approved in 2005.<sup>25</sup> In addition to the eight global goals, Afghanistan added a ninth one: access to sustainable security. Ensuring security was considered the biggest challenge on the way to achieve the MDGs so that the largest budget allocated to it in the country.<sup>26</sup> It was also agreed by the United Nations that the implementation of the Afghan MDGs to be started at 2005 and to be ended in 2020.

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<sup>19</sup> Adamec, Ludwig W. (2003) *Historical Dictionary of Afghanistan*, Washington: Scarecrow Press. P vii- xxvi.

<sup>20</sup> RUBIN, BARNETT R. (2020) *Afghanistan: What everyone Needs to Know*, oxford University Press.

<sup>21</sup> Agreement On Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Reestablishment, 5 December (2001) Bonn-Germany. Accessed at: <https://peacemaker.un.org/afghanistan-bonnagreement2001>.

<sup>22</sup> Deledda, A. (2006) Afghanistan – The End of the Bonn Process, *Transition Studies Review* 13 (1): 155–171 DOI 10.1007/s11300-006-0097-9.

<sup>23</sup> Millennium Development Goals Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Country Report 2005, Vision 2020. Accessed at: [https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Afghanistan\\_MDGReport\\_2005.pdf](https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Afghanistan_MDGReport_2005.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Oxfam, January (2008), *Afghanistan: Developments and Humanitarian Priorities*. Accessed at: [https://www.oxfam.de/system/files/20080130\\_afghanistanddevelopment\\_201kb.pdf](https://www.oxfam.de/system/files/20080130_afghanistanddevelopment_201kb.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> Najafizada, S. A. M. (2017). Policy research institutions and the health SDGs: building momentum in South Asia-country report, Afghanistan.

<sup>26</sup> The Asia Foundation (2004) *Afghanistan in 2004: A Survey of the Afghan People*, Kabul Office.

Therefore, the Plan named "Vision 2020".<sup>27</sup> This process continued until 2015, when the 2030 Agenda of SDGs was approved and the implementation was began in 2016. According to the exceptional situation, Afghanistan intended to continue the National MDGs until 2020; but the changes required Afghanistan to prepare a new plan, and the continuation of international aid subjected to it. Afghanistan approved its National Sustainable Development Plan SDGs three years later in 2018.

Afghanistan's MDG plan, focused on three principles: (1) security, (2) governance, the rule of law, and human rights, (3) economic and social development.<sup>28</sup> However, there were many challenges to implement it: one of the most important obstacle was that, in Afghanistan, there was still no credible statistics and analysis centre that could accurately identify problems and deficiencies. The reason for this was the mass-destruction of infrastructure because of the constant war since 1980 on the one hand, and some long-term political obstacles on the other hand. In the last 300-years, political power has always been the monopoly of Pashtun tribes, who have had the privilege to exercise political, social and economic sovereignty. They also claim that they constitute the majority of the country's population; while, They have always prevented counting the population, because they know that their real population is probably around 35%, and if an accurate count made, the claim of being the majority and thus enjoying national privileges will challenged.<sup>29</sup> In the absence of an accurate population statistics, it was not possible to prepare a real development plan while, many areas of the country due to the lack of security, or due to ethnic discrimination, given less attention in the plan. Therefore, Afghanistan's national MDGs faced great weakness and uncertainty at the very beginning.

The issue of discrimination in Afghanistan is always the biggest obstacle for development and rule of law. Even though Article 22 of the 2004 Constitution prohibited all kinds of discrimination, practically nothing has changed.<sup>30</sup> Due to the pressure of Pashtun members of the Constituent Assembly, with the help of Zalmi Khalilzad, a Pashtun- American who represented the USA, the state and governance structure in the constitution was defined as absolute centralized with all power for the president. Then there was pressure that the president must be a Pashtun.<sup>31</sup> Later, this centralism and excessive power of the president caused corruption, one of the main reasons for the fall of the republican system in 2021.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Millennium Development Goals Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Country Report 2005, Vision 2020.

<sup>28</sup> Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals, Targets and National Indicators. Accessed at: [https://ku.edu.af/sites/default/files/2020-12/National%20Document%2013%20January%202020\\_compressed\\_0.pdf](https://ku.edu.af/sites/default/files/2020-12/National%20Document%2013%20January%202020_compressed_0.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Glatzer, B. (1998). Is Afghanistan on the brink of ethnic and tribal disintegration? *Fundamentalism reborn*, 167-181.

<sup>30</sup> Constitution of Afghanistan, (2004) article 22.

<sup>31</sup> Rubin, B. R. (2004). Crafting a constitution for Afghanistan. *Journal of Democracy*, 15(3), 5-19.

<sup>32</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction SIGAR (2022) Why the Afghan Government Collapsed? Accessed at: <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/evaluations/SIGAR-23-05-IP.pdf>.

Of course, from 2001 onwards, Influenced by the international community, effort were made to develop democratic standards and equal life for all citizens; but the judicial system was running on the same path of discrimination and corruption as before. As an instance, in 2009, for the first time, the Personal Status Law for Shiites Muslims was approved. In the second Article, it was specified that this law must be implemented only by the Shia judges;<sup>33</sup> but practically, not even one branch and one judge in one case complied with provisions of this law, even in the Provinces with more than 90% of Shia resident like Bamian. In 2021, Taliban rulers has revoked this law and banned the cultural rights and religious freedom of Shiites.<sup>34</sup> In the case of laws related to the prohibition of drugs, the same approach was taken and never implemented.<sup>35</sup>

There are two other examples of political discrimination, which are considered as a serious obstacle to sustainable development, specially the Goals 1-5 of MDGs and Goals 10 and 16 of SDGs:

(1) In the city of Nili, the centre of Daikundi province, whose residents are Persian speaking, Shiite Hazara Tribe, there is no piped drinking water, no electricity, no asphalt roads, no public hospital, no public library, no cinema, nor any kind of welfare services that exist in other cities.<sup>36</sup> In the whole of this province, only ten kilometres of roads were asphalted in the last twenty years. However, according to article 6 of the 2004 Afghan Constitution stipulates: "The government is obliged to create a prosperous and progressive society based on social justice, maintaining human dignity, protecting human rights, realizing democracy, ensuring national unity, equality among all ethnic groups and tribes, and balanced development in all regions of the country." (2) The FICHTNER, a German company, planned to transfer a 500 kilovolts electricity line (named TOTUP) from Central Asia to Afghanistan and Pakistan through the Bamyan province as the unique route. This plan could provide electricity for millions of people in the central provinces of Afghanistan, but President Ghani prevented its transfer from Bamyan. The Hazara and Persian speaking people formed a protest movement called "Enlightenment Movement" in 2016. In the summer of 2016, the peaceful demonstration of tens of thousands of people in Kabul were suppressed by suicide attacks. Eighty-five University students were killed and the provinces of Bamyan, Ghor and Daikundi left without electricity.<sup>37</sup>

Discrimination in the allocation of foreign aid was another obstacle for implementing the MDGs. These are some reasons why western donors were allocated the most aid to the south and not to the center and north of Afghanistan: The presence of trusted Pashtun origin lobbyists in the US Department of State, such as Zalmay Khalilzad. The historical alignment of

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<sup>33</sup> Ministry of Justice (2009). Personal Status Law for Shia of Afghanistan, article 2, Approved 25/ 4/ 2009.

<sup>34</sup> Lombardi, C. B., & March, A. F. (2022). Afghan Taliban Views on Legitimate Islamic Governance. Accessed: [https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/pw\\_182-afghan\\_taliban\\_views\\_on\\_legitimate\\_islamic\\_governance.pdf](https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/pw_182-afghan_taliban_views_on_legitimate_islamic_governance.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Coyne, C. J., Blanco, A. R. H., & Burns, S. (2016). The war on drugs in Afghanistan: another failed experiment with interdiction. *The Independent Review*, 21(1), 95-119.

<sup>36</sup> I visited this City in April 2021 (writer).

<sup>37</sup> Hugueley, S. (2019). The Enlightenment Movement. *Radicle: Reed Anthropology Review*, 4(1).

England with the Pashtun rulers from the days of Indian colonialism until now. The accusation of Russia, India and Iran's influence among Persian speakers. Matt Waldman has admitted in the OXFAM report in March 2008 that a significant part of the aid to Afghanistan has used to achieve military or political goals.<sup>38</sup> The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has explicitly stated that part of the aid was used to achieve counterinsurgency goals. Instead of spending in the safe areas of the central and north of the country, the USAID has spent more than half of its budget on four insecure provinces in the south, which have distrusted constantly in wars, producing opium's or terroristic explosions. According to this report, if Helmand, a Pashtun resident Province in the south (with a population of 800,000), was an independent country, it would be ranked as the fifth recipient of USAID aid in the world. The Ministry of International Development of the British government had allocated a fifth of its Afghan budget to Helmand, and Canada had allocated more than 25% of its aid budget only to the Pashtun resident province of Kandahar.<sup>39</sup>

In another example of gross disparity in development budgets, in the mentioned OXFAM report was stated that per capita aid allocated in Panjshir province for 2007 was 685 dollars per person; while the amount of benefit of the Daikundi Province was less than 30 dollars per person. People in Daikandi have benefited from the international aids about twenty-three times less than the people of Panjshir, despite more deprivations.<sup>40</sup>

Corruption was also one of the biggest obstacle for implementation of MDGs and SDGs (Goals 10 and 16) in the country, because it destroyed the necessary ground for development. According to the official report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2012: about 4 billion (3 billion and 900 million) dollars were paid in bribes in Afghanistan, while the total annual budget was less than 6 billion dollars. In that year, Afghanistan was recognized as one of the most corrupt countries in the world, along with North Korea.<sup>41</sup> Corruption as a challenge for MDGs has reflected in the seventh chapter of Steve Coll's book. He wrote that, in 2003, Gul-Aqa Shirzui an illiterate person took the local power of Kandahar province. None of his numerous deputies had a higher education. He handed over 52 out of 60 civil governorship directorates to his tribesmen. He reserved the following privileges for himself: reconstruction contracts with the Americans, the business of fuel materials, water distribution business, transportation services, cools excavation, and the entire income of customs of Spin Buldack in the Pakistan border. Therefore, he earned about one and a half million dollars monthly. Such corruptions continued to spread until the end of republican

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<sup>38</sup> Waldman, M. (2008). *Falling Short: Aid Effectiveness in Afghanistan* Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR). *Kabul. March*. accessed at: [https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file\\_attachments/ACBAR\\_aid\\_effectiveness\\_paper\\_0803\\_3.pdf](https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/ACBAR_aid_effectiveness_paper_0803_3.pdf).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> United Nation office on Drugs and Crimes, (2013) official Report. Accessed: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/congress//background-information/Corruption/Corruption\\_in\\_Afghanistan\\_2013.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/congress//background-information/Corruption/Corruption_in_Afghanistan_2013.pdf).



period in 2021 and caused financial resources dedicated to the mafia instead of spending on sustainable development.<sup>42</sup>

Due to the aforementioned reasons as well as the spread of insecurities, the MDGs committee could not determine the exact indicators for MDGs and its' targets. In precise terms, accurate need assessment had not been done, there were no population statistics, and no real finding of economic, cultural and social capacities in the approved MDGs national plan. The reconstruction of infrastructures were discriminatory. All these deficiencies showed themselves in Afghanistan's national MDGs in the form of lack of indicators.<sup>43</sup> Later, widespread administrative corruption, insecurity, the cultural barriers of the Pashtun tribes in preventing the education of girls in the south, the discrimination in the allocation of funds in the north and central part of the country, caused the implementation of the Afghanistan's MDGs to meet with failure.

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<sup>42</sup> Coll Steven. (2018) Directorate S the CIA and America's Secret Wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan, New York-Penguin press. Chapter 7. Also, see: Coyne, C. J., Blanco, A. R. H., & Burns, S. (2016). The war on drugs in Afghanistan: another failed experiment with interdiction. *The Independent Review*, 21(1), 95-119.

<sup>43</sup> Vision 2020 – Afghanistan Millennium Development Goals Report 2005.

(2) This is a part of Afghanistan's national MDGs table, which is mostly based on probabilities and no indicator had been considered. By: Vision 2020 – Afghanistan Millennium Development Goals Report 2005 xxiii



### Can MDG Targets be met by Afghanistan?

Goals	Targets	Will the target be met?	State of policy environment?
<b>Goal 1:</b> Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	<b>Target 1:</b> Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than US \$1 a day	Lack of data	Fair
	<b>Target 2:</b> Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger	Lack of data	Fair
<b>Goal 2:</b> Achieve universal primary education	<b>Target 3:</b> Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling	Unlikely	Fair
<b>Goal 3:</b> Promote gender equality and empower women	<b>Target 4:</b> Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015	Unlikely	Weak but improving
<b>Goal 4:</b> Reduce child mortality	<b>Target 5:</b> Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-5 mortality rate	Lack of data	Fair
<b>Goal 5:</b> Improve maternal health	<b>Target 6:</b> Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio	Lack of data	Fair
<b>Goal 6:</b> Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	<b>Target 7:</b> Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS	Lack of data	Fair
	<b>Target 8:</b> Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases	Potentially	Fair
<b>Goal 7:</b> Ensure environmental sustainability	<b>Target 9:</b> Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources	Lack of data	Weak but improving
	<b>Target 10:</b> Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation	Potentially	Fair
	<b>Target 11:</b> By 2020 to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of 100 million slum dwellers	Lack of data	Fair
<b>Goal 8:</b> Develop a global partnership for development	<b>Target 12:</b> Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system	Not applicable	Not applicable
	<b>Target 13:</b> Address the special needs of the Least Developed Countries	Not applicable	Not applicable
	<b>Target 14:</b> Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and Small Island Developing States	Not applicable	Not applicable
	<b>Target 15:</b> Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term	Not applicable	Not applicable
	<b>Target 16:</b> Develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth	Lack of data	Weak but improving

The Afghanistan's National Millennium Development Plan could be never implemented acceptably due to the above-mentioned problems; but the fact that it was able to define the path for social, political, economic and educational development to some extent, was considered a big step.<sup>44</sup> After 2005, the impact of these goals could see in the country's annual budgets, in reconstructions, state building and decreasing infant mortalities.<sup>45</sup> Especially due to the fact that the international community was present in Afghanistan, the World Bank and

<sup>44</sup> Barrett, P. (2018). *The fiscal cost of conflict: Evidence from Afghanistan 2005-2016*. International Monetary Fund. Accessed: <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/001/2018/204/article-A001-en.xml>.

<sup>45</sup> Waldman, M. (2008). *Falling Short: Aid Effectiveness in Afghanistan* Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR). *Kabul. March*.

donor countries also emphasized on the implementation of the MDGs. Therefore, the achievements of MDGs in Afghanistan couldn't be denied; in these years' millions of refugees returned back, peace projects, and human rights also had been improved;<sup>46</sup> but until 2018, when Afghanistan announced the national plan for sustainable development goals SDGs, there were no accurate statistics based on the implementation of the MDGs in the country.

### **3-2 SDGs and Obstacles to their implementation in Afghanistan from 2016 to 2021**

#### **3-2-1 Lately Planning with Less Assessments**

On 25 September 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.<sup>47</sup> It was based upon the outcome of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), held in June 2012 that led to the establishment of the Working Group on SDGs. The proposal prepared by the working group of the UN General Assembly in September 2014 and became the principal guideline for integrating SDGs in 2015.<sup>48</sup> It was approved in the United Nations General Assembly in the form of 17 goals, 169 targets and 232 indicators. People, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership have been the inseparable focal points of the Agenda.<sup>49</sup>

According to the late starting in 2005, Afghanistan intended to continue the implementation of the MDGs until 2020; however, on October 12, 2015, the Supreme Council of Ministers of Afghanistan assigned the Ministry of Economy the mandate to draft the national Sdgs. In September 2018 the implementation of Afghanistan's SDGs started.<sup>50</sup> Afghanistan had lost three years of golden time, because the SDGs deadline has been from 2016-2030. Detailed work has not done in the needs assessment and analysis of the situation because the population statistics were not known accurately and, due to the war, there were no access to the villages and remote areas to identify the needs. The number of noticed targets and indicators identified were less than the number of the targets and indicators of UN SDGs. For example, UN SDGs has 169 targets and 232 indicators while Afghan national SDGs included 112 targets and 159 indicators. In this plan, goals 11 (sustainable cities and communities), 15 (life on land) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) have not been seriously addressed. The legal and judicial sector, governance and the rule of law, which is the biggest factor in preventing corruption and providing security in order to implement the MDGs, have received less attention. Perhaps one of the major flaws of Afghanistan's National SDGs was keeping the stakeholders in ignorance on the one hand, and the non-participation

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<sup>46</sup> Howe, P. (2019). The triple nexus: A potential approach to supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals? *World Development*, 124, 104629.

<sup>47</sup> See supra note 13.

<sup>48</sup> World Health Organization. (2015). Health in 2015: from MDGs, millennium development goals to SDGs, sustainable development goals. P 7.

<sup>49</sup> The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals, Targets and National Indicators. Accessed at: [https://ku.edu.af/sites/default/files/2020-12/National%20Document%2013%20January%202020\\_compressed\\_0.pdf](https://ku.edu.af/sites/default/files/2020-12/National%20Document%2013%20January%202020_compressed_0.pdf).

of the private sector in the planning and implementation of the program on the other hand. Development is not possible without the awareness of the stakeholders in a poor country where most of the people are illiterate or poorly educated and without the participation of the private sector.<sup>51</sup>

### **3-2-2 Less Inclusion in Implementation**

The main objectives of sustainable development in backward societies is aimed at reducing poverty and ensuring social justice.<sup>52</sup> The focus of development in Afghanistan should be the majority of 76% of poor rural residents.<sup>53</sup> More than three decades of war had destroyed the entire infrastructure. It expected that in the national SDGs, the legal foundations of social justice would be favourable, and then the needs assessment in rural areas would done carefully; but due to the lack of political will and disbelief in social justice and some other factors, nothing like this was done. Even the responsible organ itself has complained about the lack of statistics on indicators and their implementation.<sup>54</sup>

The spread of insecurity was another factor in the failure of SDGs. After the opening of their political office in Qatar in 2016, the Taliban intensified their terrorist operations in such a way that in 2019 they named as the deadliest terrorist group in the world.<sup>55</sup> In 2017, in less than a year, there were 34 severe attacks on health centers and 87 health centers blocked, which affected the lives of five million people. After the 2019 presidential election, the security reached its lowest level. A survey found that 74% of those interviewed said that they were not secure. The mentioned factors were caused by massive migration to the urban areas, while there were no capacity to provide services in the cities.<sup>56</sup> Disregarding social justice in remote areas led to the spread of drug cultivation and its trafficking. Instead of education, students were used in drug production. More women were deprived of their human rights. In 2021, drug cultivation expanded to an extent that its financial value was estimated to be equal to 11%of the country's total incomes.<sup>57</sup> The mentioned factors caused the implementation of SDGs in the country to face serious obstacles.

### **3-2-3 Corruption and no Governance of Law**

#### **3-2-3-1 Corruption**

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Seers, D. (2010). The meaning of development. In *Development theory* (pp. 9-30). Routledge.

<sup>53</sup> NSIA, (2020-21) Estimated Population of Afghanistan. Accessed at: <http://nsia.gov.af:8080/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Estimated-Population1399.pdf>.

<sup>54</sup> Ministry of Economy, (2016) Report on SDGs implementation, accessed at:

<https://moec.gov.af/sites/default/files/2020-02/SDGs%20Report%20Final%20May%202016.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup> Institute for Economics & Peace (2019) Global Terrorism Index 2019 measuring the impact of terrorism.

<sup>56</sup> The Asia Foundation, a survey of Afghan people, Afghanistan in 2019 accessed: <https://www.think-asia.org/handle/11540/11341>.

<sup>57</sup> United Nation Office on Drug and Crime UNODC, (22 June 2021) report to the Security Council. Accessed at: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/speeches/2021/unsc-afghanistan-180621.html>.

Various examples show the corruption that hindered peace and sustainable development In contrast with SDGs 16<sup>th</sup> goal (peace, justice and strong institutions). Some of the corruptions in the army, police and special national security forces were: political treatment of security; severe ethnic discrimination; the infiltration of rebels into the army; the existence of lists of soldiers that did not exist, but facilities were received in their name and sold in the open market, as well as arms trade.<sup>58</sup>

A report of 2010 by the UNODC explored some forms of administrative corruption in Afghanistan: Afghans paid out \$2.5 billion in bribes over the past 12 months, which is equivalent to almost one quarter (23%) of Afghanistan's GDP. By coincidence, this is similar to the revenue accrued by the opium trade in 2009, which estimated separately at \$2.8 billion. This is shocking, drugs and bribes are the two largest income generators in Afghanistan: together they amount to about half the country's (licit) GDP. Around 25% of Afghan citizens had to pay at least one bribe to police and local officials over the past year. Between 10-20% had to pay bribes to judges, prosecutors, doctors and members of the government. More than a third of the population (38%) thinks that this is the norm.<sup>59</sup> Administrative corruption and drug cultivation developed further in the following years. According to the same UNODC report, in 2020, due to corruption and lack of rule of law, the cultivation and production of narcotics also increased by 37% compared to 2019.<sup>60</sup>

Another example of corruption and lack of rule of law was elections. In 2009, the presidential elections were accompanied with violence and systematic fraud. In the second round, the rival of President Karzai withdrew from the competition in objection of fraud and the former president retained.<sup>61</sup> In the 2014 presidential election, organized fraud reached more than 80% of the voting districts. Finally, after a delay of six months, with the intervention of the Secretary of State of the United States, the person who received less votes became the president.<sup>62</sup> In the 2019 presidential election, the level of voter participation decreased to less than 10%, due to people's distrust of the government.<sup>63</sup> The fraud was such that after months of controversy, two candidates in the same city and at the same time announced that they had won and both has sworn in. At last, they left the result of the election and formed

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<sup>58</sup> Vishal, Chandra (2015), "The Unfinished War in Afghanistan 2001-2014", Institute for Defence Studies & Analyses New Delhi, Pentagon Press. / Peace Training and Research Organization (PTRO), [www.ptro.org.af](http://www.ptro.org.af) http:// Accessed on: 2012/3/12.

<sup>59</sup> UNODC, (2010) Corruption in Afghanistan. Accessed at: <https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Afghanistan/Afghanistan-corruption-survey2010-Eng.pdf>.

<sup>60</sup> UNODC, (4 May 2021) Afghanistan opium survey 2020. Accessed at: [https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2021/May/afghanistan\\_-37-per-cent-increase-in-opium-poppy-cultivation-in-2020--while-researchers-explore-novel-ways-to-collect-data-due-to-covid-19.html](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2021/May/afghanistan_-37-per-cent-increase-in-opium-poppy-cultivation-in-2020--while-researchers-explore-novel-ways-to-collect-data-due-to-covid-19.html).

<sup>61</sup> Danish, S. (2011). Constitutional Rights of Afghanistan, Kabul, Ebne-Sina University press. P 397.

<sup>62</sup> Callen, M., & Long, J. D. (2015). Institutional corruption and election fraud: Evidence from a field experiment in Afghanistan. *American Economic Review*, 105(1), 354-81.

<sup>63</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction SIGAR (2022) Why the Afghan Government Collapsed? Accessed at: <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/evaluations/SIGAR-23-05-IP.pdf>.

the government with a political agreement. This action disappointed the people from democracy and reforms in the government and sustainable development has forgotten.<sup>64</sup>

The findings of Transparency International regarding the implementation of SDGs 16<sup>th</sup> goal in Afghanistan indicated that the Afghan government's anti-corruption framework is not compatible with the United Nations anti-corruption convention.<sup>65</sup> Afghanistan does not have a comprehensive anti-corruption law and there is no political will to fight corruption. The government only took illusive actions due to the pressure of donor countries, which itself is another form of corruption.<sup>66</sup> From 2017 to 2021, Afghanistan has made no progress in the fighting against corruption and has been the seventh most corrupt country in the world for several years.<sup>67</sup>

### **3-2-3-2 No Governance of Law**

According to a survey published in 2019, more than 80% of Afghan people identified the inconsistencies with the rule of law as the cause of corruption, discrimination, growth of terrorism, and failure to achieve sustainable development.<sup>68</sup>

Inconsistencies with the rule of law was one of the major obstacles to achieve sustainable development in Afghanistan. Five major justice and judicial institutions were operating in an uncoordinated manner. On August 17, 2016, President Ashraf Ghani, through Decree No. 94, announced the establishment of the Supreme Council for the Rule of Law and Combating Administrative Corruption (SCRLCAC). It was composed of the heads of the five-major justice and judicial institutions and some other related organizations under the direction of the president himself. This institution was established with the objectives of complying with the rule of law, fighting corruption and helping to implement sustainable development goals.<sup>69</sup>

The Judiciary, the Attorney General, the Ministry of Justice, the Independent Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the Constitution, the Independent Bar Association and the Judicial Police were required to complete their action plans for a five-year program (2016-20) by the end of 2016 under the name "National Program for Justice & Judicial Reforms ". In July 2020, a committee was formed by the second vice president with the support of UNDP to evaluate the five-year performance of these institutions. After reviewing 5,000 documents

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<sup>64</sup> BBC news (9 March 2020) Afghanistan: Rival 'presidents' hold two inaugurations. accessed at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/51796780>.

<sup>65</sup> General Assembly resolution 58/4 of (31 October 2003) United Nation Convention against Corruption, New York, accessed [https://www.unodc.org/documents/brussels/UN\\_Convention\\_Against\\_Corruption.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/brussels/UN_Convention_Against_Corruption.pdf).

<sup>66</sup> Transparency international, (2017) Report on sustainable development Goals and the fighting against corruption. accessed: [https://www.transparency.org/files/content/publication/Dari\\_translation\\_-\\_Policy\\_SDGs\\_and\\_Fighting\\_Corruption.pdf](https://www.transparency.org/files/content/publication/Dari_translation_-_Policy_SDGs_and_Fighting_Corruption.pdf).

<sup>67</sup> Transparency international, (2021) CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX. Accessed at: <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021>.

<sup>68</sup> Bak, M. (2019). Corruption in Afghanistan and the role of development assistance. Transparency International. accessed: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep20486.pdf>.

<sup>69</sup> Etilaatroz daily, (21 August 2016) Establishment of the "Supreme Council for Rule of Law and Fighting against Administrative Corruption" accessed at: <https://www.etilaatroz.com/40807/>.

and reports, the findings and results were presented to the SCRLCAC in November 2020. According to the findings of the committee evaluations, many of the reports delivered to international institutions about progress in the rule of law and the fight against corruption were false. The action plans of the mentioned institutions have not done based on accurate assessment. The action plans of many of these organs, such as the Supreme Court and the Attorney General, even lacked indicators to identify progress. Some of them lacked the precise determination of the details, and in many cases lacked the determination of the budget. The findings also indicated that the National Judicial Reform Program has not been implemented even in the central offices of the five main organizations in Kabul and did not have much effect on the beneficiaries. The failure of the Program was such that the president prevented its public release.<sup>70</sup> According to the mentioned evaluation report, a main reason for the failure of this program was the disbelief in the rule of law and reforms by the authorities, as well as centralism. The organizations had not provided the necessary information to their managers about the reforms and the mechanism of the implementation. There was no independence monitoring and evaluation mechanism during the all five years. The members of the SCRLCAC were both planners, executors, supervisors and evaluators, as well as recipients of reports, which seem to have given themselves a passing grade. On the other hand, all these institutions depended on the president's decisions. Their attempt was to implement the president's extra-legal orders instead of the rule of law.<sup>71</sup>

Due to the weakness of the rule of law, most of the people used to settle their legal cases through compromise and mediation outside the judicial system. This is how sustainable development could not succeeded in Afghanistan.<sup>72</sup>

### **3-2-3- 4 Absolut Centralized Management**

An Afghan ruler first adopted a fully centralized administrative system in 1880 with the support of the British Empire. This model has always been favoured by the subsequent rulers, but has never been able to improve national participation and democracy.<sup>73</sup> According to the report of the United States Inspection Office, the extreme centralization and monopoly of power by the Afghan president and his men has been one of the six main reasons for the

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<sup>70</sup> Office of the Second Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan & UNDP, (2020) Analysis and evaluation of the implementation of the national program of Justice and Judicial reforms in the Justice and Judicial institutions of Afghanistan, Kabul, OSVP.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Rahmany, G. M. (2019). The Culture of Corruption in Afghanistan. Sl. No. Title Page, 25. Accessed: [https://www.sugyaan.org/sugyaan-archives/Vol-11\(2\)\\_Jul-Dec-2019/XI-2-2nd%20Article.pdf](https://www.sugyaan.org/sugyaan-archives/Vol-11(2)_Jul-Dec-2019/XI-2-2nd%20Article.pdf) .

<sup>73</sup> United States Institute of Peace USIP (November 2020) the Nature of the Afghan State: Centralization vs. Decentralization. Accessed: [https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Afghanistan-Peace-Process\\_Nature-of-the-Afghan-State\\_Centralization-vs-Decentralization.pdf](https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Afghanistan-Peace-Process_Nature-of-the-Afghan-State_Centralization-vs-Decentralization.pdf).

downfall of the republican system.<sup>74</sup> This was also emphasized in the SDGs report of the Ministry of Economy.<sup>75</sup>

According to Article 64 of the Afghan Constitution, practically there was no separation of powers and the president had all the authority in the absence of any monitoring and preventive mechanism. Some of the powers and qualifications of the president are:

- appointing, dismissing and accepting resignations of: all members of the cabinet and ministers; the attorney general; the head of the central bank; all officers of the army; police, national security forces; all high-ranking government officials and the head of the Red Crescent;

- appointment, dismissal and acceptance of resignation of: members of the Supreme Court. Judges in all courts amnesty or reduce the punishment of criminals;

- appointment of ambassadors and consuls of Afghanistan to foreign countries and international institutions;

- appointment of one third of the members of the Senate;

- establishment of any type of commission that it deems appropriate for the country.<sup>76</sup>

The president established 25 independent institutions using clauses 20 and 21 of article 64 of the Constitution. Some of these bodies were bigger than a ministry and were not accountable to the Parliament. Linguistic, ethnic and religious discrimination, corruption in the budget, doing parallel work of the ministries have done in these institutions. After the 2019 presidential election, practically the president and his two colleagues ran the entire country.<sup>77</sup>

Extreme centralism caused severe bureaucracy, corruption and deprivation of people, especially rural communities, from participating in any development program.<sup>78</sup> By creating parallel offices, President Ghani had taken the authority of the ministries and even part of the jurisdiction of the judiciary into his office. He dismissed many professional officers and replaced them with inexperienced people and even civilians who could not provide security. On March 28, 2021, at the opening ceremony of the Youth Council, he emphasized that at least 50% of Afghanistan's incomes had been stolen. The main reason was the highly

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<sup>74</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction SIGAR (2022) Why the Afghan Government Collapsed? Accessed at: <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/evaluations/SIGAR-23-05-IP.pdf>.

<sup>75</sup> Ministry of Economy, (2020) Report on SDGs Implementation. Accessed: <https://moec.gov.af/sites/default/files/2020-02/SDGs%20Report%20Final%20May%202016.pdf>.

<sup>76</sup> Afghanistan Constitution, (2004), Article No 64.

<sup>77</sup> - Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction SIGAR (2022) Why the Afghan Government Collapsed? Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Qadam Shah, Mohammad, (2021), "Centralization is at the Core of Afghanistan's Problems", <https://thediplomat.com/2021/08/centralization-is-at-the-core-of-afghanistans-problems/>.



centralized and bureaucratic system and lack of monitoring of government activities.<sup>79</sup> At the same time, the director of commercial customs also said that the system was broken and customs revenues had been looted.<sup>80</sup> According to the mentioned considerations, sustainable development could not be achieved.

### **3-3 Implementation of SDGs after the fall of the Republic**

With the occupation of Kabul by the Taliban, currently 95% of the people of Afghanistan are unable to secure their own food.<sup>81</sup> Successive droughts and climate changes have added to the problems. The implementation of national SDGs, which was dependent on foreign support, has now been completely stopped. In the following sections, the main causes will be explained.

#### **3-3-1 No Rule of Law, Drugs, and Human Rights**

##### **3-3-1-1 No Rule of law**

After the fall of Kabul in August 2021, high-ranking officials and elites left the country. 700,000 jobs were lost. The Taliban declared a radical theocracy in which the people and the law have no role. On September 7, 2021, the Taliban announced the establishment of a superintendent cabinet, which generally consists of warriors without expertise.<sup>82</sup> The legislation power was abrogated, because they declared that the country did not need human made laws. The Ministry of Women, the Independent Human Rights Commission and dozens of public offices were abolished. The judiciary and all the ministries were handed over to the Pashtun religious warriors<sup>83</sup>. The Ministry of Inquisition was established in the name of commanding good and forbidding evil. The Prime Minister, his deputy and all 14 main members of the Taliban government are on the United Nations terrorist blacklist. They do not have any kind of administrative work experience and expertise.<sup>84</sup> Sirajuddin Haqqani, the Taliban's Interior Minister, is the head of the Haqqani network, one of the most dangerous terrorists in the world that FBI has set a ten million dollar bounty on his head.<sup>85</sup>

Gender, ethnic, religious, and linguistic discrimination intensified. Farsi, which is the official language of the country, was removed from the boards of the offices. Women, and most people belonging to non-Pashtun ethnic groups, especially the Hazaras, were fired from

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<sup>79</sup> <https://www.darivova.com/a/president-ghani-concern-about-corruption-in-Afghanistan/5831289.html>

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.ariananews.af/50-of-national-revenue-being-embezzled-officials/>

<sup>81</sup> UN News - Global Perspective Human stories (15 March 2022) Humanitarian Aid. Accessed at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1113982> .

Lutz, J. (2021) What the Taliban Takeover Means for Food Security in Afghanistan. CSIS. Accessed at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-taliban-takeover-means-food-security-afghanistan>.

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58479750>.

<sup>83</sup> UNSC (1 June 2023) No: S/2023/370, Letter dated 23 May 2023 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011).

<sup>84</sup> Consolidated United Nations Security Council Sanctions List (2 October 2015) accessed at: <https://www.un.org/french/sc/committees/consolidated.htm>.

<sup>85</sup> Most wanted, accessed at: <https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/terrorinfo/sirajuddin-haqqani>.

government offices. A mono-ethnic, mono-gender government, lacking legislative power, lacking law, lacking national and international legitimacy, came into power.<sup>86</sup> The abolition of the constitution and all the laws of the country and the abolition of the legislature show that the rule of law does not exist even in its worst form.<sup>87</sup> In the absence of law, sustainable development loses its meaning.

### **3-3-1-2 Drugs**

Drug production and trafficking have always been financial source for the Taliban; however, their leader announced a ban on drug in 2022. After a short time, it turned out that this ban was not true. Taliban demanded the release of Haji Bashar Nurzai, the biggest international smuggler of Afghanistan and one of the founders of the Taliban movement, who had been arrested in 2006 in the United States. He was released in September 2022 and handed over to the Taliban to lead their drug mafia.<sup>88</sup> According to the UNODC findings, opium cultivation in Afghanistan increased by 32% over 2022 to 233,000 hectares. In Helmand province, one-fifth of arable land was dedicated to opium poppy.<sup>89</sup> This Pashtun-inhabited province alone produces most of Afghanistan's narcotics.

The supporters of the Taliban have monopolized the drug economy. This does not only increases the spread of crimes, but also threatens the security of other ethnic groups. Clearly, sustainable development could never achieved with the expansion of drug production and trade.

### **3-3-1-3 Human Rights**

Afghanistan is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic and Social Rights of the United Nations (New York, 16 December 1966).<sup>90</sup> Human rights and justice, which have a central position in SDGs fifth and 16<sup>th</sup> goals, have no value for the Taliban government. They have banned women, religious minorities and most non-Pashtun ethnic groups from studying and working in public offices and established a crucial discriminations.<sup>91</sup> Field executions and expulsion of people from their

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<sup>86</sup> Haqani, S. A. (2022) *Al\_Emarat\_Al Islamia Va Nedamoha*, {Islamic Emirate and its System} Kabul, Daro laolum alshareia.

<sup>87</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan (9 September 2022) Situation of human rights in Afghanistan. Report No: A/HRC/51/6.

<sup>88</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/senior-taliban-figure-arrives-kabul-after-decades-us-detention-spokesperson-2022-09-19/>

<sup>89</sup> UNODC, (2022) Afghanistan opium cultivation in 2022, accessed at: [https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/press/releases/2022/November/afghanistan-opium-cultivation-in-2022-up-by-32-per-cent\\_-unodc-survey.html?fbclid=IwAR1XrCMHfsbMEpC18gn0J1uuaHifV87iG22PHFhOYznn8AVAYCNW-Vh7vOw](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/press/releases/2022/November/afghanistan-opium-cultivation-in-2022-up-by-32-per-cent_-unodc-survey.html?fbclid=IwAR1XrCMHfsbMEpC18gn0J1uuaHifV87iG22PHFhOYznn8AVAYCNW-Vh7vOw)

<sup>90</sup> The actions of the Taliban and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan are not consistent with these two covenant.

<sup>91</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett (9 February 2023) Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, report No: A/HRC/52/84.

homes and giving their houses and lands to Taliban fighters continue.<sup>92</sup> In the latest order of the Taliban leader, women have even been prohibited from entering public bathrooms and public parks. The last Afghan Jew left Afghanistan forever in 2021, and the Sikh and Hindu minorities left Afghanistan for India in 2022 after their homes and lands were usurped.<sup>93</sup> In early November 2022, the Taliban ordered the forced deportation of 4,000 Hazara families in Daikundi and Ghor provinces to hand over their houses and farms to their fighters from Pashtuns tribes.<sup>94</sup> Also, in this April 2023, more than 30 men and women were whipped by the religious police of the Taliban without trial in Bamyan, Takhar and Paktia stadiums; in addition the leader of the Taliban announced that from now on, his government will carry out execution and amputation punishments.<sup>95</sup> Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists' in a joint report in May 2023, stated that Taliban's crime against Afghan women should be considered as crime against humanity and gender persecution.<sup>96</sup>

Systematic violations of the civil, political, social and economic rights of the Afghan people by the Taliban has been reflected in the resolution 77/10, concerning the situation in Afghanistan, adopted by the UN General Assembly of 10 November 2022. The resolution has also expressed the deep concern of the UN about the unprecedented spread of poverty, the expansion of drug production and trafficking, the widespread violation of the rights of women and tribes, the spread of suicide attacks, the spread of field executions and executions without trial.<sup>97</sup> According to SDGs and human rights criteria, sustainable development is not possible with this situation.<sup>98</sup>

### **3-3-2 Terrorism and Development**

Taliban have always engaged in terrorist operations both during the first period of their ruling, from 1996 to 2001, and after that. The 20-year war is estimated to have taken the lives of at least 47,245 civilians, in addition to over 66,000 Afghan national military and police, 51,191 Taliban and other fighters, 72 journalists, 444 aid workers and 3,846 US contractors.<sup>99</sup> In 2021, they announced that they had cut ties with international terrorism; however, only in 2022, there were several attacks on the countries of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Iran from

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<sup>92</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan (9 September 2022) Situation of human rights in Afghanistan. Report No: A/HRC/51/6.

<sup>93</sup> <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/afghan-sikhs-hindus-land-in-delhi-from-kabul-8028232/>.

<sup>94</sup> <https://8am.media/residents-of-17-villages-in-daikundi-and-ghor-have-been-forced-to-move/>.

<sup>95</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/cprej1z3p99o>.

<sup>96</sup> Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists (May 26, 2023) report: the Taliban war on Women. Accessed: [https://www.amnesty.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Taliban-War-on-Women\\_ICJ-AI-Afghanistan-Report.pdf](https://www.amnesty.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Taliban-War-on-Women_ICJ-AI-Afghanistan-Report.pdf).

<sup>97</sup> UN Doc. A/RES/7710 of 14 November 2022.

<sup>98</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett (9 February 2023) Situation of the Human Rights in Afghanistan, Report No A/HRC/52/84. And UNICEF (April 2023) Afghanistan Humanitarian Situation Report. Accessed: <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/unicef-afghanistan-humanitarian-situation-report-no-4-april-2023>.

<sup>99</sup> Amnesty international (December 2021). THE FATE OF THOUSANDS HANGING IN THE BALANCE, accessed <https://www.amnesty.org/es/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/ASA1147272021ENGLISH.pdf>.

Afghanistan borders, and the Prime Minister of Pakistan stated at the United Nations General Assembly that Afghanistan has become a place for exporting terrorists to Pakistan.<sup>100</sup> The killing of the al-Qaeda leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, in the guesthouse of the Taliban's Interior Minister in August 2022 is the obvious reason for the growth of international terrorism in Afghanistan.<sup>101</sup> Other foreign terrorist groups are also widely active in Afghanistan, including ISIS, which has committed dozens of suicide attacks in recent years. One of the deadliest attacks of the ISIS took place on September 30, 2022 at the Kaj educational center in Kabul against Hazara citizens, and more than 55 schoolgirls were killed.<sup>102</sup>

Due to the assassination of citizens in the absence of any kind of law and accountability, the security of people's lives is not ensured. As a consequence, sustainable development along with the expansion of terrorism from a group to a government is impossible.

### **3-3-3 Dark Position of Sustainable Development in the Taliban Manifesto**

In 2022, the head of the Supreme Court of the Taliban, Abdul Hakim Haqqani, published a book titled *Al-Emara-e-Islamia va Nidamha* (The Islamic Emirate and its System); the book was introduced as the government manifesto of the Taliban after abolishing the Constitution and all the laws enforced in the country. The leader of the Taliban has also signed it as confirmation. This book introduces the Taliban's view on power relations and sustainable development as it follows:

- Sovereignty belongs to God and the Taliban are God's representative and apply it. The people have no right to demand from the Taliban government; but they only have to obey. Poverty, hunger, unemployment, etc. are from God and the Taliban government has no responsibility in these cases.<sup>103</sup>

- Democracy, elections and human rights are illegitimate and anti-Islam. All laws of Afghanistan, including the constitution, are invalid because they were drafted not in accordance to Shari law with Taliban's recitation. Only followers of a Hanafi religion of Islam should administer political power and government. Non-Muslims and non-Hanafi Muslims, like Shiites, do not have any right to work or enter the government and public offices, judiciary, executive, etc. Even Shiites family rights, which were independent in the republican system, were prohibited.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> [https://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/77/pk\\_en.pdf](https://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/77/pk_en.pdf).

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-62387167>.

<sup>102</sup> <https://unama.unmissions.org/security-council-press-statement-attack-against-educational-centre-kabul> and <https://unama.unmissions.org/security-council-press-statement-attack-against-educational-centre-kabul>.

<sup>103</sup> Haqqani, S. A. (2022) *Al\_Emarat\_Al Islamia Va Nedamoha*, {Islamic Emirate and its System} Kabul, Daro laolum alshareia.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

- The current educational system, which is based on the model of non-Muslims, should be banned in Afghanistan and even in other Islamic countries. All schools should be closed even for boys, because they corrupt their morals. They should only study religious sciences. Curricula of the Universities also must change.<sup>105</sup>

- Women have no right to work, educate or have any kind of presence in society since their intellects are incomplete and they are misused by Satan/Devil.

- All non-Muslims are enemies. Even after the withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Taliban must continue the Holy war against them.<sup>106</sup>

It is clear that SDGs has not any position in the most important written document of the Taliban government.

### **3-3-4 Sustainable Development Revival Mechanism in Afghanistan**

Abandoning the implementation of SDGs in Afghanistan has internal and external reasons. At the time of writing this paper, the country is hostage of a terrorist group that weekly receives at least 40 million dollars from the international community under the name of humanitarian aid.<sup>107</sup> The rule of Taliban is a great injustice to the people of Afghanistan and a greater danger to global security as reflected in Meeting Coverage of Security Council No. 9277 of 8 March 2023.<sup>108</sup> Afghanistan struggle is not just an internal issue therefore, the United Nations and especially the United States that, signed Qatar Agreement with Taliban, are responsible in particular.<sup>109</sup> US's withdrawal from Afghanistan does not reduce the responsibility for the rule of terrorism over the fate of the Afghans. Despite the fact that the United States signed a strategic cooperation agreement with the Afghan government on May 2, 2012 and pledged to support the country against its enemies, the United States signed the Doha Agreement with the Taliban terrorist group on February 29, 2020. It forced the Afghan government to release more than 5,000 terrorists from prisons. First, it was a clear violation of Article 2 of the UN Charter, because not any country has the right to enter into an agreement with the armed opponents of a legitimate government and make a decision about the existing political system. Secondly, this was a practical violation of strategic and security agreements between the governments of Afghanistan and the United States, which were binding according to the 1969 Convention on the Law of Treaties that must be implemented in good faith. The third is the violation of the international rule of prohibition of interference

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> <https://english.news.cn/20220801/6df26b5d0385470cbe4485ab7325f985/c.html>.

<sup>108</sup> Meetings Coverage and Press Releases of the UN Security council (8 March 2023) SC/15222, 9277TH Meeting (AM) accessed: <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15222.doc.htm>.

<sup>109</sup> <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/12-704-Afghanistan-Relations.pdf>.

in the internal affairs of a country (Article 41, draft articles on Responsibility of States for internationally wrongful acts, 2001).<sup>110</sup>

The International Community as a legitimate regime has not recognized the Taliban government yet. It is still a terrorist group based on the resolutions of the Security Council, which are still valid, such as Resolution 1267 (1999). According to its paragraph 4, the Taliban has been sanctioned and any kind of funding them has prohibited.<sup>111</sup> Resolution 1373 (2001) of the Security Council, has emphasized the suppression of terrorism, and wants from the UN member states to block any route that leads to financial aid, support and trafficking of the terrorism, immediately.<sup>112</sup> Resolution No.1373 (2001) of the Security Council imposed military, diplomatic and foreign traffic sanctions on the Taliban regime. Undoubtedly, all members of the international community, including the United States, are obliged to implement the provisions and contents of these resolutions, and any agreement contrary to these resolutions is considered invalid and a violation thereof.<sup>113</sup>

The agreement between the United States and the Taliban destroyed the hope of peace, human rights and freedom in Afghanistan. Indeed the American Inspection Agency (SIGAR) has listed the non-participation of the Afghan government in the treaty with the Taliban as one of the factors of the downfall of the republican regime.<sup>114</sup> In its latest report of 1 June 2023 the UN Security Council has admitted that the Taliban has not changed from the 1996 that occupied Afghanistan. They practices ethnic, religious, and gender racism and has formed a completely Pashtun government that does not respect anyone's security, freedom, and basic rights.<sup>115</sup>

In the current situation, it is necessary for the United Nations, the United States, the European Union and other countries involved in the issue of Afghanistan to take a political action in accordance with their historical responsibility, to make the Taliban accept the sovereignty of the people, form a national government, respect human rights and change the centralized administration system. If such an action is not taken, in the near future the risk of a human disaster in Afghanistan and of attacks far more deadly than the September 11, 2001 on New York, in other parts of the world will be concrete and foreseeable as the as the US FBI acknowledges.<sup>116</sup>

Overall, reactivating the process of sustainable development in Afghanistan is only possible through the establishment of a legitimate and accountable government.

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<sup>110</sup> [https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/draft\\_articles/9\\_6\\_2001.pdf](https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/draft_articles/9_6_2001.pdf).

<sup>111</sup> <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1267>

<sup>112</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/557/43/PDF/N0155743.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>113</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/806/62/PDF/N0080662.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>114</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction SIGAR (2022) Why the Afghan Government Collapsed? Accessed at: <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/evaluations/SIGAR-23-05-IP.pdf>.

<sup>115</sup> UN Doc. S/2023/370 of 1 June 2023.

<sup>116</sup> <https://thehill.com/policy/national-security/3736668-fbi-dhs-leaders-warn-of-substantial-risks-of-targeted-violence/>.

#### **4. Concluding Remarks**

The UN MDGs and SDGs have been adopted by the United Nations to ensure a better human life and protection of global resources of the world in the 21st century. Afghanistan started the implementation of its national MDGs and SDGs later than other countries. Insecurity, destruction of structures due to war, administrative corruption, discrimination and lack of political will for development were among their major obstacles. After August 2021, the Taliban occupation of the Afghanistan led to abandoning all legislative efforts linked to the attainment of SDGs. Afghanistan has now lost its perspective of sustainable development. If global efforts are not made to make the Taliban to accept a national legitimate governing system, a human crisis will occur for 41 million Afghan as well as the export of terrorism to the whole world, will take place. Due to the Qatar agreement with the Taliban, the United States has the main responsibility in helping for restoring the normal situation. The solution to achieve SDGs in Afghanistan is to create a responsible national government. The United Nations, in cooperation with international and Regional Allies, can design and implement a mechanism to help the Afghans to form a legitimate government and force the ruling group to accept the national will. Only in this way, it will be possible to revive the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations in Afghanistan.