

STABILITY THROUGH ECONOMIC GROWTH IN AFGHANISTAN

by

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## DEDICATION

To those who lost their lives in Afghanistan

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the Afghan public's opinion to identify the overall direction of the country, whether the country, in terms of economic growth, is moving in a positive direction or not. How do economic factors affect the public's views on the direction of the country? Based on that, this study finds that economic growth has an effect on the Afghan public's opinion on the country's direction.

Afghans are not enjoying stability in their country yet, after the majority of Afghans accepted U.S. military intervention in 2001 and the establishment of the new government to end instability. It was not an easy transformation for the Afghan people. Some communities welcomed U.S. military intervention and the establishment of a new government. However, some Afghan communities became opposed to this transformation.

This thesis informs us about the differences, opportunities, barriers, and gaps related to those two camps which have delayed democratization, state-building, and political and economic transformation processes. Due to some strategic mistakes and shortcomings related to the opportunities and barriers that were within those two camps, the chances of economic investment, state-building, job creation, and investing in the safe-zone region in Afghanistan were wasted.

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## INTRODUCTION

The War on Terror was a good beginning for the people of Afghanistan in 2001. The hope of rebuilding their country, among Afghans, was high. Millions of Afghan refugees came back from Iran, Pakistan, and other neighboring countries to Afghanistan. They had a great sense of optimism and desire that their country would be rebuilt, and that their lives would be prosperous in the post-Taliban era.

The international community was committed to rebuilding Afghanistan. The donor communities assessed the needs, donated billions of dollars, and generated enough funds to rebuild Afghanistan in the post-Taliban era. The Afghan authorities and the international community committed themselves to poverty reduction, economic development, and to establishing an accountable democratic regime in Afghanistan (Bonn Conference, 2001).

The post-civil war in Afghanistan that was due to political tension and political conflict demonstrated that a democratic political system was needed to transfer the political power to authority and legitimize political power. In this phase of the democratization process, Afghanistan required a democratic government. Afghan authority and the international community established an interim administration, then a temporary administration and finally, in 2004 they succeeded in establishing a democratic government. President Hamid Karzai won the presidential election with fifty-five point four percent of the votes and he became the first president after the civil war in Afghanistan. The election result was acceptable to the majority of the Afghan people.

After a successful presidential election in 2004, followed by the parliamentary election, and the provincial councils' elections in 2005, which I refer to as the first phase of democratization in Afghanistan, the achievements in the first phase were dependent on successful economic components and investments in a second phase, to stabilize the first phase. Unfortunately, it has not happened and the opportunities after the successful establishment of a democratic government were wasted.

As of 2019, the data shows that despite the policy, planning, and strategic pathway designed, the rate of poverty has not changed, and an estimated forty percent of the population remains below the poverty line (World Bank, 2015). Approximately forty percent of the working population is unemployed, fifty percent of whom are women (World Bank, 2015). In 2015, approximately 178,000 applied for asylum in the European Union (EU) member states (Eurostat, 2016). The majority of the people that remain in Afghanistan live on emergency food. Lack of economic development and job opportunities impacted the overall stability in this country. Concerning the above context, this thesis measures the effects of economic growth and economic investment on stability in Afghanistan.

***How does prioritizing economic growth affect the Afghan public's opinion about the overall direction of the country?***

The Afghan government and the U.S. strategy of war in Afghanistan are to defeat Al-Qaeda (and other terrorist groups), establish a democratic government, bring peace, justice, economic development, and stability in Afghanistan (Bonn Conference, 2001). The strategy succeeded to transform the political system of Afghanistan from a Taliban-type regime to a new democratically elected government. The Afghan government was

able to establish an Army and police force. Since 2001, the Afghan people have had three presidential, three parliamentary and three provincial council elections, which is good progress. Approximately half of the country is enjoying peace and security, but unfortunately, the other half of the country is at war. However, it is essential to find out which factors have impacted public opinion, caused instability, and what the strategy outcome has been in Afghanistan.

In this transformation process from a Taliban type regime to a new democratically elected government, Afghanistan was geopolitically divided into two regions. These regions participated in the democratization process and welcomed the transformation process, however, approximately half of the country remains opposed to the democratization and stabilization process.

This thesis measures the lack of economic investment effects in the safe-zone region communities that were left isolated, after adapting to the emerging democratization process, as opposed to fighting to defeat this transformation process. The safe-zone region did not receive economic investment, people faced harsh poverty, food emergencies, and job opportunities were not available in the safe-zone region where these communities live in peace. The number of unemployed high school and university graduate students increased and returnees coming from neighboring countries remain unemployed. Poverty and cheap laborers hit the highest level.

However, concerning this context from Afghanistan, this thesis clustered the Afghan communities into two camps and the study was conducted through a mixed-method approach. The quantitative data incorporated in this study was generated by the World Bank from Afghanistan in 2018 and the qualitative data incorporated into this

study was generated by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU 2008-2016) through some case-based studies from the villages in Afghanistan. These two datasets help us to measure the impacts of the economic situation, job opportunities, wealth, and investment on public opinion concerning the country's direction in Afghanistan.

### **Economic Investment**

It is interesting to see if there are any economic investments, infrastructure projects, and resources that the Afghan government and donor community have implemented in the regions that supported the emerging democracy in Afghanistan compared to the communities that fought to defeat the emerging democracy from the very beginning in their regions. Political scholar Seymour Martin Lipset states: "Perhaps the most widespread generalization linking political systems to other aspects of society has been that democracy is related to the state of economic development" (Lipset, 1959).

Economic development increases job opportunities in communities and helps people to find jobs, contribute to society, and support their families for a better future. This simple notion triggers economic investments that enrich government legitimacy and increase the support of the individuals towards their elected government because the individuals see progress and positive changes in their communities. Government legitimacy is an asset for them and impacts their opinions. Lipset argues that democratic regime transitions in European countries highly correlated between high levels of economic development and the occurrence of democratic political systems.

Samuel P. Huntington (1984) argued that the probability of any causal connection running from wealth to democracy is enhanced by the arguments as to why this would be

a plausible relationship. A wealthy economy, it is said, makes possible higher levels of literacy, education, and mass media exposure, all of which are conducive to democracy. A wealthy economy also moderates the tensions of political conflict; alternative opportunities are likely to exist for unsuccessful political leaders and greater economic resources generally facilitate accommodation and compromise.

I believe that in society industrialization, urbanization, investment, and development which creates jobs and economic opportunities will generate wealth. Industrialization impacts social relations and boosts complexity of social norms that affect the culture and psychological aspects of society. These are positive and transitional factors for the democratization process and stability. The major aspect in this context is that the relationship between elites and mass populations will be impacted. People would enjoy a better income and find jobs through their capabilities, experience, and knowledge, which supports individuals to contribute, choose, and think independently (de Schweinitz, 1959).

Ross E. Burkhardt and Michael S. Levis-Beck (1994) conducted a research study on 131 nations with 2,096 observations. They recognized that “according to Granger causality tests, economic development “causes” democracy, but democracy does not “cause” economic development”. Economic development boosts market functionality, creates job opportunities, and reduces poverty. When the Afghan people enjoy positive changes in their daily lives, they will be more supportive of their government.

Evelyne Huber, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and John D. Stephens (1993) tackled the elements of causation to find out if there are any correlations between economic development and democracy. Their case study was in European countries. They

conducted their research based on a comparative historical methodology which is a case-based study. They sought to specify the dynamic by which democracy emerged in European countries, focusing on how economic development affects that dynamic. Their findings are significant and show that economic development impacted democracy in European countries.

A democratic society requires a strong economy, job opportunities, and an accountable political system. The ideal economic arrangement helps communities to realize their basic needs through meaningful contributions to their quality of life, especially through hard work. When a society does not have a job and economic opportunities “the individuals in need will find ways to survive. In survival mode, democratic principles and values do not remain top priorities for those individuals. Instead, survival dominates their day-to-day life choices (Hobbes, *State of Nature*, 1588-1679).”

It is possible in a short-term period to lead a society to observe and value the principles of a democratic system, that society might keep the values of democracy current and respected. However, in the longer term, when individuals’ survival modes are endangered due to a nonfunctional economic system and because of the lack of an unaccountable government, they will do their best to find ways to feed their families. In a hunger situation, democracy and the principles of democracy might not be an option for them, and this can impact stability. They need immediate assistance and income to feed themselves and their families, (Lerner, 1985).

The researchers stated “democracy is a matter of power and power-sharing: (1) the balance of class power, (2) the nature of the state and state-society relations, (3)

transnational structures of power, or the international economy and system of states (Huber et, al., 1993, p.73). They hypothesized that:

For a society to become democratic, the power balance in civil society has to shift. Civil society is the public sphere distinguished from the state, the economy and the web of family and kin relations. It comprises all social groups associations and institutions that are strictly production-related, nor governmental or familial in character. Since the major power resource of the many is collective organization, their chance to organize in associations, unions, and parties gains critical significance (Huber et al. 1993, p. 71-86).

The state, tribe, family, and industrialization environment shape different identities to each individual in society. The relationship, dependency, and interaction between the working-class and the middle-class or businesses in an industrialization market is a complex setting that contributes to the transformation of social norms, social structures, and stability.

In the context of a dynamic market, the working-class has opportunities to find jobs and those who are available to work have multiple business opportunities. The working-class is connected to a dynamic market that provides them flexible jobs or business opportunities, competitive wages, and benefits. Individuals could solve their financial needs through their contributions and hard work. They would have opportunities to pursue a better education, search for better jobs, and participate independently in the social and political affairs of their communities. Political elites, tribe leaders, religious groups, or political parties are not able to dominate a society when the market settings and opportunities are complex.

A dynamic economic market and a political environment where the working class is not dominated by politicians or economic elites is critical for an emerging democracy. The relationship between the working-class and business in the industrialization market helps households to have financial independence and earn better incomes. Laborers under this setting are not dependent on some Tribe leaders, Maliks, or politicians. They have job security, income, and importantly would be able to solve their financial problems based on how much they work. Every individual's contribution and their outlook to social norms, social structure, political system, and political elites would be different (in Afghanistan the society is under the control of political elites or some tribe leaders). A dynamic market and functional economic settings could produce more complex social and political environments which would be beneficial for an emerging democracy.

For example, in Europe in 1870 only Switzerland was a democratic state, but by 1920 all western European countries became fully democratic. This transition took place in Europe due to the arrival of the organized working-class, but it was not an easy transition process.

“The existence of a powerful landlords’ problems on a large supply of cheap laborers were associated with significant problems for democracy: in four of the five Western European countries in which large landholders played a significant political role towards the end of the nineteenth century — Germany, Austria-Hungary, Spain and Italy—democratic regimes collapsed in the interwar period. In each of these countries, the landed upper classes, in coalition with the state and the bourgeoisie, were crucially implicated in the weakness of the push toward democracy outside of the working-class movement before World War I

and in the events that led to the demise of democracy in the interwar period”  
(Huber & Stephens 1997, p.3).

Huber and Stephens argue that to establish a democratic regime, it is essential to have a middle-class who are dependent on a strong working-class. The dependency of economic elites to the working-class supports the emergence of a democratic regime with a sustainable basis because the economic elites cannot extremely dominate the working-class. Businesses, because of their need to find and keep enough laborers need to compete in a dynamic and complex market. Competition among businesses would help the working-class to have better wages and benefits.

A better income for the working-class enables them to pay their tuition and get higher education and enroll in better schools. A better education for the working-class can lead to a more prosperous future. In other terms, modernization would not happen on its own. There could be a better economic condition that enables a democratic movement and sustains a democratic regime. The economic conditions and opportunities must be available for individuals in a society. The wealth should not be at the hands of a few economic and political elites.

In a governing structure, or a system when businesses and political elites can dominate the working-class, democratic transformation would be hard to establish, because the economic and political elites are capable of utilizing workers for their own political and financial purposes, which can impact working-class liberty. When markets function in a dynamic setting, the working-class benefits through competitive wages and better benefits. Businesses in a complex market setting are going to compete against each

other. The working-class in that type of market environment enjoy better work and business opportunities.

### **Emerging Democracy**

Political power in Afghanistan transformed from a Taliban type regime to a new democratic state, which has guaranteed individuals' liberties, empowered civil society organizations, granted freedom of speech, created democratic institutions, and protected human rights. In a democratic regime, individuals have the right to choose, elect, and sign the governing contract terms and responsibilities with those who govern and represent them. On November 19, 1963 in Gettysburg Pennsylvania, U.S. president Abraham Lincoln addressed that democracy is government of the people, by the people, for the people.

Hadhek Zouhaier and Kefi Mohamed Karim (2012) conducted a study focused on the causal effect of the quality of governance on the performance of a hundred projects funded by the World Bank, in developing countries over the period of 1974-1993. Zouhaier and Karim conducted a dynamic panel data model. The sampling size was 11 countries from the MENA region during the period of 2000-2009. Their research findings revealed the following outcomes: a positive impact of democracy on personal investment, positive effects of civil liberties on economic growth, and positive interaction between political rights and investment.

The above findings identify that democracy has positive effects on individual investors, and civil liberties also have a positive effect on economic growth. However, good governance, secure liberties, and accountability of government in Afghanistan have many shortcomings and could not fulfill these democratic practices. The Afghan

government is divided between four ethnic groups which have affected the functionality of the government. There are arguments that this relationship is complex, and it would not be clear whether liberty and democracy have a positive effect on economic growth or not (Pritchett & Kaufmann, 1998). As an example, China is not a democratic state, individual liberties are suppressed, but the country is enjoying successful economic growth.

### **Ethnicity**

The regions, communities, and even cities in Afghanistan are divided along with the values of tribalism, except the city of Mazar-e- Sharif because the residents in Mazar-e-Sharif did not have a harsh civil war. This city is not dominated by one ethnic group or religious ideology, and each ethnic group resides historically in their district of the city. Hazara and Uzbek ethnic groups, who are more politically affiliated, are the major populations of the city. The residents of other major cities, such as Herat and Kabul, culturally present their ethnic boundaries (each ethnicity residing in a particular district). Residents in Kabul, during the civil war, fought against each other. Herat is dominated by one or two ethnic majorities. These different ethnic identities are not diversified in those cities. Because of that, ethnic barriers prevent Afghans from creating more diversified communities and this is a constraint that does not allow the people to shape the identity of a modern city. Except for the city of Mazar-e-Sharif, which has a peaceful historical narrative and is not dominated by one or two races, the residents of each ethnic group in the mentioned cities represent and utilize their own localized identities and impose their differences on one another (Dorrnsoro, 2007). It is common among Afghans, due to the

ethnic barriers, to feel constraints in marrying their loved ones across their ethnic groups (Evason, 2019)

The country is divided across ethnic identities, ideology, and belief; Sunni and Shia are the two branches of Islam. They are not at war against each other, but their followers do not feel joy or comfort to pray together or marry members of the opposite branch. Evidence shows that Afghan communities are extremely divided across tribe (Minority Rights Group International, 2016). Then tribal politics impacts public services and distribution of public resources and opportunities in Afghanistan.

### **Tribalism politics**

Tribal politics and the problem of ethnic groups' political contributions to the political power in Afghanistan becomes part of the political culture in this country which is similar to clientelism. Leaders of ethnic groups are ruling this country. In terms of ethnic groups' contributions, three of the four major groups (Hazara, Tajik, and Uzbek) supported the Bonn process, the U.S. mission, and fought against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The Pashtun ethnic-based communities divided into two groups. One group supported the establishment of the new Afghan government and the U.S. military mission and the other group stood against it (Lieven, 2012).

The Bonn conference which outlined the structure of the Afghan interim administration, created an opportunity for Afghan local leaders to come together and choose their temporary leadership. Hamid Karzai, from the Pashtun ethnic community, was accepted as the head of an interim administration. For a decade the relationship between Hamid Karzai and the U.S. government was productive, but in his final presidential term, Hamid Karzai stood against the U.S. military mission in Afghanistan

and refused to sign the U.S.-Afghan military-strategic partnership, deepening the already divided Afghan communities (Graham-Harrison, 2013). Ethnic contribution based on the percentage of their population in Afghanistan is a constraint for economic growth, stability, and democracy.

### **State Building**

Afghanistan is not a heavily populated country; the total population is 35,530,081 (World Bank 2017). The country has thirty-four provinces, and 398 districts (Afghanistan Ministry of Interior 2005). The country's population is divided into the following ethnolinguistic groups: Hazara, Pashtun, Tajik, and Uzbek, followed by other minor ethnolinguistic groups like Aymaq, Turkmen, Baloch, Pashai, Nuristani, Gujjar, Arab, Brahui, and Pamiri. According to the Afghanistan Constitution, a total number of fourteen ethnic groups reside in Afghanistan (Afghanistan Constitution, 2018).

There are three major cities: Kabul, with the total population of 4.635 million people, Mazar -e- Sharif, with the total population of 303,282 people, and Herat, with the total population of 272,806 people, (The World Population Review, 2018).

State-building in Afghanistan cost billions of dollars and thousands of military personnel, aid workers, and civilians have died in the process of state-building and fighting against terror. The total war spending and state-building process in Afghanistan cost two trillion dollars (Brown University, 2016). Watson Institute has estimated that about 147,000 people have been killed. The number of the dead includes more than 38,480 civilians, and 41,000 civilians have been injured between 2001-2016. Watson Institute has reported that out of 147,000 individuals, 58,596 were Afghan military and national police, 2,401 U.S. troops, 6 U.S. DOD civilian casualties, 3,937 U.S. contractors,

1,141 other allied troops, 54 journalists/media workers, 409 humanitarian/NGO workers, and 42,100 opposition fighters”. According to statistics, this was not an easy state-building and democratization process for the Afghan people, the U.S. government, or their allies (Watson Institute, 2018).

The above statistical data gives us a context and a better understanding of Afghanistan and helps us to get more in-depth knowledge about this country. It would help us to know how much resources, funds, and human beings have been spent in this country to build a responsible government that can serve and lift its people from poverty while not providing another chance to terrorist organizations to use this country as a haven against other nations.

Militarization activities, military operations, and spending have been substantial, but investment in the economic fields, job creation, and business opportunities is not feasible, which has led to a lack of economic investment and impacted the process of state-building and democratization.

State-building started with the Bonn Conference, in 2001. The consensus was to transform the country into a democratic state and to help the Afghan communities establish their elected government and enjoy a peaceful lifestyle as a free nation.

The Bonn Conference legitimizes the current democratic process (Bonn Conference, 2001). The impacts of the Bonn process divided the Afghan communities into two camps; the communities in the central, northern, and western part of the country who supported the U.S. strategy and establishment of the new Afghan government, and the majority of the communities in the south along the Durand-line who did not support the Bonn process.

The above statistics from Afghanistan help us to understand the context of the country, its culture, the problem of race, the situation of insecurity, and the effects of racism this country is suffering. The above-mentioned statistics of expenses of human and capital resources that the Afghan nation as well as the donor community under the NATO platform which militarily, economically, and politically supported Afghanistan was enormous. Unfortunately, after all these struggles and spending there is still ongoing war, extreme poverty, and no stability.

### **Region**

From a geostrategic perspective, the communities in the north and the central part of the country supported the Bonn process, U.S. strategy, and the newly established government. The residents of those communities fought shoulder to shoulder against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. The fight against the Taliban in their communities succeeded.

The ideology of the Taliban in their communities become the symbol of hate, violence, and ignorance. They helped to build their country, took part in the reconstruction of their communities, participated in the democratic processes, and supported the central government for a better and more prosperous future for themselves, their children, and their country.

The local communities in the north and the central part of the country made a great contribution to the stability of the newly established government. They put the country into a vital arena for development and economic investment. It was a great opportunity for the implementation of strategic infrastructure projects, creating jobs, institutional reform, good governance, and economic investment.

In terms of economic investment, there was job creation, good governance, transportation, energy, health, education, and digitalization of both the public and private sectors. Unfortunately, in these regions, they were left isolated by the government from the strategic investment program. The focus of the Afghan government, the U.S. government, and their allies shifted to the war-zone region located mostly in the southern part of the country, in places like Kandahar, Zabul, Paktika, Paktia, Khost, Lugal, Uruzgan, and Helmand.

The people that changed their communities from a war-zone environment to safe communities and made their region ready for economic development and investment were left isolated. They passionately witnessed and bitterly waited to see progress and changes in their communities, but sadly that did not happen. The communities in these regions protested against joblessness, poverty, corruption, lack of human rights, and inequality in the hope of attracting the attention of the donor communities and the Afghan government regarding investing in their region for a better future and economic growth. The communities from the safe-zone region, because of the lack of government and donor community attention, and due to lack of jobs, and extreme poverty in their communities became hopeless from the government and donor community over a decade of politically and economically induced isolation (Enlightenment Movement, 2018). The consequence of economic isolation in the safe-zone region and also the ongoing war in the war-zone region makes Afghanistan the world's second-largest refugee population, some 2.7 million Afghans again became refugees around the world ([rescue.org](https://www.rescue.org)). People became more hopeless for their future; no job, no energy, no clean water, no accountable government, and people left alone with a deep concern for their future.

They had not yet witnessed any real progress in their daily lives. The Afghan government and the donor community, who were committed to supporting them, did not invest in the communities of the safe-zone region. The majority of civilians and military resources and investment funds were used mainly in the southern-region where the war and conflict-zone were located and partially to the southwestern communities. The outcome and achievement of those projects are still not productive, especially in the southern region (Kapstein 2017).

The Afghan government, the donor communities, the U.S. civilian assistance agencies, and the U.S. military's overall attentions were to stabilize the communities that put barriers against their mission (Kapstein 2017). Unfortunately, due to such a strategic shortcoming, the Afghan government, and the U.S. strategy outcome never succeeded in achieving their objective and the strategy left the Afghan communities completely in a disastrous situation. Every single opportunity was wasted across the divided nation. These multi-level problems impacted the productivity of the political and economic investment drastically impacted the residents. Families and individuals in the safe-zone region in Afghanistan have suffered since 2001, lacking basic survival needs such as: food, clean water, and electricity.

An example from the field: approximately seventy percent of high school and college graduates have two options; to become a refugee or to stay at home without a job. Twenty to thirty percent of them might be able to find a job below the minimum wage, where their salary would be no more than one-hundred fifty dollars per month. This is a real image from those communities who supported the Afghan government since its

establishment and the U.S. presence and their allies in Afghanistan since 2001, (Witness from the field Bamiyan Afghanistan, 2014).

## RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis analyzes the factors which impacted the public's opinion of the overall direction of the country in 2018. The nation is suffering from decades of war, poverty, and instability. For measurement and analyzation purposes, I chose the public opinion survey dataset which was generated by the World Bank. The number of observations is 461, the country is Afghanistan, the year 2018. This Country Opinion Survey uses participants from the Office of the President, Office of the Chief Executive, office of a minister, office of a parliamentarian, employees of ministries, implementation agencies, project management units (PMUs), contractors, local government offices or staff, bilateral and multilateral agencies, private sector organizations, the financial sectors, NGOs, community-based organizations, the media, independent government institutions, trade unions, faith-based groups, youth groups, academia/research institutes/think tanks, and the judiciary branch. I utilized this sampling dataset for measurement in this study and discovered the causal effects of economic growth on the Afghan public's opinion of their country's overall direction. The model for testing this hypothesis is a mixed-method approach. For quantitative data analyzation, I used multilevel regression modeling, and for the qualitative study measurement, I incorporated a series of case studies from local communities that were studied by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU, 2008-2016) in Afghanistan.

## Hypotheses

**H1:** *“Individuals who perceive economic growth as a more important priority for Afghanistan are less likely to be satisfied with the government of Afghanistan.”*

**H2:** *“Individuals who perceive economic growth as a more important priority for Afghanistan are more likely to view Afghanistan as a fragile state.”*

The independent variable on H1 is economic growth, and the dependent variable is the public’s opinion of the country’s overall direction. On H2, the independent variable is again economic growth and the dependent variable is Afghanistan as a fragile state.

## METHODOLOGY

The method to examine these hypotheses is considered a mixed-method approach in that it provides qualitative and quantitative data analysis. The models are multilevel regressions. I used the dataset of the World Bank from Afghanistan from the year 2018, which has 461 observations and is a public opinion survey data. The qualitative part of this data is collected through a series of case studies from the villages of Afghanistan by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU 2008-2016).

### **Dependent Variable: Overall country direction**

The dataset indicated that forty-four percent of the participants mentioned Afghanistan is headed in the right direction. Twenty-nine percent of the participants indicated that Afghanistan is headed in the wrong direction, and twenty-five percent of the participants indicated that they are not sure. The statistical mean of participants who believe Afghanistan is headed in a positive direction is 1.813239 with a standard error of .0397638.

### **Independent Variable: Prioritizing economic growth in Afghanistan**

Prioritizing economic growth is the independent variable. The number of observations is 470. From these participants, sixty-four percent indicated that economic growth should be the top priority which has a mean of 0.1041215 with a standard error of .0142402. Another dataset from the Central Statistics Organization shows that forty percent of the Afghan working population is jobless. The majority of this jobless population is youth, returnees, high school, and university students. This statistical data

and percentage of joblessness and their priorities are important to measure whether the economic growth variable has a causal effect on Afghan public opinion regarding rating their country's direction. For measurement purposes, I used the World Bank dataset from Afghanistan to assess the impact of the economic growth on Afghan public opinion and overall country direction.

### **The Control Variables**

#### Gender

Afghanistan is among the countries where gender inequality is extreme. To get more in-depth knowledge from Afghanistan, I chose to provide some statistical data which is generated by The Asia Foundation who conducted a face-to-face interview with 15,000 Afghans in 2018. From the 15,000 participants, fifty percent were male and fifty percent female, eighty-one percent of participants were from rural areas, and nineteen percent were from the urban population. This survey, which provides a statistical picture of Afghanistan regarding gender issues, found many outstanding facts facing women. One is illiteracy and a lack of educational opportunities. About half of the participants, forty-seven percent, mentioned this as an issue, followed by limitation on women's rights, which impacts their public participation. Thirty-one percent said they lacked access to the justice system. The third critical problem was a lack of employment opportunities which was mentioned by twenty-five percent of respondents. Violence against women is the fourth challenging problem which was mentioned by nineteen percent of participants. According to the above statistical data, gender might have an impact on public opinion. For measurement and analyzation purposes, I used the survey dataset of Afghanistan generated by the World Bank in the year 2018. I kept the variable

gender as a control variable. The number of participants is 469, and from this number of observations twenty-two percent is female and seventy-two percent is male.

### Age

Afghanistan's population is young, of the 479 participants in the survey six percent are above fifty-six years of age and ninety-four percent are below the age of fifty-six. Statistically the average is 2.691023 with the standard error of .0499942. Age is controlled in this study to find out if there is any difference between age groups concerning the direction of the country.

### Region

The participants in this survey are from Kabul and outside Kabul. Of the 473 participants, twenty percent were from Kabul and seventy-nine percent were from outside Kabul. Statistically, the average is 1.794926 with a standard error of .0185844. I control this variable to measure the differences between regions and the view of the participants concerning the overall direction of the country.

The above control variables could affect the relationship between the IV and DV. To better assess and test only the relationship between economic growth—IV—and public opinion of the overall country direction—DV—I kept the above-mentioned variables as control variables.

I have divided the study field of this thesis into two camps— the safe-zone camp and the war-zone camp. The safe-zone camp supported the new democratic regime and contributed to stabilizing the emerging democracy. The war-zone camp raised barriers, created challenges, residents took arms and fought against the new establishment.

I incorporated the quantitative and qualitative data sources from both camps, then compared these two camps to figure out the effects of the economic investment and resources which have been utilized for the stabilization process and development within the two camps. Villages from a safe-zone community and villages from the war-zone community were studied by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU 2008-2016), and have been utilized for the measurement.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is an essential step for the Afghan government, and the Afghan government's allies, to invest and prioritize policies that put people back to work and boost economic growth in Afghanistan. They have enough time and resources to lift people from poverty, promote economic opportunities, create jobs, invest in rural development, and push good governance reform. The public contributions from the safe-zone region are the backbone of the Afghan government's legitimacy and the roots of the emerging democracy in Afghanistan since 2001. This is the region where government revenues, expenses, GDP growth, and stability of the country are going to be advanced and protected.

For measurement and to assess the country's overall direction based on public opinion, I have selected a public opinion survey conducted by the World Bank in Afghanistan for the year 2018 and a series of case studies from the field, generated by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU 2008-2016).

The quantitative part of this thesis measures the public opinion survey dataset from Afghanistan. I chose a mixed-method approach to study this setting both quantitatively and qualitatively. The number of observations after data cleaning is 415. The survey data was collected across the safe-zone and war-zone regions. I also incorporated the case studies from local villages in the safe-zone region and the war-zone region. The data generated is from the real lives of Afghan local households and from their communities. This research seeks to determine the extent to which the villages have

opportunities to create economic development and political stability since billions of dollars have been transferred to Afghanistan by donor communities since 2001.

In H1, the dependent variable is *the overall country direction*. The independent variable is *economic growth in Afghanistan*. In H2, the independent variable is again *economic growth in Afghanistan*. The dependent variable is *Afghanistan as a fragile state*.

The mixed-effect regression models show that there is a causal relationship between economic growth and the likelihood or unlikelihood of Afghans having a positive opinion toward the overall country's direction. According to the model, it indicates Afghan people are more likely to believe their country will be headed in a positive direction if they prioritize economic growth. The independent variable, which is economic growth, in the mixed-effects regression model is statistically significant. The dependent variable is a dummy variable with a score of 1, meaning Afghanistan is moving in the wrong direction and, a score of 0 meaning Afghanistan is moving in a positive direction. After I ran the regression model, the relationship was negative and statistically significant. It indicated that economic growth caused more likelihood among Afghans to rate their country as headed in a positive direction.

## MODEL

In this model, I kept all other controlled variables constant, except economic growth, and only tested the effect of economic growth (IV) against overall country direction (DV). I utilized the quantitative data survey generated by the World Bank in 2018 from Afghanistan (World Bank, 2018). The number of observations is 382 and the survey question was to find out what is the general Afghan public opinion concerning the country's overall direction (DV) regarding the direction of their country (0) it is heading in a positive direction or (1) it does not.

**H1:** *“Individuals who perceive economic growth as a more important priority for Afghanistan are less likely to be satisfied with the government of Afghanistan.”*

**Table-1 Economic growth Priority (IV) Country direction overall (DV). The data is generated by the World Bank from Afghanistan in 2018.**

Mix-effects ML Regression Model	
Economic Growth	-0.318** (0.139)
Gender	-0.281*** (0.0938)
Age	0.0757* (0.0396)
Region	-0.0858 (0.105)
Constant	2.276*** (0.263)
Observations	382
Standard errors in parentheses	
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1	

The negative coefficient (-0.318) for economic growth indicates that those who say economic growth should be a top priority for Afghanistan are less likely to think

Afghanistan is headed in the wrong direction, and more likely to believe it is on the right track. This is statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

The negative coefficient (-0.277) for gender indicates that females are less likely to think Afghanistan is headed in the wrong direction, and more likely to believe it is on the right track. This is statistically significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level.

The negative coefficient (0.0753) for age indicates that older participants are less likely to think Afghanistan is headed in the wrong direction, and more likely to believe it is on the right track. This is statistically significant at the  $p < 0.1$  level.

**H2:** “Individuals who perceive economic growth as a more important priority for Afghanistan are more likely to view Afghanistan as a fragile state.”

**Table-2** Economic growth independent variable. Afghanistan as a fragile state is the dependent variable. It is coded (1) Afghanistan is not a fragile state and (0) otherwise (some reason it is a fragile state).

Mix-effects ML Regression Model	
Economic growth	-0.0704* (0.0410)
Gender	0.0437 (0.0287)
Age	0.00841 (0.0119)
Region	0.0251 (0.0315)
Constant	-0.0650 (0.0802)
Observations	415
Standard errors in parentheses	
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1	

The negative coefficient (-0.0704) for economic growth indicates that those who say economic growth should be a top priority for Afghanistan are more likely to think Afghanistan is a fragile state. This is statistically significant at the  $p < 0.1$  level.

However, according to the above two multilevel regression models which demonstrate that *investing in economic growth in Afghanistan more likely affects public attitudes to think that their country is moving in a positive direction. The model also shows that a lack of economic growth more likely impacts the participants to think Afghanistan is a fragile state.* The theoretical section concerning economic growth supports these findings, with in-depth knowledge from the local communities in Afghanistan and an understanding of whether the Afghan communities, based on the theoretical concepts of this thesis, experienced economic growth, job opportunities, and investment in their communities and consider it beneficial for the democratization process and stability or not. If the qualitative study section of this thesis shows a lack of feasible economic growth and job opportunities in Afghan local communities then it more likely demonstrates that negative view of the public regarding the direction of the country is related to the impact of poverty, joblessness, and lack of economic growth.

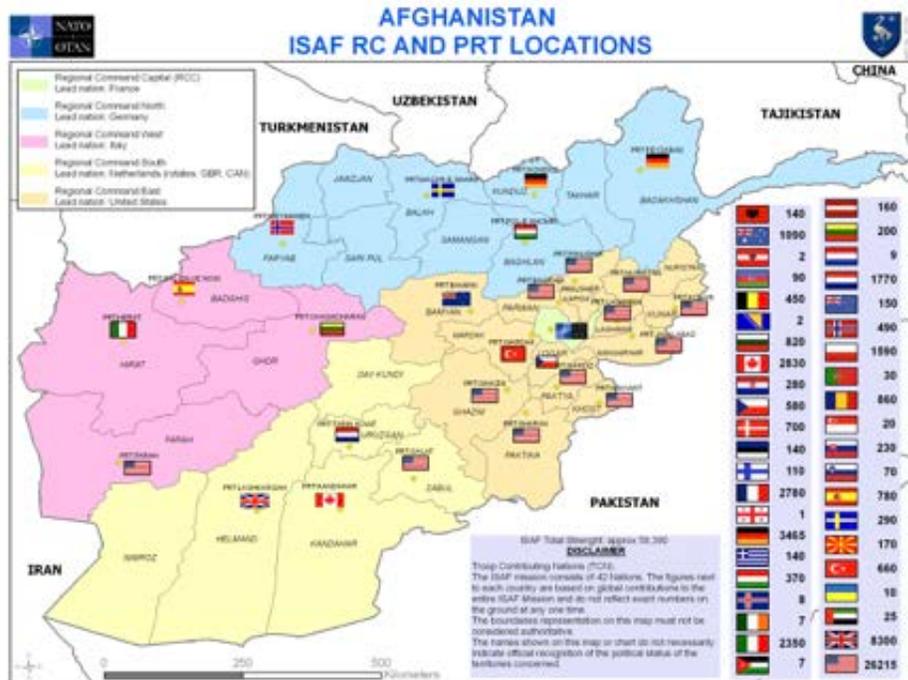
## INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE

The qualitative section of this thesis is composed of two different settings: the safe-zone region and the war-zone region. The purpose is to analyze whether the resources and changes that local communities from those two regions experienced potentially support the theoretical concept and findings of the quantitative section of this thesis. The argument is that economic development enhances democracy and boosts stability. The resources, investment, and strategic priorities of the donor community and the Afghan government comparing these two regions vary. The Safe-zone region was isolated from the investment, but the war-zone region became the hub of donor community spending and investment.

I argue that a strategic shift is needed to enhance stability and development in Afghanistan. The donor community and the Afghan government must consider economic investment in the safe-zone region instead of militarization activities in the war-zone region. Strategic economic investment in the safe-zone region will stabilize this country and help communities to maintain the democratic system. I incorporated the AREU 2008-2016 case-based study data to analyze whether the opportunities, changes, and investment these two regions received support the findings and theoretical section of this thesis or contrast them. I have also included two maps. The first map shows the location of the two zones and the second map shows the presence of the international community who support the democratization process and stability in Afghanistan.



Figure-1 Map 1: Areas of Taliban and government control of Afghanistan



**Figure-2 Map 2: Afghanistan ISAF RC and PRT Locations**

### **Bamiyan Province from The Safe-zone Region**

The Bamiyan province is located in the safe-zone region. Since 2002, there has not been any insurgency activities, terror attacks, violence against the government, or insecurity issues. The province is safe for investment. It is a rich province in terms of minerals, water resources, human capital, and is located in the central part of the country. This location is important because it is accessible for Afghans to come and work from every part of the country.

Public participation in the democratization process was rich here when compared to provinces in the war-zone region. The highest number of students who value school and participate in higher education are from this province. Since the very beginning, it has been the safest province to live, work, and travel in. Unfortunately, this province is among the provinces that have not received economic investment.

The safe-zone provinces have the highest number of refugees, jobless youth, and have suffered due to harsh economic issues. As of today, a considerable number of families, especially returnees in the capital of this province, live in caves. The emerging democratic regime did not improve the lives of those residents. The residents voted, contributed, and supported the new establishment, but the majority of the households are on emergency food supply. They wished to have a survival job to provide a basic supply of nutrients for their family but finding a survival job for them is the dream.

### **Bamiyan Village: A Case Study**

The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU 2008) conducted a case study from the local villages in Bamiyan province to study the livelihood and financial situations of the residents. It is a reliable case study from the villages in Bamiyan and provides rich data from the livelihoods of local households from the field in Bamiyan. The purpose of this study is to better understand the village background, development, household member activities, job status, and overall economic well-being of the residents in this province. The village-based research team selected the village of Bamiyan for the study.

The Bamiyan village was accepted to be studied because of its mix of on-farm and off-farm livelihood activities. The openness of the households regarding this type of study contributed to a better study as well. The local study team consisted of four Afghan researchers, two males, and two females.

### **Case Study Context**

I analyzed and incorporated the Bamiyan local village-based case study by Erna Andersen, Paula Kantor and Amanda Sim (2008). The Bamiyan village case study

provides rich data to assess and witness people who live in this village. They were able to learn from them what they think, and how they describe their lives. This was done by evaluating the views of residents and learning about their narratives and experiences regarding development, job opportunities, and livelihoods as local households.

I have incorporated a qualitative methodology in this thesis. This strengthens the study measurements and helps to analyze the public opinion regarding the investment that took place in Afghanistan. These two datasets increase the robustness and validity of the study.

### **Informal Discussion**

One of the study tactics of the AREU research team was to build trust between the households and the research team by openly sharing their ideas. Through this phase of the study, the researchers made themselves familiar with the village social norms, environment, socioeconomic status, household lifestyles, and village history. They introduced the research goal and the method they would use to conduct their study. The researchers walked around to meet the villagers in their communities in an informal setting. The researchers used these tactics to develop familiarity and gain in-depth knowledge of the village and the residents.

The female members of the research team knocked on doors and visited the families in their houses, which is a common social norm in Afghanistan. They tried to make themselves more familiar to ground themselves among the households in the community and build a constructive relationship to help enrich the data gathering process from the field.

### **Focus Group Discussions**

In the informal discussion phase nine Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were established. The FGDs consisted of landowners, landless villagers, craftswomen, shopkeepers, wage laborers, farmers, and elders. The size of each focus group discussion was between three to six participants. The FGDs create an environment for the participants in which they could be ready to express their feelings and ideas openly and answer the research questions as fully as possible. They worked with the residents to provide further evidence about the matters that impacted the villagers' daily lives. This kind of group discussion shared a common ground and responsibilities among the group, which delivered additional trust among each group member to speak more flexibly and openly, creating a richer data collection from the field.

### **Interviews**

The research team interviewed local villagers in the field to gain further required specific data about the households, their activities, challenges, and opportunities that the villagers have access to. The interviews from the households advance a more specific indication of the local situation.

### **Household Case Selection**

Household selection was an important stage for researchers. The researchers selected eight households for an in-depth interview. The eight households were selected by researchers to assemble further required in-depth data from the field. The selection was based on the diversity of social resources, job opportunities, and household activities in the targeted village.

**Table-3 Household case selections**

<b>Name (Pseudonym)</b>	<b>Household Size</b>	<b>Main Livelihood Activities</b>
Shabir	6	Shop keeping, Farming
Nabila	13	Mini-bus Transportation, Farming, Live stocks, Carpet-weaving
Yasamin	9	Wage labour, Sharecropper
Nasim	6	Wage labour
Laili	7	Farming, Livestock, Carpet-weaving
Saqib	11	Truck Transportation, Farming
Sharifa	8	Housekeeper at Health Clinic
Salim	10	Shop-keeping, Farming
Taban	12	Landowner, Job with INGO

### **Household Interviews**

The research team had two phases of interviews from these household members to collect the essential data. The emphasis was to recognize their livelihood activities, household story, how many of the households have jobs, information about the number of residents, gender, if they work on-farms or not, and if they are returnees or not.

The second interview was to inquire about the effects of the new changes in their community, if there is any, especially related to the Microcredit (MC) program that delivers credits and loans to households. It was also inquired whether they have loans or

not, why they have loans or not, how they are going to pay their loans or if they have not paid yet, if they pay back the loan and from what income, what kind of job they have, and what is their credit score. Those are the questions the interviewers asked of the local villagers. These interviews demonstrated that the majority of the villagers are not financially in a situation to pay back their loans which shows a lack of economic investment in local communities that do not support the theoretical concept of this study.

The qualitative part of this study provides in-depth data from the field and the local communities. The data shows that the majority of local community members work on the farms as wage laborers, as even labor jobs are rare. If there are a few jobs, they pay the least amount of wages.

The data shows that the Afghan government and its allies' economic investments are not offered in the safe-zone region of Afghanistan. If the donor community offers and invests in the safe-zone region, then the investment process would be safe and productive. The communities in the safe-zone region cooperate better with local government and local governments in the safe-zone region are capable of providing security for projects, and finally, the yield of the investment would be satisfactory. In terms of cost, safety, and maintenance, the investment is cheaper, safer, and more beneficial.

It is prudent to look at this from another angle. The communities that contribute to the stabilization process and keep their communities prepared for investment will turn out to be a decent model to be emulated and encouragement for the war-zone communities. In addition to that, the investment in the safe-zone region increases local capacity both in terms of capital and human resource development. If the local communities became

capable of beginning reinvestment and create jobs for those who are willing to come from war-zone regions, individuals can move within Afghanistan from a war-zone to a safe-zone region, instead of becoming a refugee in another country. They can find a chance to start building their own country where the middle class emerges, job markets grow, private investment begins, and the basis of emerging democracy might take hold. The case of European countries studied by Huber, et.al (1993) is a feasible model in this context. Emerging democracy and its success in European countries was due to the emerging middle-class, working-class, and economic development.

Sharifa (Pseudonym)

Sharifa is a woman between sixty to sixty-five years of age. She is the only employed resident of an eight-member household. She works in a local clinic as a cleaner. She gets paid eighty dollars per month and has a husband, a married daughter, two grandchildren, and three unmarried daughters. None of them have a job. The household has neither livestock or land to cultivate. Sharifa's income is the only resource for this eight-member household. The villagers also access loans from a private loan business, however, Sharifa's family opinion about the microcredit loan is not optimistic.

*She said: "My husband said that we shouldn't take credit because he is jobless, and we don't have any work to do with that money. If one day the office came and asked for repayment, but we didn't have money, then what would we do? It would be a big shame."*

The interview data demonstrates that the household does not have the income to pay back the loan. But they also sometimes live in food emergencies. Whenever they get

loans, they use the loan to buy basic food instead of investing it for any productive activities.

Nabila (Pseudonym)

Nabila's case vs Sharifa's case is different. Nabila is from a family that generates income from livestock and land cultivating. This household has a good formal and informal credit reputation in the village and also with the microcredit loans. Because they have income from different resources, they are considered wealthy.

Nabila said: *"We have a car, we have livestock, and land, so people are willing to give credit to my husband. They know that if my husband cannot repay the money, then we will sell our car, land, and livestock to repay it."*

Yasamin (Pseudonym)

Yasamin is Nabila's sister, however, the two sisters' livelihoods and income are not alike. Yasamin is thirty years old, her husband is fifty years old. They have seven children, the youngest is six months old and the oldest is fifteen. This is a farming family and their income is from sharecropping, where they receive a share of the harvest and the household gets free housing from the landowner. Yasamin's husband receives one-sixth of the harvest from the landowners when he harvests on the landowner's land. This family receives \$280 from the owner of the house and two hundred sixty dollars from another landowner because Yasamin's husband works for the other landowner too. Annually Yasamin's husband earns five hundred forty dollars. If there is job availability during the peak season, Yasamin's husband works as a daily wage laborer, earning from three dollars and sixty cents to four dollars per day. The household is also busy with carpet-weaving; the rate of carpet-weaving is five dollars for two meters.

This family has a list of outstanding loans, but they also must maintain good informal credit in the village to have the creditworthiness to be able to get a loan in the future.

Yasamin said: *“There is a shopkeeper in the Bamiyan Bazaar. During the last year, I bought goods for \$160 from him. He did not ask me for the money because he knows that I am very poor in the village. There is another shopkeeper; two months ago, I took \$150, and he asked for his credit twice and said to me, “I am going to Kabul and need the money.” But I told him that I don’t have money now. Then he did not ask me again.”*

This household is not able to pay their informal loan for the last two months, which is one-hundred-fifty dollars, because of the money they spent on groceries. There is a good piece of evidence from the field that the lack of donor community investment in Afghanistan affected local household incomes. These local households have a safe and secure region, and they have not experienced any insecurity and war since 2001, but they do not have any access to work. They are ready to cultivate wheat, potatoes, and raise livestock but that type of work and those opportunities are not accessible in their community. They do not have access to the farm equipment and machinery and still, they do not see any sign of agriculture development.

#### Taban (Pseudonym)

Taban, in terms of this village, is a wealthy villager. He works with INGO, and he earns a six-hundred dollar monthly salary. He does not need to get a loan from microcredit (MC). He has land and other sharecroppers that work on his land, which is another source of income for him and his family. He is the head of a household consisting

of ten people. He has two wives and seven children. His oldest son is going to Bamiyan University, and his other children are going to short term courses created by an INGO. He employs a farmer to cultivate wheat on his 0.6 hectares of land in return for 1,400 kg of wheat as payment. On the remaining land, the farmer cultivates potatoes and the farmer gets 10,500 kg of potatoes. The rest will be returned for Taban. Taban said that “I do not need to get a loan from microcredit (MC), my salary is a sufficient source of income for my family expenses.”

Nasim (Pseudonym)

Nasim is the head of the household and the only member who works in his family. His four children, his wife, and himself make a family of six members. He worked as a wage laborer and has a little income from harvesting from the 0.2 ha land that he has. He makes bricks for construction, for each brick that he makes, he gets \$0.08. He made eighty dollars from making bricks, but he has not been paid yet.

*Interviewer: How did you pass last winter?*

*“We took credit (borrow money). I tell you, all of our life is passed with credit. We take credit from one person to pay another person and for household consumption. Even now we don’t have anything, we have to take credit.”*

*Interviewer: Has anyone come to ask for their money?*

*Nasim’s wife said: “My husband took money from the shopkeeper. When I needed some food, he didn’t go to the shopkeeper to get those things. He sent my brother-in-law to the shopkeeper instead to get cooking oil, rice, and beans for us. My husband said that if he went to the shopkeeper, and they asked for money back, what would he do? Because he doesn’t have the money now.”*

Salim (Pseudonym)

Salim is a shopkeeper, he has two shops, one in the village and one in Bamiyan City. Salim's village shop is run by his older son. His main occupation is cultivating the 0.8 ha of land that he owns. He cultivates clover for livestock, wheat for household consumption, and potatoes to sell. He made \$1,800 last year. He has ten family members. His first wife died, his second wife divorced him and now he lives with his third wife. From the first wife he has two sons, the oldest, twenty-seven, is deaf and mute, and the other, who is twenty-four, was married seven months ago. The other younger sons, ages ten and thirteen, are both in school.

Every day they sell six to eight dollars' worth of goods, of which one dollar is profit to the household. He has another shop in Bamiyan City that he rented for eighty dollars per month. From this resource, he makes income to feed his ten-member household.

Salim said: *"My sons and I are working on the land. We don't hire wage labor for our land and, at the time of potato collection, our women help us in cleaning mud from the potatoes and filling the sacks."*

Laili (Pseudonym)

Laili lives with her husband and has four daughters and one son. Laili is her husband's second wife as his first wife died during childbirth twenty years ago. Laili has one married stepdaughter and three daughters. Two of them are seven and thirteen and go to school and literacy courses. The income for this family comes from agricultural production. Laili's husband owned 1.6 ha of land shared with two brothers. Both brothers are refugees in Pakistan and Iran. They do not make any claim to ownership because of

their shared land. The land is cultivated for potatoes and wheat, the potatoes for sale and wheat for household consumption. This family produces 14,000 kg of potatoes annually. Last year they sold 6,300 kg of potatoes at ninety-six cents per seven kg. Laili's (pseudonym) household also weaves carpet, earning two-hundred to two-hundred forty dollars per year.

Saqib (Pseudonym)

Saqib is a new returnee from Iran. They have been in Iran for the last 27 years. Saqib lives with his 65-year-old brother. His two brothers and their families are still living in Iran. Saqib 's household has eleven people that depend on him. He has 3.6 ha of land, and he cultivates wheat, potatoes, and clover.

Saqib said: *“In the first year after we came to the village, we got 10,000 kg of potatoes, which was very little. In the second year, we had experience and gave better fertilizer and seeds to our field, and we got 35,000 kg of potatoes. And last year, we got 42,000 kg of potatoes. This coming year, we hope to get even more production of potatoes from our land.”*

Saqib saved a good sum of money while he worked in Iran. From these savings, he bought a truck and started a transport business. He has a good economic position in the village, and he bought fifty sacks of fertilizer to give to villagers on credit in the spring. He has enough money to pay his expenses which is eight-hundred dollars. He said, “I did this to help the villagers and I get no profit from it.” Some villagers still owe him money for the cost of fertilizer that he gives to them as credit.

### **Conclusion to Safe-zone**

There is data from the field that can tell the situation among the families and communities who do not have security problems. The only problem that they have is to find a job and feed their family. It shows that the lack of economic investment in the region that contributed since the very beginning to stabilize the country was the vital shortcoming. The lack of economic investment, joblessness, the damaging job market, and state of hunger in the safe-zone region of the country impacted the country's stability and public opinion.

The Afghan and the U.S. governments spent and invested billions of dollars in regions far away from government control. The productivity of those projects is weak. Unfortunately, due to a strategic mistake, despite billions of dollars invested, the outcome of those investments is not beneficial yet.

This village is not far from the center of Bamiyan province. The data from this village shows that the households in this village do not have nutrition, food, and daily expenses for their kids and family members. For families of eight, nine and ten members, only one of them works but their wages are below the minimum wage. Even though billions of dollars have been donated by the donor community and over 50 countries militarily and economically are supporting the Afghan people, villagers do not have a basic job to work or a way to feed their family. Now, I want to incorporate the data from the residents in the war-zone region where they have a security problem and the government is not fully present in their community.

### **The Case Study of Dand Village, Kandahar Province from the War-zone Region**

The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) conducted a case study from the villages of Kandahar to assess the livelihood, activities, and economic situations of residents in Kandahar province. Kandahar was one of the main power centers for the Taliban and a province that cultivated opium, supported Taliban strongholds, and has received high international investments, contributions, funds, and resources.

The Dand district is in the south of Kandahar city. The district was studied by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) in 2008. Dand village is 10-15 km away from Kandahar city. The village according to the AREU case study is controlled by landowners and elders.

“In the villages of Dand, you will not find such a village where the whole land belongs to three families... In other villages it is the Malik system but, in our village, [the main landowner] is the landlord and head of shura. There is another village... and they have also a powerful head of the village. He also solves people’s problems and is very powerful in the village,” (Pain & Hurt, 2017).

This field data was provided by a group of village elders who shared information about the village’s social structure, economic structure, the local community performances, and activities. The common law in this village deals with the restriction on selling land. The individuals who have little land are not allowed to sell their lands without the permission of a Malik or the landlord. Selling land requires a Malik’s approval, which structurally empowers the landlords in this village. Maliks and landlords enjoy a dominant role and have total control of the village and local communities.

The Malik's land is cultivated by sharecroppers. The majority of these households either live in houses that the Malik owns, or they built their houses on the Malik's land. This type of income dependency of the households to a Malik's property plays a role to enrich the Malik's power in the village. Sharecroppers do not have an alternative option to choose that would benefit them. Not having an option regarding finding a job, investment, or opportunities in their village, the villagers have no option other than working as sharecroppers on the Malik's land. Maliks in this village use the sharecroppers and poor households for their benefits and keep them under control without providing them job security and better wages.

The local government, the national government, and their allies had a strategy to spend funds and political money in the war-zone region to buy the support of the Malik from the war-zone local communities. Unfortunately, buying the support of these landlords to gain the support of the local villages in the war-zone region has never been beneficial.

The strategy of supporting Maliks as the influential groups in the war-zone region helped the local Maliks enjoy a political relationship with local and national government leaders and their allies. These local landlords received funds and resources under the name of supporting the national and local government through a political relationship with politicians in Kabul and the local government heads in Kandahar.

The landlords are also the heads of the National Solidarity Program (NSP) and the community council/Shura. This community council/Shura is an elected council by nature but in these villages, the NSPs are controlled by landlords. The villagers, through an election, should choose the heads of the NSPs. In the case of this village, the election did

not happen and a landlord selected himself as the head of the NSP. This is not legitimate in the eyes of the villagers. The villagers believe that he is powerful, has wealth, and controls this village. The sharecroppers and other village members could not talk or raise their voices against this landlord. If they do, they would face some harsh consequences.

From an interview with a Malik:

(This Malik is the head of NSP in this village.) “We constructed a road, which was very beneficial for the village ... that is why the people of our area again requested me to become the head of the NSP Shura.” The majority of the villagers’ view is not the same as the Malik. The villagers believe that the Malik comes as the head of Shura through a selective process. One of the interviewees stated: “I don’t have information about it, but people say that people came to organize the villagers to elect Shura members, but there wasn’t any voting process because the Malik elected himself and Haji for the Shura.”

The researchers asked what is the reason that the village members do not elect other people, the interviewee responded:

“Do not ask this question elsewhere. If he hears this, he will kill you. He doesn’t want others to be elected for the head of Shura. I know that you people are just asking, but if he hears this, he will think something else about this question. We can’t do anything against powerful people. When an organization comes, they work through Maliks and elders. Only the government can change the way it works. The government should remove his soldiers and should not allow him to do whatever he wants.”

When the researchers asked about the benefit of the road, the interviewee said:  
 “This road was only graveled for his cars. We are far from that road and don’t have access to that road. We want the road on which we move to the city to be graveled.”

The other respondent said:

“He is a rich person, and he has power. I am a poor person. I am afraid he will hear that I have talked about him. If you want to get information about him, then ask those NGOs that had projects in this village. First, see their project budget and then come to the village and see how much was spent on this useless road. I have heard that he got USD 200,000 from the NSP Shura, but he repaired just one road. I think this type of repair only costs 500,000 Afs (USD 10,000).”

This data indicates that poor residents and families have little to no security from the authority of Maliks. They do not have the right to openly share their ideas and speak up for the benefit of their villages and their families. If they choose to do so, they will be killed or might face economic, and other social consequences from Maliks. Corruption in the NGOs, donor agencies, and the poor performance are noticeable. Because of the security barriers, NGOs and donor agencies are not available to regularly monitor their programs’ performance in these villages. Maliks are providing these NGOs, donor agencies, and government security.

*Interview from a Malik: “As a Malik in this village, I make the solutions and agreements for people. I used to do the agreements only for Afghans but later also for Pakistanis. Once a Pakistani came to me and wanted me to find the solution to his problem. It was a death dispute, and I got 20,000 Rs from him. My rate is not specific and differs according to the problem. Once a daughter of the head of (a government)*

*department had failed in a board examination, and her father came to me to pass his daughter. I, that girl, her father went to [name] and told him to enroll that girl in the Medical Faculty and he did.”*

The data tells that the Malik system, as a subsystem for the local government and the national government, are inline to bring stability to the war-zone region. In the case of Afghanistan, it shows that Maliks will only work with the national government when their personal interest is protected and enriched in that region. This region, based on the theoretical framework that we have, is not supportive of the middle class and working family. Laborers and working families under the Malik system do not have job security and their wealth and personal safety are in danger. The villagers are economically dependent on the resources of local Maliks and landlords. The villagers will lose their income and jobs if they do not enrich the Maliks.

The Maliks in these villages have structural, economic, and political power. They have bodyguards and are protected by the police. When they travel, both private and governmental security forces protect the Maliks from the Taliban or the insurgent groups. In those exchanges, Maliks provide or generate support from these villages to the Afghan government, foreign troops, and NGOs. Through these exchanges, the Maliks and elders enjoy the best amount of financial resources, both from the internationally and locally. The villagers are pushed to work for the Maliks and landlords. This system of exchange and buying, supported through the Maliks and landlords in the war-zone region, impacts the productivity of the resources, government programs, and international donor communities' investment, (Pain 2010).

The second village in the Dand District is 15 km from Kandahar city. This village consists of six Maliks. One of the Maliks is the head of the village and his father was also the head of this village. Each of the five Maliks has a jurisdiction role in the village. The NSPs in this village is controlled by five Maliks and the other non-Malik members of the Shura are for the benefit of the five Maliks in this village.

Interview from the non-Malik member from the village:

“I am a poor person. However, villagers selected me for the Shura/council. The story is that villagers were supposed to select one person from every mosque and the villagers selected me. I attend meetings in the Shura/council sometimes but nobody accepts my ideas. [He turned his face to one of the interviewers.] You have seen me in the Shura, so you know that nobody asks my opinion... No, this Shura is only of Maliks. Maliks are only involved in these Shuras. Whatever comes to the Shura for villagers is distributed among Maliks. We didn't see anything yet. When the head of the Shura gives a cow to his son who works abroad but not to a poor person in the village, what will be the benefit of the Shura to the people?”

This data indicates that Maliks are powerful in this war-zone region and do not allow new changes in the local governing structure. These Maliks believe that any changes might impact the authority of their governing roles in the communities. On the other hand, the local and national governments are not helpful to those villagers to prevent Maliks from violating the laws.

Connection with the Shura/council is beneficial for those who are members and the Shura/council are one of their income resources...whatever they receive through the Shura/council, they take to help their pocket, home, and relatives. They distribute all help

among themselves/Maliks. I have seen such people like the Malik who received fertilized seeds, but instead of planting fertilized seeds he planted poppy in his lands and sold seeds to farmers. I am not the only one who says this, many villagers know this reality.

However, in this village basic public infrastructure improved through road construction and electricity. The households in this village have latrines and bathrooms (AREU 2015). But education is not supported. There is a primary school in the village, based on the data from the field only a minority of the village boys and no girls are enrolled in this school. It is reported that the major factor that limits enrollment is the school teachers. The school teachers don't attend to teach, but they receive a salary from the government. Girls are not attending school because of social norms, culture, and restrictions. For example, female members of the community get married at the age of sixteen to eighteen (AREU, 2015).

An interview from a non-Malik member of this village regarding a literacy class.

“We had a literacy class in our house funded from [an NGO]; my wife was teaching the girls of the village; her salary was USD 50. She was teaching from 1st grade until 3rd grade; she had 30 students. After a year, the Malik came to me and asked me why I decided to provide a school. When I couldn't argue any longer, I told him to take the class to his home... I couldn't do anything against him. Everyone knows that the Malik and his wife are not educated, but he took over the class for profit. However, my wives didn't let the girls go to his house. That course was in his house for one year but finally failed. When the NGO learned that the Malik's wife was not educated, they closed the class.”

The villages in the war-zone region, based on various types of barriers such as economic structure, culturel, the Malik system, and security, are not ready to contribute. Time, resources, and a long-term developmental strategy is required to empower these communities. Long term steady planning would help the war-zone region to change their communities from within.

### **Conclusion to the War-zone Section**

The data from the war-zone region shows that local communities are under the control of Maliks and landlords who have power and resources. The government and donor community are not strong enough to change the war-zone region's social structure and establish an accountable local institution due to security barriers. The Afghan government buys support of the local communities through Maliks and elders. In those exchanges the Maliks benefit and enrich their local power in the form of working and supporting the Afghan government, which is not productive for the households and families who live under the control of those Maliks.

Security is a critical barrier in the war-zone region and it would be difficult to build, develop, and secure a war-zone region all in one phase with a foreign donor resource. There should be step-by-step planning and in the meantime the other part of the country which is already safe and ready for investment should not be kept hostage.

## CONCLUSION

The thesis findings indicate that prioritizing economic growth in Afghanistan positively impacts public views about the country's direction. At this time the Afghan police and the Afghan military are not even capable to protect the capital of the country. Afghanistan needs economic investment focused on the safe-zone region. The safe-zone region is a better region for economic investment and creating jobs, because investment in the safe-zone region would boost Afghanistan's economic growth.

In the theoretical section, it was discussed that economic development has causal effects on democracy. The government of Afghanistan must consider investing and putting people back to work, which would enhance stability in Afghanistan.

The qualitative section of these thesis findings indicates that local communities in Afghanistan are living in harsh poverty. It is recommended that the Afghan government and the donor community begin to invest in a region that they are able to protect and have control over. Investment in those regions are productive. People could move from the war-zone region due to war, violence, and insecurity. They would be able to find a place in the safe-zone region and could contribute to building their country.

In the long-term, the safe-zone region would be an ideal model of progress for the war-zone communities. This approach would be a good example for the rest of the communities to join the democratization process. It would encourage the war-zone communities to take part in rebuilding and supporting the newly established democratic regime. The history of Afghanistan shows the problem of government legitimacy and

distribution of political power leads to civil war. The newly established democratic regime gave legitimacy to the government and transformed political power to authority in Afghanistan and the Bonn Conference was very helpful toward that end.

Forty percent of the working population in Afghanistan is jobless. The burden and expenses that joblessness caused to families and communities are an immediate concern that needs to be addressed; both in the short, medium, and long-term.

Afghanistan, with better jobs and economic opportunities, according to the theoretical section of this thesis, would enhance the stability of the emerging democratic regime and prevent it from a defeat or fall.

The suggestion is that the focus, at this time, should be on the region that can guarantee productivity of the democratization, stability, and development process. Once the safe-zone region emerges strongly in terms of economic development then the Afghan people will find the option to move forward and change the war-zone region from the current situation.

Finally, it is necessary to consider a strategic shift, instead of spending limited resources in militarization and war activities. It is better to invest such resources and funds for investment projects, job creation, economic growth, and development that would stabilize the emerging democracy in Afghanistan from falling. This would increase public support and lead this nation toward a prosperous future.

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