Understanding and Explaining Corruption

A case study of Afghanistan

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Abstract

Afghanistan a country affected by decades of war and invasions has been subject of democratization and state-building of foreign donors post-2001. Despite the efforts of international community for improvements of state institutions, the country is and has been located at the bottom corruption indexes for many years. This essay tries to understand and explain why Afghanistan has been at the bottom line of corruption despite external actor’s vast democracy aid and building of effective state institutions. The case study of Afghanistan with qualitative method and descriptive text analysis examine causes of corruption in Afghanistan. The materials consist of both statistical data in terms of surveys and scientific literature to provide explanations of corruption in Afghanistan. The analytical framework of the study is based on previous research where formal institutions with focus on political system and informal institutions with focus on clientelism, patronage and neopatrimonialism, are used to explain the empirical data. The findings are that corruption is endemic in Afghanistan, occurring at all sectors of the government and the main reason is the defective political structure along with patronage and clientelistic networks and a state that rest on neo-patrimonialism.

Key words:
Afghanistan, Corruption, Clientelism, Patronage, Neopatrimonialism, Nepotism, Embezzlement, Favoritism
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1. Research problem and aim

Following the events of 9/11 and the fall of the autocratic Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001, the country drew international community and media’s attention and was put on the world map once again as it has done in the past during communist time in late 1970s, and even further back during the British attempt to conquer the country in late 19th century. However, after 2001 the country has received vast support from international donors with US and NATO-members in the leading to democratize and build/rebuild the state institutions of the country. During this almost 15 years the country has made some democratic developments and progress in re-building of political institutions. For instance, the first democratic presidential election was held in 2004, where people picked their first democratically elected president, Hamid Karzai, compared to Taliban time where elections did not ever exist. The presidential election in 2014, with some problematic electoral procedure and fraud allegations, was however the first democratic power transition from one democratic president to another in history of Afghanistan. The country has managed to have several presidential, parliamentarian and provincial elections during last 14 years and has made some improvements in political participation, particularly participation of women. Since 2001 the country has taken significant steps in right direction by establishing ministries providing services to citizens and development of media press and civil society (USAID 2015). Despite all these developments the country is still ranked by many assessors as one of the most corrupt countries in the world but also as one of least peaceful places in the world (Transparency International 2015). The question arises here is how come that Afghanistan is placed at the bottom of the corruption index? What are the factors that explain this development? The relevance of studying Afghanistan is due to huge involvement of external actors in democratization and building of state institutions but in contrast, the country is still one of most corrupt countries in the world. The study aims to understand and explain corruption in Afghanistan and found it necessary to study the case since the scientific research have some lack on this area. By doing so the author hope to leave some further understanding to the research about the causes of corruption in Afghanistan.
The reason to investigate this subject lays in my personal interest for Afghanistan but more importantly the curiosity to know why the country despite the efforts of external actor in democratization and rebuilding of government institutions, is located at the bottom of corruption index. The aim is to describe corruption in Afghanistan but importantly to provide some explanations for why the country is a victim of corruption. Through the remaining research the following questions will be answered:

1. *How widespread is corruption in Afghanistan?*
2. *What types of corruption exist in Afghanistan?*
3. *How can corruption in Afghanistan be explained?*

### 1.1 Background: Afghanistan
Afghanistan has been a battlefield for many invasions and power rivalry between great powers due to its geographic location. The country connects three major cultural and geographic regions, the Indian subcontinent to the southeast, central Asia to the north and the Iranian plain and tableland to the west. Ahmad Shah, leader of the Abdali/Durrani clan is recognized as the founder of the modern Afghanistan which became a nation in 1747. During its modern era in the 19th century, Afghanistan was a subject of great power struggle between the British India and czarist Russian Empire. Afghanistan achieved its independency and became a sovereign state in 1919 leaving behind three Anglo-Afghan Wars, 1839, 1878 and 1919 (Barfield 2010. 181). During the cold war period, Afghanistan once again became a battleground for power struggle between United States and Soviet Union which reached its peak with Soviet’s invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 (ibid 1). After the withdrawal of Soviet armies in 1989 the country fell into civil war in 1992 due to lack of consensus on power-sharing between the leaders of different political parties belonging to *Mujahedeen* who fought against Soviet (ibid 249). To end the harmful civil war and establish an authentic Islamic state, claimed by a new group so called Taliban, came to power in 1994. The Taliban captured Kabul in 1996 by disarming bands, bringing security at least initially, and ending the civil war. Taliban ruled with their brutal, unpopular and harsh policies until 2001 following US invasion of Afghanistan due to 9/11 attacks (ibid 269).
Following the fall of the Taliban, the Bonn Conference in December 2001, established an interim government led by Hamid Karzai till presidential election was held in 2004. Hamid Karzai won the election of 2004, 2009 and were president until end of 2014 (Stiftung 2014. 3). Afghanistan established new constitution in 2004, which claim to have formal centralized power and according to which Afghanistan is a republic headed by a president with broad authority. The president is head of state, commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and with the approval of National Assembly, the president appoints cabinet ministers, the attorney general, chief of central bank, judges, and has power to declare war or state of emergency. Despite the strong authority of the president, local leaders, such as warlords and strongmen have equal power in provinces and in countryside beyond the reach of the state (Landguiden 2016.6).

The current government so called National Unity Government (NUG) formed as a solution to disagreements on 2014 presidential election outcome, has also failed to curb corruption. The NUG headed by Ashraf Ghani created a new post “Chief Executive Officer” in 2014, which in practice works as Prime Minister (Landguiden 2016. 7). The post was created as an emergency solution where both presidential candidates Ghani and Abdullah could not agree on the elections outcome. The 2014 presidential election as well as 2009 election were witnessed by electoral fraud with involvement of security personnel and public officers (Landguiden 2016. 32). Due to political disagreements between the two leaders the cabinet ministers were announced after more than six months. Both leaders have tried to appoint cabinet ministers from their own team to gain political control. The appointment of many ministers have been based on political affiliation and not on merit or professionalism (Noorzai 2016). After nineteen months, the government is still headless of minister of defense due to disagreements between the leaders and the defense ministry is ruled by an acting minister (Putz 2016). This is a further indication of weak governance that fails to take strong actions against corrupt officials.

2. Previous research

In this section the previous work of different scholars on corruption will be discussed generally around the world. All research and information regarding Afghanistan is discussed in the section
of analysis. Here will a description of corruption at general level, how it occurs and factors that explain it, as well as different types of corruption will discussed.

2.1 Different types of Corruption

While going through previous literature on corruption, I found different interpretations of the notion of corruption and these interpretation varies due to regional location, local values and beliefs of the society, which has resulted in subjectivity and complexity in the study of corruption. Nevertheless, different cultures have different perceptions of corrupt activities and level of tolerance towards corruption varies as well (Zaleha et al. 2014, 250). What we define as corruption today and what we put in the concept has not always been the same historically. The meaning of the word depends on the existing legal framework, the political-moral approach and the current political and social system in the society. Much of what we define as corrupt behavior today has been accepted in other contexts and historical periods. The way the word corruption is defined in our time is much related to the legal system and the political development in West and conditioned by the situation in Western societies. This development is often referred to the idea of Max Weber of rational-legal modern bureaucracy, where the distinction between public office and private property was drawn and emphasized that the legitimacy of the authority should be based on legal order and not traditional forms such as kinship (Amundsen et al., 2000. 65-6; Karlström, 2003, 8-9).

Nevertheless, this does not mean that corruption should be linked to a certain culture or culture behavior (although some practices have culturally characters) according to some scholars but to circumstances and to political system in a country. The claim that corruption is more widespread where it is culturally accepted does not have proper support in research. Studies have shown that many ordinary people in hardly corrupt societies have strong norms against corruption and view it as morally unacceptable (Rothstein, 2011. 100-01; Begovic, 2005. 3). Thus, it is important to remember the different interpretation and acceptance of the word in different contexts and cultures.

There is no common agreed definition upon corruption. However, a most commonly used definition of corruption among scholars is related to the determined role of the state and public office and here corruption is defined as “exploitation of public power and public resources for own benefits”, (Otusanya, 2011; Sundström Aksel 2014; Rose-Ackerman 1999). For instance,
electoral corruption is a fraud involving illegal activities by electoral officials to influence the result of elections by manipulating the number of votes (Otusanya, 2011, 390; Rose Ackerman, 2006, Kunicová, 2006). Transparency International (global organization working against corruption), also defines general corruption as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain”. There are different distinctions made in literature about the type of corruption. For instance, the Transparency International divide corruption in three terms, classified as grand, petty and political, depending on where it occurs and the size of money that is lost. Grand corruption occurs at highest levels of government that scramble the policies or dysfunction the state institutions making possible for leaders to take advantage at the expense of public goods. Petty corruption or bureaucratic corruption is when public officials at low and middle-level misuse their power in contact with ordinary citizens in applying for basic services. It can be at police stations, hospitals, education departments and other agencies. Political corruption occurs when politicians and officeholders abuse their power and manipulate policies, institutions and rules of actions in distribution of resources and funding in order to stay in power (Transparency International 2016). However, many scholars see grand and political corruption as the same category occurring at political arena and therefore main type of corruption is described as bureaucratic and political corruption (Amundsen et al 2000. 18; Olsson 2014. 6; Otusanya 2011. 390).

Corruption is a multi-dimension and a complex concept and the general forms and notions associated with it are described as below (Otusanya, 2011. 391).

**Bribery**: known as a common feature of corruption, often occur in terms of money or other material means in a corrupt relationship in order to obtain public benefits and resources.

**Embezzlement**: refers to theft of resources by an individual in a position of trust and who has responsibility of over the assets. Public officials who steal resources and funds from institutions.

**Fraud**: a corrupt behavior involving of damage of another person or entity e.g. state, in order to get benefits for own or a third part’s gain. Public officials may manipulate information and facts for their own benefit or may steal funds and resources available for them at their office.

**Extortion**: a corrupt practice of obtaining money or other resources by using force or threat.

**Favoritism**: or nepotism is a type of abuse of power where services and resources in both private and public sector are allocated based on the family and relative ties, tribal, religious or party
affiliation.

**Conflict of interest:** a situation when a person or organization engaged in multiple interests, or obtain a position or financial interest, which is incompatible in his or her official role and duties, one of which may include bribery, embezzlement, theft and fraud.

**Illegal contribution:** refers to situation where the political parties or the existing government receive money from a part and in exchange not to interfere in their activities.

**Money laundering:** washing of “dirty money” or transformation of revenue of crime into legitimized money through legitimized enterprise such as banks, which hide the source, location, ownership and control of illegally received money.

**White collar crime:** refers to well-planned criminal activities with financial motivations committed by persons belonging to business companies or government office by intention to harm third part. It involves fraud, extortion, threat, money laundering, and insider trading and identity theft.

**Intimidation:** threatening of general public or certain section of it, or a person or a company by a person to change a decision or what do or not to do.

**Abuse of power:** use of entrusted power to discriminate a person or group or provide someone an unjustified privilege (Otusanya, 2011, 391-2, Amundsen *et al*, 2000 16-18).

There is also distinction between corruption in economic and social terms. Economic corruption occurs in a market-like situation where money in cash or material things are exchanged, which make the basis for corruption. But corruption also occurs beyond these material goods in a social setting with cultural and moral motivations, which is called “social exchange” and social corruption. Social corruption here is understood as an element of clientelism, which is more socially and culturally incorporated. Corruption in social terms can be related to clientelism, nepotism, ethnic and other kind of favoritism, which are all variants of corruption (Amundsen *et al*, 2000. 12; Médard 1998. 308).

The word corruption is virtually always used in connection with public employees who in one way or another misuse their positions and public resources for private gain. In addition, corruption occur beyond this state-society arena, in national and international relations and within the state itself at different levels and forms. Corrupt countries can be attractive for some
businesses from abroad (Bayart et al 1999). External actors (in politics, business and development cooperation) can have both a supportive role in reduction of corruption or be part of corruption (Rose-Ackerman 1999; Moody-Stuart 1997). Many scholars have observed that foreign-sponsored bribery is an important contributing factor to corruption (Amundsen et al, 2000. 11, 13).

At the national level, corruption occurs between the state and society or non-state actors. The public officials can be from the head of state and top political leaders (political corruption), down to state institutions in contact with citizens (bureaucratic corruption) and to very low level of public servants. Within the national public institutions, corruption often occur in government branches such as executive, legislative and judiciary and between political and bureaucratic institutions that provide civil services. Corruption, also, occurs within the private businesses and NGOs, in terms of bribes, swindling, and mafia activities in businesses, and disloyalties of employees. Corruption has also moral and cultural dilemma in societies, where gift-giving, patronage and illegal rewards are practices of corruption occurring in societies despite the illegal basis of it (Amundsen et al, 2000. 14).

2.2 Consequences of corruption

Corruption is considered as a negative activity and corruption at civil services of a country is widely believed to have negative effects on both social and economic development (Sundström, 2016). It is believed to increase the costs and exclude particularly poor people from social activities and the poor people are also the one most affected by corruption. Corruption causes higher prices in both public and private sectors. It leads to higher prices for medicine, utility services, textbooks, and extra payments in import of goods (OECD 2015. 15). Scholars have argued that weak institutional structures in any economy encourage individuals and companies to search for possibility of using bribes in achieving their interests and goals from government officials. This has led to corrupt activities of officials in searching for private profits and control over state resources. Corruption is further linked to devastation of economy, loss of public revenue, loss of taxes, decrease of faith to law and governmental institutions. Dysfunctional state institutions affected by corruption harms economic development and it also leads to emergence of mafia activities and private militia and other criminal activities (Otusanya, 2011. 388, 395).
The nexus between corruption and democracy is also examined by many scholars and a general understanding is that corruption has negative impact on democracy. Some scholars argue that corruption and democracy has a U-shaped relationship (i.e. corruption rises in the beginning of new democracies to a point and then declines when democracy has consolidated) and a durable democracy provides transparent and responsible institutions (Rock, 2009. 70). However, corruption is believed to destroy democratic stability and its survival, and it decreases the legitimacy of the state and may lead to electoral crises, political murders, contract killing and insecurity (Ogundia, 2009. 281). It damages the public institutions and weakens trust of citizens in their governments and leads to increase of inequality in society. Corruption causes widespread and longer-term damage by undermining the rule of law and breaking the function of formal rules. It also has a negative effect on the justice system and press freedom. The corrupt culture in a country reduces the conditions of transparency in political processes and public communication and hinders the political participation (Lauth, 2000. 35; OECD. 2015. 15).

2.3 Empirical research
In this section some general examples from the field on corruption will be provided to illustrate the occurrence of the phenomenon in a broader perspective and increase understanding about other cases in general. It would be interesting to see whether patterns of corruption and explanations have same roots in Afghanistan or not. There is extensive empirical research on corruption and here will some cases briefly presented. Sierra Leon, African country affected by a systemic corruption, where bribery is common among civil servants, governmental ministers involved in deceitful activities, criminal wrongdoings, embezzlement, and falsification of accounts. Corruption has become a norm for achieving societal goals and political actors manipulate rules to use national funds for personal goals. Poor economy managed by illegal activities, tension between modernization and traditional values and unaccountable and weak law enforcement bodies are regarded as causes of corruption. In rural areas social relations are based on traditional norms, and people are loyal to own kin group in first hand (Potter & Thompson 1997; Transparency International 2013).

A study on corruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina shows that the criminal elite that raised after the war and formed the reconstruction of the country have contributed to corruption. Corruption was used as a way to reach personal goals and their corrupt behavior have led to poor economy,
weak institutions and fragile penalty system, no institutions control, which has resulted in emergence of corruption. Corruption is considered to occur at all major sectors such as judiciary, health system, education system, police, political parties, and other public sectors providing services. The case is relevant for this study since Bosnia and Herzegovina is also a developing country, affected by armed conflicts and unrests, attempting to go from wartime to peacetime (Kahvedzic and Losic 2010. 65). Nigeria is another case where endemic corruption is explained by amoral behavior of the officials, patron-client relations, service provided by nepotism, and a state that is patrimonial or neo-patrimonial. The state use public resources to secure the loyalty of the clients and misuse of resources for own purposes (Ogundiya 2009. 283-85).

Anders Sundell has examined corruption in Sweden based on nepotism and its development toward a meritocratic society, by looking at Swedish central public administration for period of last 200 years and finds out that recruitments in some cases were based on nepotism. Characteristics of birth and rank (nobility), were important factors of success in administration during 19th century but even in 20th century. The author gives a historical explanation of the corruption in given time, which can be important to understand why some states are involved in corrupt activities still today. Historically, rulers regarded their supremacy as their property, and the states were governed by the ruler’s family. The contrast between official resources and private property was very small. Servants and other working in the household were expected to be loyal to the ruler and not the state itself. The ruler had the power and freedom of decision to dismiss servants if the ruler wanted so. This was reality of governing in most part of the human history until some states started to reform and gradually limited the arbitrary power of the rulers over the administration. In modern professional bureaucracies, recruitments are based on competitive examination, skills, and qualification of the servants, which also contributes to prevent corruption. Meritocratic bureaucracies help leaders or rulers to take responsibility in an honor way to respect property rights and contracts, which boosts investments and economic growth. In a long-term perspective, the economic development is seen as an important factor for having effective and impersonal administrations (Sundell 2014. 4). In contrast, in patrimonial states, civil servants are recruited on basis of patronage (thorough political or personal loyalty) or nepotism (based on kinship relations). Administrations bound to rulers on patronage basis generate prospects for corruption and maximization of personal benefits by cost of public resources (Sundell, 2014. 4-5).
Kyrgyzstan is another case where corruption, business and illegal interests has affected the political system of the country. Fragile law enforcement bodies, weak and irresponsible institutions, lack of rule of law and favoritism are pointed as the main causes of corruption in Kyrgyzstan. Those individuals and groups who control the main resources in poor countries, are usually the strongest actors. In the Kyrgyz case, the presidential family (Akayev 1991-2005) controlled large part of the business assets either directly or indirectly (by giving the administration of economic sector to politico-economic strongmen). Corruption in Kyrgyzstan is experienced in terms of bribe-taking and nepotism among state officials and other interest groups where appointments were based on personal loyalties and clan affiliation (Engvall, 2007, p.35-36). The state institutions functioned as a source for providing profits and selling high official posts as well as recruit relatives and friends to official posts. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, corrupt activities are not only limited to bribe-taking but also corruption at political level, use of kinship and patronage networks to work for interests of the political elite or other illegal business actors (Engvall, 2007, p.40-41)

The phenomena of selling public posts is not a new but occurring in many other countries too. The states that emerged in Post-Soviet era, have been challenged by corruption, where public offices are transformed to private profits. Public offices and jobs are object of selling and buying among actors, and public sector has become a market to invest in. This is a well-known behavior which is also confirmed by many state officials. For instance, former Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev in one of his speeches during his time in office (2008-2012), mentioned that public offices can be bought by money. In Azerbaijan, in fall 2012 a Member of Parliament required US $1,000,000 from a former university rector in order to put him as a candidate on ruling party’s list in parliamentary election. Even in Ukraine, lawyers and human rights activists witnessing corrupt activities in the judiciary systems. The article shows that deep-rooted bribery, extortion, exchange of public offices into private profits and other type of corruption linked to money are observable in post-soviet Eurasia. To understand these states, the author describes them as states governed by patrimonial logic of political organization. In contrast to modern states, where governments are derived by rule of law and impersonal administration, the patrimonial systems are defined by individualistic practices where power is in the hands of a leader or few strong men close to the ruler. The resources of the state are usually used randomly and there is no control for who and how the resources are used (Engvall, 2013, p. 28).
2.4 Mainstream explanations and causes of corruption

In this section different views of explanations on corruption will be presented for better understanding of the phenomenon. The conventional political scientists believe that the causes of corruptions are due to shortages in political system, especially in the “democratic deficit”.

Political systems with unsatisfactory democratic power-sharing systems, poor checks and balances, irresponsible and non-transparence institutions with bad governance causes and facilitates for corruption. Widespread corruption is connected to poorly functioning states and corruption is explained due to failure of *ethical leadership, democracy and “good governance”* (Hope, 2000, 19, Doig and Theobald 2000). This is highly relevant for Afghanistan that has had a turbulent political history and lack of democratic structure. The econometric literature based on corruption-indexes and cross-country data also focuses on factors at general level while explaining corruption. Here the focus is on political institutions, government regulations, legal systems, GDP-levels, gender, religion, revenue of public officials, cultural factors, poverty, inequality, and role of colonialism. Economists and political scientists have also proposed that features of countries’ economic, political, cultural and social systems may have an impact on the predictable costs and benefits of corruption for individual officials (Treisman 2000; Paldam 1999; Amundsen *et al.*, 2000. 79-80).

In contrast, the microeconomic bureaucratic models focus on incentive or principal-agent-client theory. This principal-agent model is a well-known and wide-established explanation to understand corruption (Aidt 2003; Rose-Ackerman 1978; Klitgaard 1988, Teorell & Rothstein 2015, ). Corruption here is viewed as a criminal performance by some agents who work in the interest of a benevolent principle. This benevolent principle can be a chief executive, cabinet minister, politicians and decision-maker, and the agents can be a public employee or civil servants (Rothstein 2011,99, Begovic 2005: 3). The basic assumption is that there is a goal conflict existing between these principles and agents and that the agent has more information about tasks at hand than principle which result in information asymmetry. These agents are believed to reveal the principle’s interest in achieving of his or own personal benefits which is a result of lack of communication between the principle and agents. The principle is assumed to not get information about the corrupt activities of the agent. The main idea is that a public institution must conduct its activities in an effective way to be successful. This effective work can be problematic if some activities are managed by individuals who struggle for private
interests and do not feel responsibility for the success of the institution. This behavior can occur in many bureaucratic institutions where the agents takes bribes for personal gain and client gives bribes for receiving a service (Galtung, 1998; Cadot 1986; Amundsen et al 2000. 104-5). According to this approach the agent is the problem of corruption and the principle will have a role of controlling the corruption (Persson et al 2013. 452)

However, Bo Rothstein and his colleagues argue that this model can be problematic in a very corrupt system, where it can be hard to detect who such a benevolent principal can be, because according to the approach the state, or political elites are the benevolent. Thus the approach does not provide explanation for political corruption but only bureaucratic corruption (Begovic, 2005. 3; Persson et al, 2013. 452). The researchers argue that in countries with systemic corruption political elites are for instance those who gain most from the payments and therefore unwilling to change the corrupt system. If it is assumed that the political elite is corrupt then the principle-agent theory will be not useful since the principle is not willing to monitor or punish corrupt actors. Rothstein and his colleagues intend that a widespread systemic corruption should be seen as collective action problem in order to combat corruption. In a society with a thoroughly systemic corruption, where agents or people know that they would gain from eradicating corruption, but cannot trust or have a belief that most other will not refrain from corrupt activities. Then it is useless not to take bribes because other will do it anyway, and in addition, the chances to get caught is minimal. This is explained as collective problem and hard to change if not the whole society take a collective action against corruption (Rothstein, 2011, 100).

In the other hand, the recent less radical theories studying corruption have focused on the impact of informal aspects of power and informal institutions. This neo-patrimonial approach states that politics in developing countries, for instance in Africa and Latin America is based on personal political relations, clientelism, and nepotism, where political corruption is widespread and the distinction between private and public interests is unclear (Amundsen et al. 2000, 54-55). This type of explanations is important for my case, since Afghanistan is a developing country with widespread corruption, where personal relations and kinship is important for acquiring jobs and services (AREUA 2010. 9).

Political scientists and historians have further focused on countries with very high levels of corruption and conducted comprehensive research to understand the causes of corruption. For
instance, studies of Bayart (1993) and Reno (1995) have studied the corruption in African context where focus have been on clientelist networks between economic and political agents that undermine the role of bureaucracies. These networks are usually in charge of many activities; war, legal as well as illegal local and international business, party politics, governmental tasks, and in some countries manage personal family and tribal affairs. The incomes that these network actually acquire are through bribery and extortion. Many of the activities of these networks are illegal according to local and international law, and which are often committed by people linked having public posts (Amundsen et al. 2000, 27-28).

Anthropologists Blundo and Oliver De Sardan (2000) argue that corruption “is largely a clandestine or concealed practice with strong normative undertones, similar to other phenomena like large scale and petty crime, parallel to black market activities and drug trafficking”. They argue that in developing countries the distinction between public and private duties are hardly clear and it varies from country to country. What is accepted as corruption or not, differs from place to place and context. In many countries appointments and other disputes are solved through contacts and acquaintances, bribes or pressure from the top. “Favoritism” is another form of corruption, but in developing countries, people might see it as an obligation to help their families and friends (Amundsen et al 2000, 69-71). These patterns of corruption are visible in Afghanistan too (IWA 2014, National survey).

In many countries there is a tradition of gift-giving, based on various motives and is practiced for different goals. In China, there is a practice of guanxi, means “social relationship or social connection”, (Yang, 1989, 1994, Amundsen et al 2000, 72). In practice, gift-giving opens up for mutual support between two parties who have set up a foundation or process of familiarity. Motivations behind the practice depends on the relationship between the individuals and to correspond to obligations by giving, taking and repaying gifts are, what “feels” right and a way to avoid “loosing face”, in the eyes of others. And “one may feel obliged to help others with a certain sense of self-interest and material benefit in mind” (Yang, 1994. 140). It is a way of helping each other in day-to-day life activities and to refuse accepting and reciprocating gift might also create a problem of “losing face”. This is hard to transform this practice to modern western idea of corruption according to Yang, because the personal sense of responsibility to
help and indebtedness are as important as the undertaking benefit of gift-giving (Yang, 1994. 108).

Other scholars have highlighted the importance of solidarity network, where individuals try to build and preserve bonds with different people. A study in Bangladesh shows that people spend plenty of their time with each other to communicate, socialize and develop their personal relations of friendship, where a trust in between is established and a sense of mutual assistance. These networks depend on kin, friends, and neighbors and are important for conducting of everyday practices. In such a manner, business deals are discussed, loans are given, services are granted and exchange of information occur. Due to this obligation of mutual assistance that exists, one cannot refuse a service or a favor without serious consequences (Amundsen et al, 2000. 75-76). These practices of gift-giving, mutual assistance and solidarity networks to obtain goods and services make it hard to draw the line between these traditional practices of helping each other and bureaucratic corruption. Nevertheless, these studies are important for understanding corruption in developing countries where cultural traditions and norms are still important and maybe part of the corruption. These explanations will help to understand social relations among citizens in Afghanistan, where gift-giving in obtaining services and loyalty to own kin group or friends are important in relations of give-and-take.

Other scholars such as Mbako (1991) explain petty corruption due to poor economy. He intended that in countries where civil servants have low levels of income tend to do corrupt activities in order to compensate for the low wages which is a significant part of the bureaucratic corruption. Empirical evidence from Case studies in Ghana (1983), Peru (1991), Uganda (1992), Zambia (1994), Kenya (1995) and Tanzania (1996), exposed progresses in collection of taxes and other incomes due to reforms in salaries in tax administration (Van Rijckeghem and Weder 2002, Otusanya, 2011. 394). Some researchers connect corruption to socio-ethno and linguistic origin of people in a certain society. It is believed that the behavior of people is formed by the culture and values that might generate nepotistic practices where people are offered jobs based on family, relatives band or friendship or political affiliations (Otusanya, 2011. 394).

Some recent studies link the historic roots of corruption with level of universal education, GDP/capita and democracy. The early adoption of universal education in societies is linked to economic equality and to efforts that increase state capacity. Societies with more equal education
provided more opportunities to oppose corruption and the adoption of universal education was a strong motivation for increased state capacity. Such societies had low level of economic inequality and low level of corruption (Uslaner and Rothstein; 2016).

3. Analytical framework

The analytical framework to be used in the empirical analysis is derived from my review of past theory and research on corruption. There are many theoretical explanations but the more relevant theoretical factors that would help me to explain corruption in Afghanistan and relevant forms and causes of corruption based on previous research will be outlined here. To operationalize the concept of corruption, the different forms and explanations are discussed and presented.

3.1 General types of corruption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrative/bureaucratic corruption</th>
<th>Political or grand corruption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occurs at low level in public administration, where ordinary citizens in attempt to obtain a good or public service or speeding-up of a transaction have to pay bribes to civil servants. Abuse of legal rules or partial implementation of rules motivated by economic incentives is typically administrative corruption.</td>
<td>Occurs at highest levels of political arena, where political elite, decision-makers and other top public officials misuse their power to obtain large bribes or other benefits, by changing decisions or laws in their own or other’s interest. They can ignore laws and rules or make laws to fit their own interests.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Amundsen et al, 2000. 18-19)

3.1.1 Main forms of corruption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bribery</th>
<th>Payment in money or in terms of kickbacks, baksheesh, gratuity, pay-offs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fraud</td>
<td>Manipulation of information, facts for own profit involving trickery, and swindle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extortion</td>
<td>Use of threat and or violence to obtain money or other resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embezzlement</td>
<td>Theft or misappropriation of resources or funds from public institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favoritism</td>
<td>Unfair and biased distribution of resources to friends, family members or a group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 Main explanations and causes of corruption

In one hand, the political system of a country and functioning of public institutions described as formal institutions, are important factors to explain corruption according to political scientists. On the other hand, societal, cultural relationships known as informal institutions, such as patron-client relationships, tribe-family based relationships in obtaining services are explained as causes of corruption according to anthropologists. Since I do not know which explanations are the most plausible, I will combine both type of explanations in my analytical framework to provide better understanding and explanation of corruption in Afghanistan.

3.2.1 Formal institutions

Political scientists and Economists explain corruption as absence or existing of very poor political, social and financial system of countries where corruption breeds. Traditionally, political science has focused on formal state institutions important for political and economic development (Amundsen et al, 2000. 53-54). The common causes of corruption are here due to: lack of rule of law, weak and unaccountable state institutions and law enforcement bodies, non-transparency in law and regulations, poor economic development resulting in low public salaries, poverty, political instability, absence of legal tradition and democratic system, governmental interference in free market and violations of private property rights (Dreher et al 2004; Treisman 2000).

It is supposed that those who commit corrupt activities think about the expected costs of their action, against the expected benefits from it. The risk of getting caught and punished for corrupt activities depends on the legal systems (penalty systems) of the countries (Becker 1968). How the rules and regulations are enforced determine the level and extent of corruption (Treisman 2000, 402-3). Societies with close and non-democratic political system (with very poor freedom of press and other civic associations and monitoring bodies to expose violations and corrupt activities), are supposed to facilitate for corruption. Institutional controls somehow reflect the attitudes of political elite toward tackling corruption. Transparent institutional controls and offices along with ethical and honest officials should reveal and discourage corrupt actors and
corrupt activities (Tanzi 1998). Further, developed economies enable increase of education, literacy and facilitate to remove biased relationships and help to reveal any kind of abuse as well as clarify the distinction between public and private property (Treisman 2000. 403-7).

3.2.2 Informal institutions

This part was explained in previous research and here is a summary. In contrast to formal institutions scholars with “neo-patrimonial” approach have paid attention to informal institutions and informal aspects of the power to explain corruption. They argue that in patrimonial settings, the state is merely a façade that hide the political relations totally based on clientelism, patron-client-based relationships and personal relations. In non-democracies considered as “neo-patrimonial” or “kleptocratic” states, corruption is a way by which authoritarian power-holders manipulate political and social environment to gain private benefits (Amundsen et al. 2000. 26-27; Harsch 1997; Bayart 1993). The study will use Clientelism, patronage and neo-patrimonialism to explain corruption, and these three concepts are quite similar to each other.

Clientelism

Clientelism has been seen as a phenomenon used in developing countries, but the concept is not limited only to developing countries but is found in the understanding of political systems in Western developed countries too (Landé 1983, Varraich, 2014. 5). The concept is regarded as a type of corruption and has a negative connotation similar to corruption. Early anthropologists and sociologists have used clientelism as a concept to understand traditional societies, often observed in developing countries in Latin America and Southeast Asia, where patron-client relationships were observed as social structures. As Schmidt describe the concept in Lauth’s article a “specialist term for forms of protective relationship of mutual benefit between a person or persons occupying a higher place in the social hierarchy (patron) and a following concerned with protection and the acquisition of certain advantages (clients)” (Schmidt, 476, in Lauth, 2000. 27). According to Hopkin, political clientelism is where actors with access to resources give some benefits to specific individual or certain groups in order to get political support (Hopkin 2006, 2, Varraich 2014. 5).

The patron is a person who has access to resources (both material and immaterial) either own or control it and which are provided for a client in a certain situation. These resources can be in terms of protection, money, assistance, facilitating job and career opportunities. The clientelistic
structure of relationship is based on mutual exchange. The client can obtain these resources in exchange of giving political support or talking good in advantage of patron or do some other unpaid services for patron. This relationship is wider expanded to patron-broker-client relationship where the broker is a middleman who fix the exchange of resources between patron and client. It is emerged due to the geographic distance between patron and client or many number of clients (Varraich, 2014. 6-7).

This relationship is also described based on reciprocity. The patron to provide services and goods in exchange of some other kind of support, both parties have to deliver their part of the deal (ibid 7). Hierarchy is also an essential feature of clientelism. A patron usually with high status use his authority and resources to support client in terms of protection, jobs opportunities or something else and the client with lower status has to pay back or provide the support the patron asks for. The relationship can be optional or forced and based on special interests such as kinship, where sense of “obligation” and “loyalty” are important in the reciprocal relationship (ibid 8-9). For instance, civil servants or employees at public sectors are created to satisfy rulers’ aspirations to expand and develop loyalty through patronage (Begovic, 2005. 3).

Patronage
This is another concept linked to clientelism and corruption. Anthropologists regard it as social relationship while political scientists see it as a tool or instrument of governing and how to manage political relations. It is also defined as “the way in which party politicians distribute public or special favours in exchange of electoral support”, (Arriola 2009; Kopecky and Scherils 2009). Patronage is a typically exchange relationship between patron and client, where patron often provides public office or appointments to employment to the client in exchange of political support in terms of electoral vote or something else (Varraich, 2014. 13).

Neo-patrimonialism
The terms patrimonialism and neopatrimonialism are both used to describe the corruption in relation to political system of a society. The term is Max Weber’s typology for traditional authority, where the main executive authority keeps its power through personal patronage. The formal political system is characterized by personal loyalty and dependence of the bureaucratic
staff to the ruler and the staff’s impersonal obligation are less important. The public resources and offices are distributed through personal connections rather than on merit-based system. The individuals with public offices and real power over society did not serve the people as expected from their formal obligation, but rather work to obtain personal benefits and status. Such regimes are a combination of formal legal administration with patrimonial system in terms of informal politics (Bratton and van de Walle 1994. 458). In such patrimonial regimes, distinction between public and private property is less clear and civil servants increase their salaries by taking bribes and rewards. In such systems some citizens are provided more privileges than other and rules are enforced with favoritism (Varraich 2014. 22).

4. Method and Materials

4.1 Case study

A case study is an “instance of a class of events”, a phenomena of scientific interest, which is investigated with aim to develop theory or produce knowledge about that case. Case study is a suitable method in situations when the researcher asks questions of “how” and “why”. The Cuban Missile Crises is a famous example of case study (Yin: 2003, 1).

The strategy of this research is case study, Afghanistan as a case, with a qualitative research method in combination of statistical data. Through a descriptive text analysis and with help of my analytical framework the chosen materials will be interpreted and analyzed. Case study examines a phenomenon in deep, in order to accumulate a comprehensive knowledge and understand the underling factors behind an event. Here, the study will focus to understand corruption in Afghanistan and provide some explanations why it occurs. It is also important to do research about the context, history and culture of the specific country to be able to say anything about that development. For that reason, I do place my research in the field of area study or case study.

In recent times, methodological collaboration, where researchers combine more than one method in their work has emerged and it has a crucial contribution to theoretical procedure (George & Bennett. 2005, 4-5). Due to progress and domination of statistical methods, case studies has been misunderstood for its methodological work. The proponents of case studies argue that both
statistical and formal methods as well as case studies have different methodological logics. All three models try to develop logical theoretical framework and test hypothesis on empirical observations. These three methods provide different reasoning on how to select a case, how to operationalize different variables and how to use *inductive* and *deductive* logic (ibid 6). This study will combine statistical data, books, articles, reports and survey of public opinion to answer the questions. Thus, it is an advantage to could combine several methods relevant for the study.

4.2 Advantage and limitations of case study

In case studies, the researcher has to identify variables and measure indicators that present the theoretical concept in sufficient way and indicators or concepts that are the focuses of measurement. When suitable variables of theoretical concept are identified the study can provide high conceptual validity. Case studies are good in explanation of complicated situations where the outcome have several causes than one (George & Bennett. 21-22). Case studies can be used to understand and explain the complexity of a case. They can provide different outcomes, e.g. in this study different types of corruption, which is difficult to show by only a large statistical survey. Thus case studies can contribute to complexity of outcomes and complexity of explanations of a phenomenon. For instance, corruption can depend on war, poverty, political system and different other factors which also affect each other. One known disadvantage of case studies is that it cannot be generalized to bigger population, but it is not the aim either. In other hand, the study can give detailed information about the specific country, Afghanistan related to corruption. It may help to generalize to other cases in theoretical sense or find similarities or differences in similar cases.

4.3 Choice of research area and case selection

The course of Comparative Politics at the higher education had a module on informal institutions including subject of corruption that drew my attention as well as the Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index of different countries. The choice of Afghanistan fell naturally since I have my origin there and have a good knowledge about the society, traditions and culture of the country. The external factors (presence of international community including US and EU and their investment in democratization of the country) made it interest to choose
Afghanistan as a case. Some preliminary knowledge about the case in question is probably good to have. As a research I have to be neutral and objective obviously. The choice of only one case instead of several is to be able to find explanations about this specific case, and because every country has own historical, political, economic and cultural background. Thus it is important to focus on the context and quality of the specific study in the question.

4.4 Materials

Due to limited resources and time I could not collect my own surveys or interviews, and therefore my materials will be rest on secondary sources and consisted by research related to Afghanistan. To understand and describe corruption in Afghanistan, the material for analyze will be consisted mainly by statistical data such as surveys on corruption perceptions and experiences. Although most of the sources are secondary, they are highly scientific and valuable and reliable. The main surveys used in the essay is by Integrity Watch Afghanistan that has conducted national surveys of corruption experienced and perceived by Afghans since 2007. The central focus of the survey is on impact of corruption in provision as well as access to public goods and services and how it affects legitimacy of the government, state stability and insurgency. The 2014 survey interviewed in total 7,798 from all 34 provinces of Afghanistan. The 2012 survey had 8316 respondents from all 34 provinces and the 2010 survey had 6,498 respondents from the 32 of 34 provinces of Afghanistan. The first national survey from 2007 had 1,258 respondents from 13 of 34 provinces of Afghanistan. All surveys had included respondents from all Afghan ethnic groups in proportion to the population of provinces and as well as inclusion of man and female respondents. The Asia Foundation is another none/profit international development organization, in cooperation with organization at field has conducted annually surveys since 2004. Surveys called a survey of Afghan people are about social, economic and political development in the country. The study has taken advantage of the 2015 survey.

Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) another famous database used among scholars is also included in the study. In this index, countries are ranked on scale 1-10, where 1 is highly corrupt and 10 stands for no corruption (Ekman: 2009. 12). The study will also use Global Corruption Barometer, which is a worldwide public opinion, asking people in every country about their thoughts and experiences of corruption. Their survey questions cover areas of
To be able to find explanations of corruption in Afghanistan, I have used data from different scholars consisted of books, scientific articles and NGOs working in Afghanistan. I have used a book by Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan, a Cultural and Political History*. Another book edited by Conrad Schetter, *local politics in Afghanistan: A century of Intervention in the Social Order*, is about the local actors that influence the policies and how the local politics work in Afghanistan including, patron-client relations and nepotism. The scientific articles of various scholars studied the *ethnic diversity, distrust and corruption* and clientelism and neopatrimonialism in Afghanistan, which helped in explanations of corruption in Afghanistan. The *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, UNDOC, Integrity Watch Afghanistan* as well as *USAIDs* assessment on corruption are taken into the study.

4.5 Delimitations

Due to limit and scope of the study, the author in not going to involve any anti-corruption strategies or how Afghanistan and international community work to combat corruption and neither will be the impact of external actors on democratization and combating corruption involved. The study focuses on to look at time period of 2001 to 2015.

5. Empirical analysis

The empirical analysis is divided in two part. The first section will describe the corruption in Afghanistan, the extent and types of corruption that exist. The second part will suggest some explanations of corruption in Afghanistan.

5.1 Scope and types of corruption in Afghanistan

Corruption is one of the major problem in Afghanistan and a concern to both Afghans and international community. Corruption is perceived to damage the legitimacy of state-building, impinge the stat-society relations, contribute to frustrations and insurgency, violates basic human rights and hamper the rule of law. The Asia Foundation survey 2015 shows that Afghans reports very low confidence in governmental institutions, which is the lowest over a decade, partly due
to systemic corruption (Asia Foundation National Survey 2015. 95-97). The systemic corruption damages the state legitimacy and is seen as driver of insurgency. In the National corruption surveys 35% of respondents believed that corruption help the insurgency and facilitate to expansion of Taliban. Respondents in more insecure provinces were in general more pessimistic and viewed corruption to fuel insurgency (Integrity Watch Afghanistan, National Corruption Survey 2010. 9, 2014. 6).

In international rankings measuring corruption, Afghanistan has remained at the bottom in past several years. According to Transparency International’s recent Corruption Perception Index (CPI), Afghanistan is ranked as 166 out of 168. Nordic countries such as Denmark and Sweden are at the top of the index meaning the less corrupt countries (Transparency International 2015). Corruption is not a new problem for Afghanistan but it has gradually increased in post-Taliban era (Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit 2010. 3). Corruption is perceived to be widespread, established at all level and reached to extent which never been seen prior in the history of Afghanistan (USAID. 2009. 1). For instance, in CPI 2005 Afghanistan was ranked at 117th out of 158, and the number fell to 172nd out of 180 in 2007, to 176 of 178 in 2010 and the ranking has worsened in the perception index (Transparency International 2015). This is also apparent at national surveys of Afghans perceptions and experience on corruption (IWA. 2016, National Surveys).

In a 2014 national survey on Afghans perceptions and experiences on corruption, 90 % of the respondents said corruption is a problem in their daily life and 61.1% viewed it as a major problem. (The Asia Foundation survey 2015; IWA. 2014). The type of corruption in Afghanistan is both administrative one and political corruption. It includes the most common Reshwat (bribery), abuse of power, extortion, fraud, nepotism, embezzlement (theft of public resources), illicit financial flows in terms of money laundering, drug trade, tax evasion, co-optation of power holders, mushkel tarashi (delays or bureaucratic difficulties/obstructionism), where bribes are requested, Wasita (“contacts”, know strongmen or office-holder with influence), and excessive incomes of international staff, which is a new type of corruption perceived by Afghans (AREU 2010. 5; IWA 2015. 1).

The state and public sector is considered most corrupt than private sector (IWA. 2010. 24). According to Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) 2013, Afghans respondents (60%) viewed
judiciary sector as the most corrupt institution in Afghanistan, and 43% felt that public officials and civil servants were corrupt, 40% regarded parliament and legislature as corrupt followed by police, political parties, education system, military, NGOs, religious bodies, business branch, media and medical and health sectors (Global corruption Barometer 2013). According to the same survey, 65% of the respondent mentioned they paid bribes to judiciary sector, 58% reported paid to registry and permit services (for ID-cards and passports), 51% paid to police, followed by tax revenue, land services, medical and health services, educational services and other utilities, in order to get access to basic public service (GCB 2013).

According to the surveys conducted by Integrity Watch Afghanistan, Afghans’ perceptions and experiences on corruption have worsened comparing to previous surveys in 2012, 2010, and 2007 where corruption was considered as third biggest problem in the country and which is now the second biggest problem together with unemployment after insecurity. There is an increase in the perceptions and experience of corruption comparing to previous years and the major difference can be seen in the increased amount of bribery. Bribery is the most common type of corruption in Afghanistan and the amount money paid in bribery has doubled since 2010, reaching almost to $2bn (IWA 2014, 4 National Corruption Survey).

The survey also shows increase in institutionalization of corruption, where people feel confidence in under the table-transactions to receive services and people rely more on relatives, friends, contacts and civil servants as intermediaries in paying bribes to obtain services than on commission-takers which was the case in previous years. According to the survey a majority (57%) of the respondents mentioned that personal, ethnical and political relationships were important in access to state services, which is an indication of corruption based on nepotism. Institutions perceived the most corrupt by Afghans respondents were, civilian public sectors including Courts and the police (Ministry of Interior) followed by the Ministry of Education. The trend of corruption has increased since 2007 among public officials at municipalities, districts, custom offices and provincial governor’s offices (Asia Foundation 2015. However, the survey also showed some improvements in reduction of corruption in other sectors such as Ministry of Water and Energy, Ministry of Transport and in the Directorate of National Security (National Corruption Survey, Integrity Watch 2014, 5). It should be mentioned that these are the perceptions of people and not actual experience of corruption, but it still reflects the development
of corruption in the society. Those who actually experienced corruption, reported in this survey, that 57% paid bribes in term of cash payment, 16% provided gift, 8% paid to commission-taker (indirect bribes), the same number obtained services based on nepotistic relations (Integrity Watch 2014.30).

In Afghanistan, in daily life, civil servants, public sector employees, police and judges, demand citizen for bribes in order to provide basic public services and goods or to speed up the transactions, which is type of survival-based corruption to compensate for low wages. Corruption in Afghanistan is not only because of corrupt civil servants but also citizen themselves is part of the problem. People paid bribes for services they may not have right to obtain. For instance, pay bribes for obtaining driving license, school/university certificate, bribe teachers for obtaining higher school degree, paying doctors for extra care, and paying bribes for provision of other documents. Citizens can also pay bribes to avoid punishment for a committed crime (Mohseni 2014, 143).

Bribery and extortion are two common type of corruption occurs among Afghan police in order to compensate for poor incomes. For instance, traffic police demand for payment from drivers to allow vehicles to pass. Police commanders can collect salaries of “ghost” policemen by exaggerating number of working under them. There are some other factors that can encourage the corrupt behavior of police such as receiving illegal rewards by local power brokers involved in poppy trafficking. They can also manipulate the eradication programs of poppy by forcing bribes from farmers in let them cultivate. Criminal and drug-lords may also bribe police chiefs and/or border police in exchange of economic benefits from narcotic market, and local power brokers are often involved in protection of drug industry. The ethnical favoritism is also an important driver of corruption in Afghanistan, where individual and groups compete for benefits from patrons who distribute state resources and jobs and this hinder police reforms too, since posts are distributed based on ethnic relations (Singh, 2014, 625).

The Asia Foundation survey report 2012 and Integrity Watch Afghanistan National survey 2014 confirm the trend of institutionalization of corruption since 2001 in all levels of government. Corruption is perceived to have increased and more serious and alarming in the government of Hamid Karzai 2001-2014 than to last five previous regimes. (Asia Foundation Report 2012. 2). This may confirm the U-shaped relationship of democracy to corruption, that in new
democracies corruption increases to a point and then decline when democracy has consolidated. It has not declined yet in Afghanistan after 15 years of democratization process.

However, there are some trends in the occurrence of type of corruption which was interesting to observe. According to the surveys, bribery or the monetization of corrupt activities has increased since 2001, while personal, ethnic, party-political connections has decreased which were important factors for accessing public services in previous regimes (AREU 2010. 8). Nevertheless, in the latest survey of Integrity Watch Afghanistan, 2014, respondents reported that family, ethnicity and personal connections have become more important again in order to get public services. Patron-client networks based on ethnic relationships and political affiliation are important ways of getting political support, having access to public services and political offices, obtaining jobs and having access to state institutions in current political system. As a result, this excludes those individuals who does not have the same ethnic or party connections and may seek help and get service from other non-state groups such as Taliban which increase existing of insurgent groups and decrease the legitimacy of the government (National Corruption survey, Integrity Watch 2014. 37).

However, corruption in Afghanistan is not only the administrative one but it involved grand or political corruption too having a harmful effect. The selling of public posts, appointments of friends and relatives to public posts, and drug-related corruption is widespread which have hindered law enforcement in the country. Kabul-bank scandal is one among many that illustrate corruption in Afghanistan. The scandal involved theft of US$ 900 million of investors’ cash in 2010 with connections to political elites. The brothers of former president Karzai and the deceased vice-president Qasim Fahim were among the shareholders and creditors of the bank (The Guardian 2012). The investigations of the perpetrators were delayed due to immunity culture, until the new president Ghani took office and reviewed the investigation (The New York Times 2014). Public posts such as police chiefs and provincial governor posts are sold for thousands of US dollar and the price is higher in areas with poppy cultivation and drug-related activities. This obviously make it difficult to provide security and enforcement of the rule of law. The police serve interests of criminal groups and other criminal activities such as, drug trafficking, land robbery, property cheating, tax and custom evasion, illegal monopolies on markets with legal good and so on (Singh, 2014, 622).
Manipulation of contracts is also have been a big problem for state-building and a contributor to corruption. These contract provided by US and other donors to Afghan government assigned for various ends such as reconstruction work. Cronyism and political connections were important factors for receiving contract and selling them as sub-contracts. The money waste due to contracts fraud between 2002-2011 was estimated between US$31 billion and US$60 billion. This further has deteriorated legitimacy of the state and contributed to losing faith of citizens in state (Murtazashvili 2015. 79). Family of the Karzai and local warlords have been an important part of these contract manipulation and theft of millions of US dollar (ibid 84).

However, despite widespread corruption in the country, in most surveys majority of Afghans condemns the corruption and do not see it as an Afghan culture. Although there are some contradictions in the perceptions of respondents. Approximately, (34%) of respondents saw bribery as a necessity and acceptable due to very low salaries of the civil servants but at the same time (41%) viewed it as unacceptable that civil servants taking bribes from the poor or taking bribes for unjustified reasons (44%). On the other hand, in general a majority of the respondents saw all forms of corruption as unacceptable (IWA National Survey, 2014 .45).

5.2 Explaining corruption in Afghanistan
In this section, formal and informal institutions as discussed in the analytical framework will be suggested as causes of corruption.

5.2.1 Formal institutions
Causes and explanations of corruption are many and diverse in Afghanistan. Decades of war has hindered the development and persistence of effective state institutions and monitoring bodies. Rule of law is a serious concern in Afghanistan, where judicial system is very slow, insufficient, corrupt and where judges and lawyers face threats from local leaders or armed groups (Freedom House 2015; Stiftung 2014. 7). Public sectors such as security and justice are influenced by non-state criminal individuals, warlords, local powerbrokers and private groups to protect their illegal interests. Government officials, as well as warlords in some provinces, allow prevalent exploitations by the police, armed groups and security staff, where random capture and imprisonment of people, torture, and killings are occurred. Political elites, officeholders and
warlords and other criminal networks are involved in illegal and profitable black-market of minerals, narcotics and weapons. These public institutions and anti-corruption agencies are interfered by political elite to serve some criminal interests. Many experts have observed that many Afghan government officials serve some individual patrons and are not accountable to the wider population. Many such criminal actors are often free from prosecution because the police are manipulated by powerful actors in order to release drug-lords and smugglers. The “culture of impunity” exists and many drug-related criminals and other perpetrators with strong connection to political elite are not held accountable ((Freedom House 2015; Singh 2014).

Unaccountability of the civil servants and culture of impunity, unwillingness of political elite and public officials to tackle corruption (because they gain from it), are factors that contribute to corruption. Criminal and corrupt actors continue to do their activities since the risk to get caught is little since the prosecutors, judges and police are manipulated. By paying money one can buy public offices, and avoid justice and police for committed crime (IWA 2006). This shows the lack of legal-penalty system and monitoring bodies where perpetrators and corrupt people can go free from charge. The data based on surveys and articles also point cause of corruption due to the lack of sanctions, weak and unaccountable state institutions, low corruption control and lack of law enforcement, and huge inflow of donor money (IWA, National Corruption Survey 2014. 4-36).

Defective legal system is particularly apparent in house property, land and construction sector, a main cause of corruption in the judiciary system. The legal system is very old and insufficient. It lacks adequate capacity to provide acceptable property rights and solve the land controversies. Land rights are defined by various legal sources such as the constitution, state law, sharia, civil law, customary law that are contradictory in current time and this complexity contribute to disputes and corrupt activities by paying bribes to solve the issues or make decisions with partiality (The Asia Foundation, 2012. 6). The courts are manipulated and work in the interest of specific actors, officials and drug-lords due to bribery or threats (Singh, 2014, 629-30).

Low level of education and salaries among civil servants and national police is one of the main rationalization of paying bribes. Officials often see public offices as opportunity to gain benefits at the cost of public goods (Goodman & Sutton 2015). The main reason for bribery among Afghan police is due to the very low salaries. The salaries can be low at US $70 per month to
supply for Afghan family (often big families), and the rent of houses in Afghanistan can be at US $400, which leads to corrupt activities to compensate for low wages. Poor economy is main explanation for survival-based corruption. The overall explanations of corruption among Afghan police and in Afghanistan at general are structural causes of corruption (patronage and nepotism), low pay, state capture and ethnic favoritism (Singh, 2014, 621, AREU. 2010).

There is one external factor that has received less attention in the previous research but some scholars have drawn attention to, is donor aid. This external factor has encouraged for corrupt activities that enhanced corruption in Afghanistan and undermined the state-building process. The huge arrival of international aid has apparently also contributed to strengthen patronage networks. Afghanistan has been allocated billions of US dollars, only in 2002-2012 the US alone supported with $73 billion, in aid. Most of the money was allocated to warlords, and political figures and families with influence. There have been no strong mechanisms to monitor how money was consumed and distributed. This big inflows of aid led to cause of pressure in spending quickly, which in turn often led to parallel systems with non-responsibility and non-transparency (The Asia Foundation Report, 2012. 5; Goodman & Sutton 2015; Murtazashvili 2015. 89). Afghanistan has been dependent on foreign aid for long time, during 19th century of British aid, in 1970s on Soviets and post 2001 on US and other foreign donors. This dependency on foreign sources of patronage is one issue that should be investigate further.

5.2.1 Causes due to political system
The political history of Afghanistan has been witnessed by violence, and much bloodshed. The last almost four decades of armed conflicts along with poverty has contributed to bad political atmosphere. During the Taliban regime 1996-2001 the country was viewed as classic failed state, with broken social structures and non-existent or very poor state institutions (Barma 2012. 286). The political elite have experienced different type of governments including monarchy, republic, socialism/communism, Islamic Emirate of Taliban and now western type of democracy. The country has had little political reforms due to its turbulent history and lacked political and economic stability (Stiftung 2014. 3).

The political system of governance in Afghanistan is made up by both formal, informal institutions, and illegal actors and power brokers. Since the formal state institutions are absent or very weak, and the central government is unable to govern through its centralized system
throughout the country, the informal and non-state actors and institutions appeared to be more active in the politics and economy of the country. Some of them contribute to stability and others threaten it. Although the government has made vital improvements since 2001, the state administrations are still weak and the government does not seem to have control over governance and use of force (Lamb 2012). Afghanistan is not a nation-state defined in western terms but still a majority of Afghans accept the legitimacy of the state. However, the ethnic and tribal alliances, social and economic injustices, widespread corruption, and increasing insurgency question the legitimacy of the state. The long-standing wars have contributed to deep divisions between the ethnic, linguistic and political lines, which further have been exacerbated by external actors who did support various groups for different aims (Stiftung 2014. 5). The afghan government have made some improvements in provision of public goods but at general still lacks to provide basic services to its population due to weak and dysfunctional institutions and lacks effective governance and rule of law. The attempts of state-building and the aid that was directed to enhance state institutions including the executive, legislative, military and civil institutions have not succeeded to achieve the expected results. The institutions built in Afghanistan are still dependent on international aid and the amount of aid has declined since withdrawal of international troops in end of 2014, which affect the development work negatively. The effectiveness of such institutions have further been undermined by lack of accountability, transparency and political stability. These unaccountable state institutions, political instability and poor political system contribute to corruption. A large number of Afghan population believe the government is unable to work for public good, but instead working for the interests of a small groups of political leaders and warlords (IWA Assessment 2015, Transparency International 2015).

Afghanistan is not a developed democracy where elected political figures have the real power to govern but it is a traditional-bound country where the local elites are the key actor that influence political decisions, determine state policies and control the means of violence. The crucial political power lays in the hand of a political elite mostly consisted of the former Northern Alliance group connected to the current chief Executive Abdullah. These local elites including warlords and local power brokers controlling the policies of the government, embodied with their own worldviews, interests and practices which affect the formal function of the rules and laws. All provincial governors, mayors, and security commander are appointed by the president and
Ministry of Interior and often these local figures govern and serve special interest groups (Stiftung 2014. 6). Distributions of posts in these sectors are often recruited based on patronage, clienteleism and reciprocity. Local politics in Afghanistan are unique in a way that it differs from other places in the world due to some factors. Firstly, Afghan or external actors have been unable to change the local politics. Secondly, Afghanistan never became a dependent colony by interventions made in last two centuries and the state-building process that started in late 19th century was unable to reach the local level (Conrad. 2014. 6).

5.2.2 Informal Institutions: Clientelism, Patronage and Neopatrimonialism

There are also some other crucial causes of corruption based on traditional practices such as patron-client relationships, distributions of public resources based on nepotistic relationships, party political affiliation and connections to informal institutions, illicit actors such as strongmen and warlords. Historically, the Afghan state, despite the attempts of centralization of the government, has mostly leaned on *clientelistic networks and patronage* connections (Zurcher 2012. 467). Despite the central government, the rural areas were highly autonomous (due to subsistence farming and pastoralism), and the relationship between state and villages was mediated by wealthy landlords, high-ranked religious figures, and influential families. These mediators helped the state with gathering of taxes, land distribution, enlistment of soldiers, and other public governmental affairs. In exchange, the patron (the state) provided protection against hostile administration or enemy. These landlords, elders or clan leaders (*Khan, Malak*) were in turn patron for ordinary people and provided social services and solved the disputes between the ordinary people and state administration (Shahrani 2014. 25, Wilde 2014. 64). From Western point of view patron-client relations are understood as informal institutions, parallel system and labeled by weak statehood, while in Afghanistan, these patron-client relations and informal power relations were crucial to modern state-building process in Afghanistan (Wilde 2014. 60).

Afghanistan is culturally diverse and a traditional-bound society characterized by tribes and ethnic divisions. Almost 80% of the afghan population lives in rural areas where the supremacy of the tribes and ethnic groups is dominant over individuals, and group interests precedes the individual interests. *Loyalty and solidarity* to own *qawm*, explained as kin, tribe, family, and ethnic group is important feature of the afghan social life, but loyalty to people with shared political affiliation and shared locality is also crucial and sometimes connected to *qawm*
(Barfield 2010. 18; Forsberg 2010. 12). In Afghanistan and even in other societies, with tribal systems and ethnic divisions, weak administrative system, interact with ideas of patron and kinship, especially when patrons with influence and power are expected to help its own people or members of the network (Sutton & Goodman 2015). Loyalty to a patron from own qawm is crucial in recruitment of jobs and other services (Singh 2014. 635). Many warlords and local actors have been given public offices by former Karzai administration to obtain loyalty and maintain in power. These recruitments are often not based on merit or competence for the work but on personal relations, which further maintain corruption (Goodman & Sutton. 2015).

The relationships between the state and citizens has functioned on basis of kin and tribe connections and politics at general have been characterized by negotiations between clans, tribes, regional groups and solidarity groups (Hess 2010. 174). The relationships and interactions among people is also based on trust, friendship, and sometimes ties beyond the ethnic and tribe line, which also is characterized by solidarity, and obligations in trade, politics and daily life-matters. The relationships based on reciprocity and “gift-giving” in exchange of a favor are also common use (Conard 2014). These traditions can be problematic in modern states with bureaucratic system based on meritocracy and impartiality which clashed with traditional systems, where public offices or resources are distributed through ethnic, tribe basis, friendship or political party affiliation, which leads to corruption. However, since 2001 the influence of tribes and clans seems to has declined in some places and personality-driven politics with strongmen and warlords with connections to criminal-military networks has emerged (Forsberg 2010. 6). These type of social relationships are typical indications of clientelistic networks and common in developing countries as described in previous research (Amundsen et al 2000; Yang 1989).

The cultural connotations that sustain corruption due to public tolerance of some corrupt practices, which is quite high in Afghanistan, is a dilemma in modern bureaucratic system. Two third of the adult populations consider it acceptable that civil servants take bribes due to low salaries or receive gifts. The requirement of civil servants based on family or friendship relations or political affiliation is also tolerated. To help people and relatives or speed up services are considered acceptable even if it might be regarded as corrupt behavior. These social or cultural factors further contribute to sustaining of corruption (AREU 2010. 15; UNODC 2012). Bribery
and gift-giving are considered as a way of solving problems, when receiving some basic services from civil servants, police or judges (Azami 2009).

Despite the efforts of state-building and formal institution post-2001, the statehood has been characterized by patronage relationship and clientelistic networks in many parts. Patronage networks and patronage politics has existed for centuries in Afghanistan but has strengthened in current time and with connections to criminal networks. These patron networks often consisted of warlords have attempted since Soviet invasion to control funding sources in order to maintain their local militia. People have no choice but to gain from these patrons in order to get access to basic public services or obtain high posts in government (Giustozzi 2009. 80-81). The supremacy of patronage-politics and these networks are directly connected to corruption. These networks influence the state institutions and judiciary system in a way so the perpetrators or corruptors are not brought to justice due to culture of impunity. Sometimes officials who should fight corruption are actually the one involved in corrupt activities (The Asia Foundation report 2012. 4; USAID, 2009. 4). Many of these patronage-networks are involved in corrupt activities ranging from land and real estate to private security, illegal import or export of goods, drug trafficking, mining and banking issues (Asia Foundation Report 2012. 5 Singh 2014).

The Karzai regime post 2001-2014 and the former Soviet-backed communist regime of People’s Democratic party of Afghanistan (PDPA) 1979-1992 are regarded as typically neo-patrimonial states, where the ruler maintained its power through personal patronage than on law or political ideology. The formal political and governmental system is based on relationships of loyalty and dependence where political leaders join the government to obtain personal benefits and status than to serve the ordinary citizens. The political system is built on informal alliances between different political figures and strongmen through distribution of public posts, arms, money, and other facilities to maintain in power (Hess 2010. 172; AREU. 2010. 9).

Afghanistan’s important challenge to enhance democracy, comes from subnational strongmen with patronage networks who have obtained power, legitimacy and economic resources from the central government. In late 2001 the US provided money and weapons to regional warlords from Northern Alliance such as Atta (governor of Balkh province since 2004) and Dostum (current vice-president) to fight against Taliban. These regional warlords were later integrated into the government of Karzai in 2002 (Barma 2012. 286, Edwards 2010. 9). Since Karzai came to power
without any dominant militia or influence among the public, he was dependent on the cooperation with these warlords and local leaders to maintain in power. The Karzai administration relied on patronage and clientelistic networks and *ad hoc* alliances in order to have influence beyond the capital Kabul. The role of these networks including regional warlords were legitimized by giving them high-ranked posts in the government (Hess 2010. 181).

In 2007 president Karzai established the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) in order to influence local politics and obtain political support. The main goal was to identify local, subnational actors and provide posts or ‘sell’ public offices to them. The president provided resources to clientelistic networks in terms of official posts, aid, and other privileges to local authorities in provinces and districts to get political and electoral support in exchange. Many provincial governors such as Atta Noor (former local commander), Ahmad Wali Karzai (half-brother of the ex-president Karzai) Ismail Khan (former warlord), and other authorities at district level obtained their posts by the government due to their independency and traditional power (Conrad *et al.* 2014. 8; Forsberg 2010. 6-7; Zurcher 2012. 467). Ahmad Wali Karzai was a well-known drug trafficker, which was appointed as a governor of Kandahar in 2005. He had a deep cooperation with CIA and was paid by them to recruit paramilitary forces. Ahmad Wali Karzai was a person who was involved in land rubbery, appointment of public offices based on nepotism and other criminal activities (Chayes. 2014. 51; New York Times 2009). For instance, many MPs in the national assembly were people involved in the war or belonged to militia groups. However, these strongmen and warlord were recognized and legitimized by both the international community and Karzai. These subnational leaders have strengthened their patronage networks through sophisticated political and economic strategies to exploit state resources and achieve international support to maintain their power.

The problem of political consolidation of the afghan government have been twofold. One is that the government has been dependent or is still dependent on these warlords particularly associated with Northern Alliance (“winners” of the conflict with Taliban) who create problems for the legitimacy and power of the central government. On other hand, the failure of Afghan government and its external supporter in including of the “looser” (Taliban) of the war into the political process. The increased attacks of Taliban and insurgency further challenge the legitimacy of the government and consequences of the Bonn peace agreement resulted in
political instability and corruption - leads to low quality of democratic governance (Conard et al. 2014. 287).

However, the Afghan government has attempted under several years to bring Taliban to negotiation table and peace talks but it has been without any successes yet. The security situation is deteriorating and the number of civilian affected in the conflict is raising. According to UNAMA report, only in 2015, 11,002 civilian causalities (3,545 deaths and 7, 457 injured), were documented (UNAMA 2016. 7).

The drug-related economy and clientelistic-networks and corruption has created a petty stability in some part of the country but caused socio-political instability and armed conflicts in other places. Drug-related corruption harms the state capacity in providing basic services and weaken the legitimacy of the government. The insurgent groups such as Taliban also utilize this incapacity of the government and prevalent patronage and corruption in government to legitimize their fighting against the government which further contribute to political instability in the country (ibid 287).

In a cultural diverse society with modern state institutions, if diversity is not managed, it can lead to favoritism and prioritization of a certain people or group in provision of services or at workplace. Un-managed ethnic, political, language and ideological diversity has contributed to long-run conflicts in Afghanistan and have caused distrust, violence and unethical actions in Afghanistan (Bahaudin 2013. 246). Due to decades of armed conflicts, absence of peace and civil unrest among different ethnical-political groups, drugs and bribery has become main sources of income in Afghanistan. As a negative consequence this has resulted in emergence of mafia networks, thieves, and corrupt officials that do everything to maximize their personal gains from it (Bahaudin 2013. 252).

6. Findings

In this section I will answer the questions asked in the beginning of the study.

1. How widespread is corruption in Afghanistan?
The Afghan case present an endemic corruption throughout the country and corruption occurs at all level and sectors. However, corruption has increased severely at the public sector than private sector. Corruption is considered to be the second biggest problem in the country after insecurity and 61% of the respondents consider it as a major problem in their life. The most corrupt public sectors are believed to be the judiciary followed by Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Education. Prosecutors, judges, custom officers, police and teachers are considered to be the most bribe-takers.

2. What types of corruption exist in Afghanistan?
Corruption pervades every aspect of the Afghan governance including administrative/petty corruption at the lower levels of the government to the grand/political corruption at the higher level of the government. Administrative or petty corruption in terms of bribery and gift-giving is the most common in the country. Grand or political corruption is where public official abuse their power through selling public offices, theft of public assets and providing public resources and jobs based on nepotism and cronyism, and party-political members. The specific forms of corruption in Afghanistan is in terms of bribery, extortion, embezzlement, favoritism and patronage/clientelistic networks.

3. How can corruption in Afghanistan be explained?
There are many reasons and causes of corruption in Afghanistan and many of theoretical explanations provided in previous research are observable in Afghanistan. According to the surveys and articles, the main reason for petty corruption or bribery by civil servants is the low salaries, although this explanation has declined little bit since previous years. Weakness of the administrative system, lack of governmental control and sanctions and lack of willingness from political elite and officials to curb corruption are considered as main factors that contribute to maintenance of corruption. The long-standing war and insurgency together with poor economy and low rate of education are other factors that deteriorate prospects for curbing corruption and which also have contributed to prevalence of corruption. There are also some cultural connotations such as gift-giving, loyalty to own clan, kin and neighbors in providing services that maintain corruption. The
high dominance of patronage networks particularly ethnic-based patronage, where certain local power brokers, warlords and other political leaders monopolizing state resources and distributed to their clients for different aims, is a big obstacle for combating corruption. It is difficult to pick just one explanation due to the diversity of the causes but a plausible explanation is that causes of corruption lies in the political structure of the country. The non-transparent and weak state institutions and unaccountable law enforcement bodies, highly persistent of clientelistic networks and patronage are the main factors that contribute to maintenance of corruption.

7. Conclusion

The study has attempted to understand and find some explanations to prevalence of corruption in Afghanistan by applying the analytical framework used in the paper. The theories applied in the thesis included formal institution in terms of political system and informal institutions consisted of clientelism, patronage and neo-patrimonialism. With help of previous research and the analytical framework and the existing research on corruption has helped me to explain my research problem and purpose of the paper, namely to explain corruption in Afghanistan. The result shows that Afghanistan’s political system, lacks of effective formal state institutions, lacks of rule of law and unaccountable law enforcement bodies that are considered to enhance corruption. In addition, Afghanistan is not a mature democracy and according to the theory that corruption increases in new democracies to a point and then decline when democracies are consolidated, is observable in the sense that corruption is very high. In the case of Afghanistan, the country struggling through its democratization process and the country is at the bottom of corruption perception index and there is no sign of decline of corruption. It would be interesting to see this development in coming 5-10 years, if corruption will decline or not depending on consolidation of democracy in Afghanistan. The afghan state is a mix of poor formal institutions and a type of neo-patrimonial state with informal institutions that has relied on patron-client relationships and clientelistic networks to provide services in exchange of political support or other benefits. The political elite with local power brokers and warlords influence the policies of the government for their own benefits and are unwilling to tackle the issue of corruption since they are involved in corruption itself. By combination of theories, both formal and informal
institutions, the study provides a more comprehensive contribution to the research literature with hopefully more knowledge and explanations of corruption in Afghanistan. The author would suggest further study regarding Afghanistan’s relation to its foreign patron and explore in deep how external actors have hampered the economic development by providing aid.

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