

Application of Good Governance for Implementing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals: SDG Goal#16 in Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

This research paper is based on the thesis that analyzed the application of good governance composing accountability, transparency, predictability, participation, and the rule of law. The study applied a qualitative research methodology by using documentary research methods that the secondary data is collected from various documents, such as academic books, research reports and papers, review articles and newspapers, official reports of governments, non-governments and international organizations. This data sources were used to analyze governance opportunities and threats in Afghanistan in light of SDG goal#16. The researcher analyzed all collected data by content analysis, logical analysis, and comparative analysis, for presenting research's conclusion, discussion and recommendations. The results of this research found that the application of good governance is depended on the effective implementation process of United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals: SDG goal#16 that relied on process of strong institutions, good governance and anti-corruption, sustainable peace and justice, rule of law and human rights, as well as the process of democracy and foreign interference in Afghanistan. The auteur recommends that (1) to solve corruption problems, the Afghan government shall mobilize funds for training Afghan public and private sectors' personnel skills on the application of good governance for implementing the UN-SDGs#16 to fight against corruption; (2) to strengthen good governance, Afghanistan shall cooperate closely with all stakeholders to implement the effective application of best practices for the implementation of the UN-SDGs, especially Goal#16; (3) to achieve sustainable peace and justice, rule of law and human rights, Afghanistan shall establish and enforce Afghan strong institutions and good governance network to implement the application of best practices for implementing the UN-SDGs, especially Goal#16 efficiently and effectively; and (4) to stabilize democracy and peaceful Afghan politics, Afghanistan shall make a strong effort to prevent interference of foreign powers in its internal affairs according the United Nations Charter in order to implement the UN-SDGs, especially Goal#16 progressively.

Keywords: Application, Good Governance, United Nations Development Goals, SDG Goal#16, Afghanistan

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is the common goal of humankind and is necessary to achieve human well-being. In 2015, 193 countries around the world passed the “Transforming Our World: The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit and proposed a set of 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and 169 targets to guide international development, specifically with regard to society, the economy, and the environment. This is the inheritance of the agenda of the new millennium. The 17 goals revolve around themes that are closely related to human prosperity, such as poverty, equality, hunger, climate change, resources, and the environment (Stafford-Smith and others, 2017). The new agenda calls on all countries to take action now and work toward achieving the 17 SDGs in the next 15 years. While the SDGs are intended to be achieved on a global scale, their action implementation depends on the level at which countries prioritize them, and on how sustainability issues compete with a country’s other challenges. As a member state of the United Nations, Afghanistan has to implement the UN-SDGs, especially Goal#16 by the application of good governance effectively.

The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs) have been a way for international community to engage every member state to work for its betterment. Analyzing good governance opportunities and threats in Afghanistan through UN-SDGs: Goal#16 “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels” will be essential to address the governance institution in light of international standards. As one of the active UN member states and a country in transition and developing phase, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan endorsed the UN-SDGs, in the UN Summit which was attended by the leader of Afghanistan, H.E. Abdullah Abdullah, in September 2015, and afterward, Afghan government has taken some concrete steps to affirm its commitment to attaining the SDGs targets through the implementation process of UN-SDGs Goal#16.

At a worldwide meeting in Kabul in July 2010, the Afghan governance vowed to embrace, with help from unfamiliar contributors, “primary change to make a compelling, responsible, and straightforward governance that can convey administrations to the populace and protect public interests” and “to fortify every one of the three parts of the public authority and to build up the established balanced governance that ensure and implement resident rights and obligations” (Jackson, 2014). Good governance is the activity of public administration and continuous process of state authority over the populace it oversees. While good governance in the created world is the unchallenged providers of administration to their nearby networks, this has not been the case generally in Afghanistan (Shawn, 2014). Here one finds satisfactory neighborhood administration without formal establishments. Likewise, Douglas Saltmarshe and Abhilash Medhi characterize administration as “the qualities, standards, and shows that distinctive social, political, and authoritative groupings apply to meet their organizational objectives, alongside the association among them” and note that administration “identifies with casual practices, religion, and the activity of common society just as formal governance (Lamb, 2012)”. As Afghanistan begins the process of adopting and implementing the UN-SDGs, it time to learn and share knowledge on modes of implementation and roles of various stakeholders in the process. Each country involved in the SDG programme will adopt SDGs according to their contexts, their needs, and their resources. Despite these differences, countries can learn from one another to improve their own implementation process.

For years, emerging nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America, collectively known as “Third World”, were targets of weak administration resulting in a major decline in their developmental status Afghanistan is; no oddity the majority of Afghanistan's government based authorized institutions are completely reliant on government choices and operate through an ineffective judiciary framework. Unlike many certain growing states in Asia Afghanistan’s governance is not based on accountability and transparency, denying people the participation right to challenge the existing administration. Corruption is at an all-time high inside the Afghan government’s party that makes decisions. As a result, the country lacks the effective capacity to take important choices in a social responsibility manner. Army actions in Afghanistan have been reported to have the upper hand in several situations, especially during times of emergency weakening the administration's deep stabilization. Corruption and a lack of accountability and transparency in Afghan government are significant obstructed to the effective implementation of UN-SDGs in Afghanistan. More improved good governance system is Afghanistan’s main opportunity for greater economic growth the visible perception of Western legal institutions on post-2001 constitutional change efforts to close the distance among change and execution prospects.

As Afghanistan was ranked at the bottom of the Global Peace Index, and has 54.5% of its population living below the national poverty line, Afghan government have to work hard in exploring some of the treat and challenges faced in implementing the UN-SDGs. Five years on from their initial implementation, questions are being raised about the applicability of the UN-SDGs in places of extreme poverty and political conflicts in Afghanistan. In the coming months, Afghanaid will be sharing its experiences implementing various UN’s SDGs in one of the most challenging parts of the world (Afghanaid, 2020). The main purpose of this research is to examine what extent and how successful application of good governance for implementing the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs), especially Goal#16 in Afghanistan. The interconnection between the effective application of good governance and the implementation of UN-SDGs: Goal#16 is the subject of this research. Effective good governance has a significant impact on sustainable development of Afghan nations where there is significant institutional instability as a result of ongoing civil disputes in democratic process and foreign interferences of great powers.

Research Objectives

1. To study concepts and theories of good governance and sustainable development leading to the launching of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs);
2. To analyze the application process of good governance for implementing the UN-SDGs, especially Goal#16 in Afghanistan;
3. To recommend some practical measures for the successful application of good governance practices for implementing the UN SDGs: Goal #16 in Afghanistan.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research applies a qualitative research by using documentary research methods. The secondary data is collected from various documents, such as academic books, research reports and papers, review articles and newspapers, official reports of governments and international organizations. This data sources shall be used to analyze governance opportunities threats and opportunities in Afghanistan in light of SDG goal number sixteen.

The researcher analyzes all collected data by using content analysis, logical analysis, and comparative analysis, in order to make the research's conclusion, discussion and recommendations.

Conceptual Framework

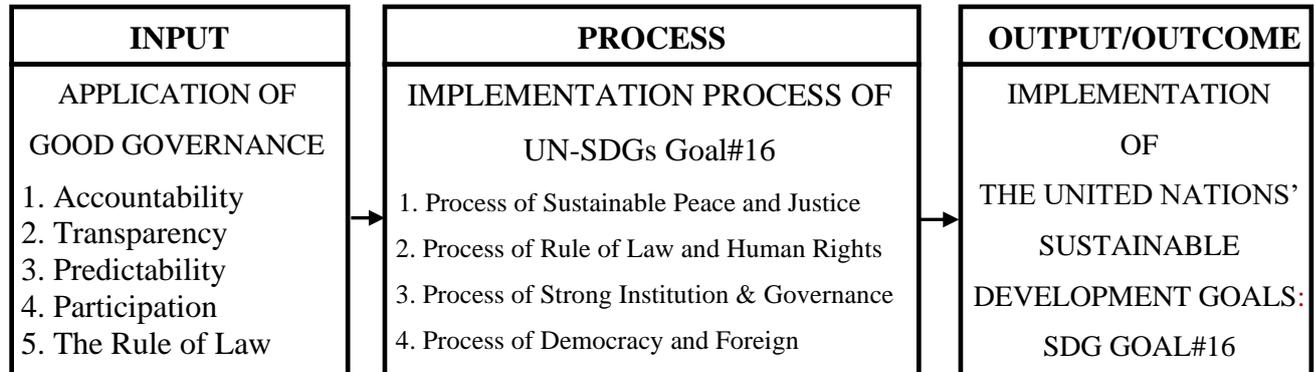


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Research

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research found that the application of good governance is depended on the effective implementation process of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs): SDG goal#16 that relied on the process of strong institutions, good governance and anti-corruption, sustainable peace and justice, rule of law and human rights, as well as the process of democracy and foreign interference in Afghanistan. There are numerous challenges, opportunities and possibilities inherent in establishing an effective Afghan government. Afghanistan's good governance, according to an assessment of the country's administration during the last decade, has been in ruins since the Taliban were expelled from power and with Taliban return in power again. It is significant to analyze the good governance and structures of strong institutions as per the UN-SDGs, especially Goal #16. The Interim Administration in Afghanistan failed to meet the good governance's objectives and components of the Bonn Conference on Effective Management. They had to start from scratch since they lacked the skills and ability necessary to successfully govern an administration of good governance for implementing the UN-SDGs, especially Goal #16. Despite their lack of prior experience and willingness to lead peacefully, only a few well-educated technocrats can be promoted to senior positions in the Afghan administration. As a result, individuals with a direct or indirect link with military leaders had a considerable influence on the lower administration and corruptive bureaucracy in general.

Corruption has increased significantly as a result of foreign interference backing and resources being controlled by those who lack openness, transparency, accountability and people participation. Civilians were and still are fearful of the country's impending democratic transition and the formation of an effective democratic administration in the shape of a constitutional monarchy. This adds another layer of complexity to the matter. As a result, the government's moral and legal reputation has suffered, impairing its ability to rule Afghanistan by the process of democracy under the rule of law. The Interim Administration (06/2002–07/2004) and the Transitional Government (06/2002-07/2004) shared many of the characteristics listed below. Similarly, the same political parties were given power in a

similar fashion, and that this process of democracy was instrumental in the establishment of these organizations at all levels. Between January 2002 and June 2004, two significant international conferences, the Tokyo Conference in January 2002 and the Berlin Conference in June 2004, both focused on Afghanistan's progress, reconstruction, and democratization. Afghanistan's financial and administrative sectors, as highlighted at both summits, appear to be a significant impediment to the development of a legitimate administration. Both remarks emphasized the critical nature of foreign assistance to the country's public administration and democracy, as well as the critical nature of international assistance to Afghanistan's progress (Tokyo Declaration, 2002: 6 & Berlin Declaration 2004: 3).

Despite worldwide attention, the Transitional Government has been unable to establish a credible system of good governance or plan to combat corruption in the near future. Due to the articles' publication in Afghanistan, the concept of good government had a limited impact. Additionally, there has been an upsurge in corruption and organized crime. According to Jean Mazurelle, no other country in the world is more adversely affected by corruption and organized crime than Afghanistan. International funds have been squandered and made ineffective as a result of corruption. Drug trafficking has historically been associated with corruption, which has resulted in an increase in recent years in the linkages between corrupt politicians and criminal organizations. The drug cartels bribed government officials to ensure their own safety and avoid prosecution. The transitional administration's most notable achievement was the adoption of a new constitution in January 2004 that placed a premium on the establishment of an elected government in Afghanistan. The constitution requires a democratic and rule of law system, yet it has been difficult to remove corrupt political leaders and civil servant officers, who have risen to prominence in Afghanistan's central and provincial governments. The absence of educated and competent administrative elite, growing corruption, and nomination of former war leaders to high-ranking government positions exacerbated the difficulties faced by the Afghan administration during this period. The 2004 and 2005 presidential and congressional elections resulted in the establishment of the country's first democratically elected administration in nearly three decades.

In 2005, as allegedly corrupt election officials and warlords strengthened their influence, a new style of government came under attack (BBC, 2005). Since the new government took office, a number of shortcomings in public administration and leadership have come to light. As a result, Afghanistan's corruption has reached historic proportions. In light of this, international gatherings on Afghanistan placed a premium on its significance. At a Paris Conference on Democracy in Afghanistan, donor countries' willingness to support a long-term, stable democracy in Afghanistan must be acknowledged. Afghanistan's future ability to demonstrate accountability and transparency in government operations will be a requirement for receiving additional assistance, according to the conference declaration. Since then, little has changed, other for a presidential pronouncement condemning corruption. According to analysts, the 2008 "Afghanistan National Development Strategy" was the period's most significant achievement in the area of good governance. The implementation of UN-SDGs: goal#16 in this research will place a premium on poverty alleviation by the process of strong institution and good governance in Afghanistan. Its success will be determined by the process of rule of law, democracy, human rights, law and order, as well as public safety. As part of this strategy, experts from Afghanistan and throughout the world will monitor closely the situation in Afghanistan and give constructive recommendations to the Afghan government. Implementing the UN-SDGs, especially goal#16 has proven difficult, despite the fact that the Afghan government profits from it. Certain government officials were unable to recognize

the need of comprehending a plethora of critical strategic issues at all levels of Afghan government and institutions due to corruption. Although anti-corruption organizations have been established in Afghanistan, no high-ranking officials has been prosecuted or convicted for their wrongdoings to date. The Afghan government was unable to carry out its duties and responsibilities efficiently as a result of insufficient communication and coordination among Afghan three key institutions of government in executive, legislative, and judicial powers.

Due to the concentration of administrative authority in the Afghan government, it appears as though other institutions like as the legislature, judiciary, and civil society are only symbolic. Apart from how money is spent and how it is spent, numerous other aspects of government operations remain opaque. Even in a country with a constitution and cultural traditions that encourage democracy and free expression, authoritarianism endures. The first step towards determining what went wrong is to establish national and international standards for effective good governance. To determine what went wrong, we must go through each and every possible cause in order. A significant amount of storage space is at stake in this case. The overwhelming majority of international organizations and strong institutions regard education and training, as well as ensuring access to knowledge, as the most critical components of a country's sustainable development and prosperity. Afghanistan's public sector, suffers severely from shortage of highly qualified, educated, and technologically savvy government's officers. In the workplace management of Afghan government, the system of nepotism has trumped meritocracy at central and local administration. Only qualified and deserving persons who are not affiliated with management organizations or political leaders are eligible to engage in the government system under these ways, as outlined in the Constitution. Increased corruption and inefficiency in Afghanistan's governmental sector are a result of nepotism. Afghanistan is ranked 173rd out of 178 countries on the Human Development Index, lagging far behind the rest of Asia, Africa and its neighboring countries.

The standard of good governance administration is decided by strengthening the public's expression and addressing their desires A strong administration is one that follows Healey and Robinson's definition of strong administration which is as follows: "It denotes an elevated degree of organizational success in policy planning and implementation notably in the execution of monetary strategy and its connection to development, prosperity, and public welfare. Responsibility, accountability, transparency, predictability, participation, and the rule of law are all aspects of strong institution of good governance It does not always mean a value judgment, such as a healthy regard for constitutional and democratic rights while good governance is also a precondition for democratic validation the involvement of governance in deciding a country's growth is important, since a civilized country is one that meets current needs without jeopardizing upcoming generation access to capital. The Administrative Reform Committee, established by presidential decree, has failed to achieve its stated objective of growing public sector and strengthening public administration in Afghanistan. To overcome this stumbling barrier, extensive capacity building measures are required. Individuals, organizations, and communities of all sizes can benefit from a strategy known as "capacity building". There must be more access to talent and resources to enable people at all levels of society to carry out their obligations, overcome hurdles, and accomplish goals, among other things. A commission for administrative reform in Afghanistan must be established with well-educated, knowledgeable, and professional staff to recruit and personnel who are qualified and deserving of positions within Afghan government institutions, as defined by the commission. Improved application and interviewing procedures should be adopted to ensure that all qualified job applicants receive equal treatment. An

organization's long-term viability and activity are ensured when its administrative experiences are broadened to encompass persons and groups from diverse social, political, and cultural backgrounds. Employers should make recruiting decisions without regard for a candidate's gender, ethnic origin, religious affiliation, or any other non-job-related part of their identity. There is a clear association between the government's ability to stay current with technological advancements and its personnel' abilities and talents. Afghan workers must have the opportunity to acquire new skills and broaden their knowledge base in order to confront new challenges and achieve their goals and career path.

The Commission for Administrative Reforms in Afghanistan (ACAR) was established in May 2005 with assistance from the United Nations Development Program and other donors. The fundamental objectives of this endeavor are to strengthen Afghanistan's public sector leadership and management capabilities, as well as the overall quality of government services supplied by the country. Since the project began six years ago, about 600 Afghan public service employees have received training in international management and administration standards, as well as a better understanding of contemporary public service practices. Despite the fact that these initiatives have garnered considerable attention, they fall short of addressing the primary issue. Despite the Afghan and foreign governments' best efforts, Afghanistan's capacity-building programs confront huge difficulties as a result of the country's lack of a clear national plan and long-term objectives, according to the World Bank. The Afghan government and international capacity-building organizations operating in Afghanistan, for example, lack a long-term vision for the Afghan government and public sector. We already know that the Afghan administration will fail if it lacks a clear vision for the future. While establishing a long-term strategic vision for Afghanistan's public sector, Afghan society and donors must also consider a number of additional aspects. Many people use the term "corruption" to shift attention away from more serious issues, such as the promotion of democratic principles.

Numerous factors contribute to Afghanistan's corruption, including the difficulty and slowness with which laws and justice process are implemented ineffectively, lack of accountable bureaucracy, people' ignorance of their individual rights, limited access to government information, and lack of social accountability. According to Transparency International, bribery of government officials was documented in Afghanistan in 2009. Bribes totaled between \$650 million and \$1 billion, according to the enquiry. According to Payame-e-Aftab, the ex-Afghan Attorney General has been presented with 265 cases of corruption. Previously, similar events involving senior government officials occurred. According to insiders' sources, there have been no high-level corruption trials in Afghanistan in the recent decade. According to Transparency International, Afghanistan is now the world's most corrupt country. According to an Afghan official publication, Payame-e-Aftab, as many as one in seven Afghans paid bribes in 2010. Corruption substantially impairs Afghanistan's ability to run its government efficiently. Afghanistan's government must first increase and promote transparency throughout the country in order to succeed. To ensure transparency and honesty, the public and the media must have access to all financial information and budgeting techniques. To carry out this plan effectively, public employees and management must fully comprehend the concepts of transparency and anti-corruption.

To be successful UN-SDGs#Goal16 implementation, an individual and Afghan people must receive specialized education and training in their area of competence. They will eventually understand that serving the public is more vital than serving the government. As a result, they

are entirely responsible for their actions and the services they deliver to their clients. When Parliament passes a law requiring the release of information and the transparency of government institutions, it will empower citizens and public sector employees to have a greater say in the decision-making and project implementation processes of their respective jurisdictions. When decision-making methods are simple to comprehend and information is easily available to individuals who participate, government programs and objectives become second nature. As control units develop the capability to monitor and evaluate projects on a more frequent basis, the need for enhanced transparency will arise. Afghan officials must be held more accountable to their constituents under the country's new constitutional framework. Governments at all levels, regardless of political party affiliation, must be held accountable to the people they serve and the units under their command. According to the Afghan Constitution, the Afghan government is expected to carry out a variety of transparency, accountability and responsibilities. When it comes to a country's ability to maintain good governance, there might be considerable disparities in how well its constitution and other laws are enforced effectively.

The rule of law ensures that marginalized groups and visible minorities have their rights safeguarded as a result of all persons, regardless of their position, receiving equal treatment under the law. To establish a government founded on the rule of law, an impartial police force and an independent court are required. Three actions must be taken in Afghanistan in order to establish a rule of law-based administration. They include the following: Afghan courts must be reevaluated and, to some extent, reformed in order to better serve the Afghan people. Promoting legal education and enforcing the government's zero-tolerance stance against corruption are critical components of the battle against corruption in the courts and judiciary. Expanding access to justice entails, among other things, making the courts more accessible to people from all walks of life. It is critical to improve communication and cooperation among government departments, especially the courts, if we are to achieve our efficiency goals. To maintain the rule of law, all levels of government and non-governmental organizations must work cooperatively. To be as effective as feasible, civil society organizations and legal experts must be permitted to contribute their experience, analysis, and information throughout the legislative process. To reassure citizens that the country is controlled by a single judiciary and that the rule of law is being upheld, the administration must expand access to judicial services throughout the country. Justice is more likely to be delivered more swiftly if the judiciary is composed of independent justices who are not beholden to the government or any one political party.

The government must completely protect human dignity, human rights, citizen rights, and other constitutional values for the benefit of all citizens. Effortlessness is the most significant impediment to advancement and performance in the legal system. Afghan judicial system may be bolstered in two ways: by expanding the lawyer pool and reorganizing the courts. The burden of government red tape reduction is huge. They have made it abundantly clear that Afghan established and conservative elite is opposed to any form of political reform. Modernism and traditionalism are not mutually exclusive, contrary to popular belief. Throughout Afghan history, those who value tradition and preserving the status quo have consistently prevailed over those who do not. For the majority of the twentieth century, it was the conservative movement that seized control of the government and the nation's educational institutions. Throughout the 1920s, religious organizations deemed the reforms to be anti-Islamic, necessitating their suspension. This resulted in the monarchy's abdication. It is a practice that dates all the way back to the 1960s, long before the Taliban were deposed,

and has persisted following their defeat in 2001 at the hands of religious and ideological militants. Afghanistan's reform initiatives have always been risky due to the country's uncertain political position at the time of reform. Those opposed to reform have reaped the benefits of Afghanistan's shortage of skilled experts and technologically advanced staff.

The leaders of this group place a higher premium on their political, racial, and religious allegiances than on their professional accomplishments and successes. This indicates that any attempt to reform the Afghan public sector will be difficult to accomplish and sustain due to the existing administrative and managerial culture. At the moment, the emphasis is shifting away from service provision and towards enforcing government control over the populace. Afghanistan's reform efforts will be evaluated in accordance with international standards by the Commission for Administrative Reform (ACAR), as government-sponsored organization. According to a recent study conducted by the ACAR, the organization was able to implement for the first time Afghan human resource management norms and principles. For example, government employment systems employed teachers, while the vast majority of high-ranking officials were appointed under the government's direction. Additionally, it's worth noting that the ACAR has significantly improved in each of these areas over the last decade. Despite ACAR's best efforts, the Afghan people's quest for high-quality services faces significant obstacles. At the highest levels of government in Afghanistan, discrimination is heavily influenced by political and ethnic ideology. As a result, Afghanistan's public sector is in desperate need of change. A functional government is required under the Afghan constitution, which also mandates additional reforms. Administrative changes in Afghanistan must attempt to build a government free of political or ethnic pressures, according to the Afghan National Establishment Strategy and the Civil Service Employees Law.

According to Afghan law, the following adjustments must be made to ensure compliance with the Afghan constitution and other laws: The sole criterion for determining a person's place of employment should be professional competence. At the moment, changes to the content you've supplied are not possible. Reforms must be implemented at all levels of government, including the federal, state, and municipal. To conclude, Afghanistan has made efforts to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, especially goal#16, but it is significant to say that instability within political structures prevented the targets to be achieved. Now, with Taliban in power again, the good governance of Afghanistan has become more significant than ever. As per the UN-SDGs of Goal#16, good governance indicators need to be incorporated and rule of law needs to be established with democracy. This research tries to suggest few mechanisms through which corruption, rule of law, accountability and transparency can be attained by incorporating the suggested solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recommendations from This Research

- (1) To solve corruption problems, this research recommends that the Afghan government shall mobilize funds for training Afghan public and private sectors' personnel skills on the application of good governance for implementing the UN-SDGs#16 to fight against corruption.
- (2) To strengthen good governance, this research recommends that Afghanistan shall cooperate closely with all stakeholders to implement the effective application of best practices for the implementation of the UN-SDGs, especially Goal#16.

(3) To achieve sustainable peace and justice, rule of law and human rights, Afghanistan shall establish and enforce Afghan strong institutions and good governance network linking all sectors concerned to implement the application of best practices for the implementation of the UN-SDGs, especially Goal#16 efficiently and effectively.

(4) To stabilize democracy and peaceful Afghan politics, Afghanistan shall make a strong effort to prevent interference of foreign powers in its internal affairs according the United Nations Charter in order to implement the UN-SDGs, especially Goal#16 progressively.

2. Recommendations for Future Research

(1) The author would like to recommend doing a further research on the application of good governance for implementing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs) under the new government of Taliban, establishing after the complete withdrawal of the U.S. troupes from Afghanistan on 30 August 2021.

(2) The author wish to recommend conducting a further comparative research between the old government and the new Taliban government on the application of good governance for implementing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs) after the complete withdrawal of the U.S. troupes from Afghanistan on 30 August 2021.

(3) The author would like to recommend doing a further quantitative research on the application of good governance for implementing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs): key success indicators of SDG goal#16 in Afghanistan.

(4) The author wish to recommend conducting a further evaluation research on the application of good governance for implementing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs) of the old government and the new Taliban government after the complete withdrawal of the U.S. troupes from Afghanistan on 30 August 2021.

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