

Evaluating the Role of Norwegian Aid in Afghan Economic Development: SWOT analysis and the role of actors

Avaliando o papel da ajuda norueguesa no desenvolvimento econômico afegão: análise
SWOT e o papel dos atores

Evaluación del papel de la ayuda noruega en el desarrollo económico afgano: análisis FODA
y el papel de los actores

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Abstract: Afghanistan's current reliance and dependency on foreign aid is not only due to the past three to four decades of war and civil dissension but came about even before the era of conflict. Since the fall of the Taliban regime in December 2001, Afghanistan has become an engaging country in the eyes of the international community and since then has become one of the largest recipients of foreign aid. The international community has pledged a huge amount of assistance for the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan. The main aim of this research paper is to attempt evaluating policy developments in Norwegian assistance to Afghanistan for economic and social development by employing SWOT analysis, understand the role of key actors involved in driving policy developments, and international agreements related to Norwegian aid assistance to Afghanistan. In so doing, the major research method employed is document analysis of existing research and policy papers related to the topic. This policy analysis is grounded on the stages approach to the policy process (Howlett, Ramesh & Perl, 2009), focusing specifically on the evaluation stage of policymaking. The research finds, despite certain weaknesses, the Norwegian government to be an effective actor in promoting foreign aid to Afghanistan through the means of effective coordination of assistance and reconstruction efforts.

Keywords: Norway's foreign aid policy; Afghanistan development; SWOT analysis; policy evaluation; the stages approach to policymaking

Resumo: A atual confiança e dependência do Afeganistão da ajuda estrangeira não se deve apenas às últimas três a quatro décadas de guerra e dissensão civil, mas ocorreu antes mesmo da era do conflito. Desde a queda do regime talibã em dezembro de 2001, o Afeganistão se tornou um país envolvente aos olhos da comunidade internacional e desde então se tornou um dos maiores beneficiários de ajuda externa. A comunidade internacional prometeu uma enorme quantidade de assistência para a reconstrução e desenvolvimento do Afeganistão. O principal objetivo deste trabalho de pesquisa é tentar avaliar o desenvolvimento de políticas na assistência norueguesa ao Afeganistão para o desenvolvimento econômico e social, empregando análises SWOT; entender o papel dos principais atores envolvidos na condução de desenvolvimentos de políticas e acordos internacionais relacionados à assistência norueguesa ao Afeganistão. Ao fazer isso, o principal método de pesquisa empregado é a análise de documentos de pesquisas e documentos de políticas existentes relacionados ao tópico. Essa análise de política baseia-se na abordagem de estágios do processo político (Howlett, Ramesh & Perl, 2009), concentrando-se especificamente no estágio de avaliação de políticas. A pesquisa constata, apesar de certas fraquezas, que o governo norueguês é um ator eficaz na promoção da ajuda externa ao Afeganistão por meio de uma coordenação eficaz dos esforços de assistência e reconstrução.

Palavras-chave: Política de ajuda externa da Noruega, Desenvolvimento do Afeganistão, Análise SWOT, avaliação de políticas, as etapas da formulação de políticas.

Resumen: La actual confianza y dependencia de Afganistán de la ayuda exterior no se debe solo a las últimas tres o cuatro décadas de guerra y conflictos civiles, sino que se produjo incluso antes de la era del conflicto. Desde la caída del régimen talibán en diciembre de 2001, Afganistán se ha convertido en un país atractivo a los ojos de la comunidad internacional y desde entonces se ha convertido en uno de los mayores beneficiarios de la ayuda exterior. La comunidad internacional ha prometido una enorme cantidad de asistencia para la reconstrucción y el desarrollo de Afganistán. El objetivo principal de este trabajo de investigación es tratar de evaluar el desarrollo de políticas en la asistencia noruega a Afganistán para el desarrollo económico y social, utilizando análisis FODA; Comprender el papel de los principales actores involucrados en el desarrollo de políticas y acuerdos internacionales relacionados con la asistencia noruega a Afganistán. Al hacerlo, el método de investigación principal empleado es el análisis de documentos de investigación existentes y documentos de política relacionados con el tema. Este análisis de políticas se basa en el enfoque por etapas del proceso político (Howlett, Ramesh y Perl, 2009), centrándose específicamente en la etapa de evaluación de políticas. La encuesta revela, a pesar de ciertas debilidades, que el gobierno noruego es un actor eficaz en la promoción de la ayuda exterior a Afganistán a través de la coordinación efectiva de los esfuerzos de ayuda y reconstrucción.

Palabras clave: Política de ayuda exterior de Noruega, Desarrollo de Afganistán, Análisis FODA, evaluación de políticas, etapas de formulación de políticas.

INTRODUÇÃO

In December 2001, after the withdrawal of the Taliban, the Bonn Agreement, after thirty years of war, defined the arrangements for democratic transition in Afghanistan. It was a

political agreement that was rapidly creating a vacuum due to the Taliban's official withdrawal. The agreement allowed the establishment of the International Security Assistance Fund (ISAF) to monitor security in Afghanistan. The Afghan Constitutional Commission was also established in Bonn to create a new constitution in consultation with the people. It was not an ordinary peace agreement, in which all the details were intensely negotiated by all the heroes of the conflict over a long period of time, and therefore did not resolve the roots of the conflict.

Since early 2002, after the Bonn Agreement, there has been a lot of work with a flood of new agencies that started humanitarian and reconstruction projects. The Tokyo conference was held in that same year and donors began their duties. The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) and the Law and Commitment for Law and Enforcement (LOTFA) have been created to transfer funds to the transitional government and to create new large-scale projects. In a hurry to carry out new projects and activities, all this was done in the absence of a clear development policy framework, so that there was little integration in international assistance.

Following the Bonn Agreement, donors and many development partners were placed on the government agenda. The seemingly exciting positivity about ending the military conflict and suffering was a kind of denial of human needs that led to the closure of the OCHA and the reduction of the human capacity of the United Nations. Within the Afghan government, the finance minister has criticized the domination of United Nations organizations and non-governmental organizations, which have long been the main providers of services in rural areas, and continue their attempts to control major activities in the country. Therefore, while it was definitely a debate to move to a reconstruction and development program, its speed was based on assumptions that influenced the effect of humanitarian sounding.

The empirical problem this paper attempts to address is to analyze Afghan foreign policy through the role of actors as applied to a specific stage of policymaking, e.g. policy evaluation. Indeed, the existing literature to date has failed to do so. To begin with, Massie,

Boucher & Roussel (2010) analyze Canada's Afghan foreign policy through the prism of the role of a specific sub-national actor, i.e. Quebec, in assessing its influence on Canada's policy without contracting its role vis-à-vis other actors. Ghosh & Panda (1983) look at India's Afghan foreign policy through the lenses of international relations theory, i.e. the Soviet Union's influence on India's policy. In a somewhat similar vein, Weinbaum & Harder (2008) explore Pakistan's Afghan contradictory foreign policy with a focus on wider implications for national identity and social cohesion through the prism of strategic partnership with the United States. Similarly, both Khan (2010) and Usman (2008) look at Pakistan's Afghan foreign policy through their relationship with India.

Thus, the key research question this paper attempts to address is the following: who are the major actors that play a role in the evaluation of Norway's foreign policy developments in Afghanistan? In so doing, it employs the SWOT analysis as a research tool.

Theory

An overview of the stages approach to policy analysis

The analysis of public policy processes through the stages approach, its certain shortcomings notwithstanding (see e.g. Sabatier 1991), was introduced by Laswell (1956) and became increasingly popular among scholars throughout the 1970s (e.g. Jones 1970, Dye 1972, Anderson 1975, Jenkins 1978, May and Wildavsky 1978) that continues to be used at present, both among scholars (e.g. Kulaç & Özgür 2017; Howlett, Ramesh & Perl 2009) and policy makers (OECD 2017, Wu 2009). According to the stages approach to analysis, the policy process is essentially viewed as a progressive cycle (Gosling 2004, p. 92, as in Kulaç & Özgür 2017). Initially including seven stages of the policy process (as in Laswell 1956), the stages model eventually evolved into five major stages (as in pic. 1 below) – agenda-setting, policy

formulation, decision-making, policy implementation, and policy evaluation (e.g. Howlett, Ramesh & Perl 2009).

Picture 1 The classical sequence of stages of the policy process



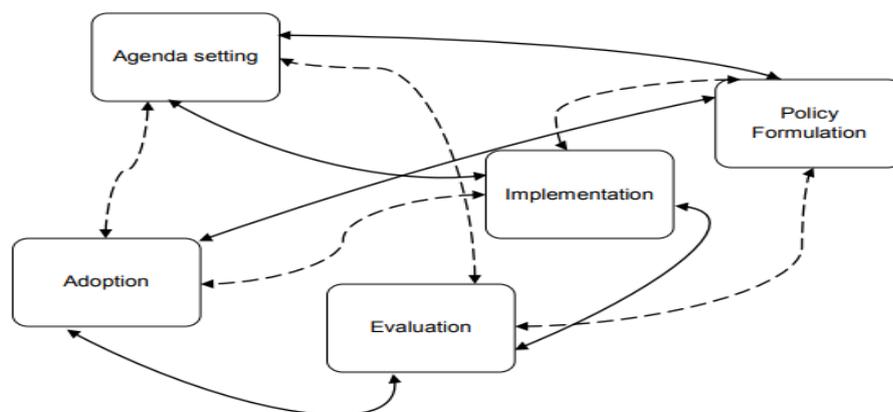
Source: adapted from Howlett, Ramesh & Perl (2009)

Most public policy research that employs the stages approach to analysis tends to look into a specific stage of the process, e.g. either agenda-setting (e.g. Dyussenov 2019, Howlett 1998, Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2010, Madani 2011), policy formulation (e.g. Howlett, Mukherjee & Woo 2015, Howlett & Rayner 2013, Sidney 2017, Mardiyanta 2013), decision-making (e.g. Teisman 2010, Knecht & Weatherford 2006), policy implementation (e.g. Kuzairi et al. 2018, Grindle 2017, Smith 1973), or evaluation (e.g. Vedung 2017, McConnell 2010). A few existing studies attempt to either analyze a sequence from agenda-setting to implementation stages of the policy process (e.g. Pelletier et al. 2011, Gneiting 2015), or analyze agenda setting and evaluation (e.g. Kim, Scheufele & Shanahan 2002). Pelletier et al. (2011) look at undernutrition policy through agenda-setting, policy formulation and implementation stages. Gneiting (2015) analyzes tobacco control policy from global agenda-setting to nation-level

implementation emphasizing the role of global health networks in driving the agenda onto national implementation effectiveness. Finally, Kim, Scheufele & Shanahan (2002) analyze a connection between issue prominence emphasized by media and perception of issue attributes by the public, and found that the stronger the media emphasis on issue attributes, the higher the likelihood that media can tell the public "how to think about" an issue as well as "what to think about" [Abstract].

Primary reasons explaining why the majority of policy research focus on a single stage include a lack of causal links between stages (Sabatier 1991, Gültekin 2014) though there might be certain correlation based on temporal interconnectedness, a rather generic description of policy processes (hence the tendency among scholars to focus on a specific stage in their research), and an oversimplification of links between stages and actors (Gültekin 2014). It is therefore unsurprising that recent scholars (e.g. Benoit 2013) have increasingly appreciated the relevance of a turbulent sequence of stages in policymaking processes (as in pic. 2) as opposed to a rather straightforward linear stage flow (pic. 1) according to Howlett, Ramesh & Perl (2009).

Picture 2 The turbulent flow of stages in policymaking



Source: Benoit 2013 (p. 2)

This ‘improved’ model based on the turbulent flow of stages takes into account the realistic complexity of interlinks between stages and actors. Under the turbulent flow model, the term ‘policy network’ refers to government-affiliated actors and those stakeholders involved in a policy area who possess substantial and relevant expertise. Such networks are expected to exert major influence on subsequent policy implementation (Benoit 2013).

A brief analysis of research attention to each stage of policymaking

There seems to be a consensus among policy scholars overall that among the major stages of policymaking, it is the agenda-setting stage that appears better investigated as compared to other stages (Howlett, Ramesh & Perl 2009). It is interesting to analyze the relative popularity of each stage among modern public policy and administration scholars as identified through the number of publications with some of the top journals in the field over the last five years (2014-2019). For this purpose, Scimago institutional rankings were employed (Scimago 2019) as it is a widely known journal ranking database that allows classifying a range of academic journals, depending on a specific subject area, into four quartiles with Q1 being the highest ranked. To obtain a rough sense of high-quality scholarly popularity of each stage, the first top five journals ranked in the subject category of ‘public administration’ had been selected: Administrative science quarterly, Journal of public administration research and theory, Public administration review, International public management journal, and the Journal of policy analysis and management (Table 1).

Table 1 Popularity of policy process stages in some of high-ranked journals (2014-2019)

	Agenda-setting	Formulation	Decision-making	Implementation	Evaluation
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Administrative science quarterly	42	43	196	110	140
Journal of public administration research and theory	159	77	174	251	230
Public administration review	178	128	598	509	387
International public management journal	50	68	178	145	141
Journal of policy analysis and management	30	33	239	242	230

Source: The author's own analysis

As this tentative litmus-test analysis suggests, the first two stages of the classical stages model – agenda-setting and policy formulation – tend to receive far less attention among modern scholars who publish in highly ranked journals as compared to the other three stages. Not only does this support an earlier observation that agenda-setting seems better investigated (and thus reached scholarly maturity supported with lower numbers of relevant publications) than other stages (as in Howlett, Ramesh & Perl 2009), but interestingly the policy formulation stage likewise appears to receive less attention.

Among the other three stages that remain in focus of scholarly attention, it is policy evaluation that completes a policymaking cycle. As Howlett, Ramesh & Perl (2009) define, evaluation is “the stage of the policy process at which it is determined how a public policy has actually fared in action. It involves the evaluation of the means being employed and the objectives being served” (p. 178). As similar definition is offered by (Benoit 2013), who notes that at this stage “a policy is evaluated, to verify whether its implementation and its effects are aligned with the objectives that were explicitly or implicitly set out” (p. 3). What the above definitions primarily suggest is that if the ultimate goal is to observe a bigger picture of the

polycymaking process, attention should be given to analyzing the policy evaluation stage. Both decision-making and implementation, notwithstanding their similarly high popularity among scholars, still remain rather intermediary stages. It is the policy evaluation stage that is the major analytical focus of this paper.

The Research Method

This study seeks to employ a SWOT analysis framework for as applied to studying the role of Norwegian foreign aid in Afghanistan. The SWOT model, while initially developed for business applications, has witnessed further proliferation across other fields, including public policy – this covers a wide range of areas, such as energy policy in Japan, Korea and Taiwan (Chen, Kim & Yamaguchi 2014), environment impact assessment in India (Paliwal 2006), EU cluster policy (Interreg Europe 2017), EU rural development (Knierim & Nowicki 2010), healthcare policy evaluation in Denmark (Christiansen 2002), development policy in Greece (Nikolaou, Ierapetritis & Tsagarakis 2011), Turkish maritime industry policy (Celik & Kandakoglu 2012), Hong Kong school evaluation policy (Yeung 2012), farming policy in an Indonesian local setting (Jusrang & Prianto 2012), Vietnamese economic policy (Dapice 2003) etc. Thus, while the framework has been mostly applied to developed nations’ context (EU, East Asia), its use across the developing world (e.g. Indonesia as in Jusrang & Prianto 2012; Vietnam as in Dapice 2003) remains limited.

As a policy evaluation tool, the SWOT framework comprises internal and external layers of assessment. The internal assessment primarily seeks to demonstrate major strengths and weaknesses that exist within a policy area, while the external assessment aims at identifying key opportunities and threats (Matthews 2004, as in Chen, Kim & Yamaguchi 2014). Strengths may include resources deployable in an effort to improve performance. Weaknesses are policy shortcomings (e.g. inefficiency) which may compromise advantages, efficiency, or

sustainability. Opportunities are possible changes, often external, that are conducive to favorable development, while threats are outside factors that may present challenges (Paliwal 2006).

Main actors

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Norwegian Foreign Ministry is responsible for the formation and implementation of national foreign policy, as well as development and humanitarian policies. The reform of the aid system (2003-2004) approved the power for development cooperation from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) to the State Department in 2004, and the responsibility for the cooperation of the government and the state was transferred to the embassies.

NORAD is a department under the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After reforming the aid development policy in 2004, NORAD still remains responsible for administering small amounts of financial assistance, but its main tasks are related to consultation, and humanitarian aid is managed jointly by Oslo and Kabul. The State's Department of Homeland Security in Oslo provides around \$ 1 million a year through various organizations in an established program. The Norwegian embassy in Kabul also provides humanitarian aid that is provided by small teams and is not necessarily visible.

The Embassy of Norway in Kabul

When the Norwegian embassy in Kabul was established in 2002, it was ordered that its starting point was the fact that it was established to assist Norway in its duties as the head of the Afghanistan Support Group (NORAD 2012), which then helped to manage humanitarian assistance. Since 2005, it has been responsible for long-term development cooperation. The

reform of the assistance system (2003-2004) transferred power to development cooperation from NORAD to the MFA in 2004, and then the responsibility for government-to-government cooperation with the embassies was transferred. This has affected Kabul since 2005, as indicated by the Kabul embassy program in 2006. The embassy controls the long-term development fund with 2/3 of the budget in 2011 (NORAD, 2012). Annual reports and embassy programs in Kabul describe the organization as provided with insufficient staffing levels. In 2006, many employees' hours were spent trying to improve internal systems, documents, and quality of contract follow-ups. Just as the situation began to improve, Norway doubled its funding to Afghanistan, and much of it left the embassy without any increase in the number of staff.

The expansion of the aid program was motivated, but according to the capacity of the embassy, as was reported in the 2006 and 2007 annual reports. Work conditions were reported due to security issues and insufficient staff to manage development was reported. After increasing aid in 2008, the "Productivity Project" found that project management was rather inadequate for a large number of agreements in terms of resources, which could have implications for quality and results (Brantzæg et al. 2009, as cited in NORAD 2012).

Office of Auditor General (OAG) research on the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance showed that, in a global perspective, Norway is one of the smallest partners in terms of humanitarian efforts in the country (ibid). Furthermore, while Norway is welcomed for predictability and flexibility, the processing time of cases sometimes can be quite consuming, which results in delays in implementation and consequences for stakeholders. In Afghanistan, the situation is intensifying and the embassy easily confesses to the team that they are by no means acceptable or are in control of quality.

Other Ministries

The National Police Directorate under the Ministry of Justice has managed ODA funds for government to government twinning projects to support the Afghan national police and prison administrative systems since 2003, with funding disbursed through MFA. The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development channeled funding for Afghan refugees in Norway in 2001-2005.

Coordination of assistance efforts should be integrated into a comprehensive approach, aligning it with other foreign and security policy objectives for Norway that continues its presence in Afghanistan and is represented in the United Nations. Based on the financial structure described above, it is logical to conclude that there are coordination challenges in Norway. Defining Afghanistan's financial assistance as a foreign minister's responsibility from early on may improve facilities to address this issue within the Department of State as the central actor analysts have identified a lack of an explicit strategy for the "entire government approach" as a constraint in a comprehensive approach, including the efforts of the Department of Defense and the Justice Department as well as the Department of State. An intergovernmental association of Afghanistan should be established at the level of the Foreign Minister with the participation of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Justice and the State Department (Oslo and Kabul), in order to improve the Norwegian coordination of the comprehensive approach.

The Policy Evaluation Stage (SWOT Analysis)

Strengths

Establishing PRT for Faryab province; in 2004, Norway agreed to establish a Provincial Reconstruction Team for Faryab Province for ISAF. Initially, ISAF focused mainly around Kabul, but as it turned out that this was not enough to maintain security, Norway was part of the move to expand the UN mission to ISAF throughout Afghanistan. In the same year, long-

term development cooperation was formed with the encouragement of Afghanistan as a partner in development, making it the largest recipient of Norwegian

500 troops stationed in Afghanistan; Norwegian authorities had sent five hundred soldiers for doing better mission in Afghanistan under the direction of ISAF, these troops only were responsible to ensure better security conditions for Norwegians. Most of the time the Norwegian authorities employ these forces for reconstructions and cooperation purposes.

Most military forces had left Afghanistan by the end of 2014, with only a small group of Norwegian monitoring troops continuing to remain in Afghanistan as part of NATO agreements, and this decision has had a negative influence on the security situation in Afghanistan. This is primarily due to reduced military costs in common and due to increased support from Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) for development projects for many countries (except Norway and Sweden), and doing missions with NATO involvement.

Weaknesses

Implementing of projects without the demand of local residents or Afghan government; many development projects were designed without any recommendations of civilians or the Afghan government, which often has led to the reduced efficiency and effectiveness of project developments. This worsened situation is still prevalent today, and that is the reason why the local people are increasingly dissatisfied with Norwegian and other international aid programs.

Limited administrative capacity; while the Taliban's regime collapsed in 2001 as a result of attacks by UN military forces, at the time Afghanistan largely lacked of administrative capacity and educated labor forces that to led to miscommunication, mismanagement and most of the time misunderstanding which existed with the foreign cooperation institutions that would be needed for better implementation of reconstruction projects.

Opportunities

Providing public services; Since the beginning of 2002, following the adoption of the Bonn Agreement, there has been a significant amount of work completed, with a flood of new agencies that have started humanitarian and reconstruction projects. Norwegian development aid has been one of the most affected critical factors for standardizing residence lives and social welfare, as many Afghan local citizens were hired by Faryab Provincial Remonstrations teams (PRTs) to maintain middle-class income earnings.

Creating a modern justice system; the Norwegian Refugee Council provides free legal assistance strictly in civil cases, and in the modern judiciary system foreign legal aid has had significant impact on the training of lawyers across 34 provinces of Afghanistan. The Ministry of Justice and foreign donors worked to develop a plan to train more than a thousand of lawyers that specialize in criminal cases, while the number of defense lawyers has increased after 2001, who played a crucial role in the criminal justice system, providing accountability for how police, prosecutors and judges use the state power.

After the end of the Taliban regime, defense lawyers were not allowed to participate fully at trial involving the cases, and many local and international NGOs were increasingly involved in the modernization of the Afghan national justice system, i.e. various projects such as the Herat Legal Clinic, International Legal Foundation-Afghanistan; Humanitarian Aid for women and Children of Afghanistan; da Qanoon Ghush-tonky; American Women Support Afghanistan; Women Social Services; Legal Aid Organization of Afghanistan; Justice For All; and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and World Bank projects. Specifically, the World Bank Group and the NRC have had crucial impacts on the modern justice system of Afghanistan.

Threats

Security problems: the worsened security situation has led to generally increased challenges against the further implementation of Norwegian development projects as well as with regard to monitoring and evaluation activities. Affected areas involved places such as across Faryab, Kunduz, Baghlan and Badakshan regions. The growing uncertainty conditions have led many Afghans to considering migration as the only viable option, with many young people having been leaving the country over the last years, including migrants to Norway, where they have constituted the largest group of under-aged asylum seekers.

Norwegian troops killed: the security situation in Afghanistan has remained under threat. On Jun 28, 2010, four Norwegian soldiers in Afghanistan were killed in a roadside bomb attack on their vehicle. The soldiers were believed to have been killed while on mission in Faryab province, in the northern part of the country.

The Godal report, published in June 2016 evaluating the diplomatic, military and aid-related aspects of the Norway's mission, is an official government document. It is long over 200 pages. According to the report's analysis, the total number of Afghans killed during the intervention is predicted at "maybe over 90,000" – and with regard to Norway, with 10 troops killed and many seriously injured (as cited in Europa Varietas 2016). Over the financial period, the Norwegian expenditure is estimated at around 20 billion Norwegian crowns (approximately 2.4 billion USD).

Political controversy: in 2014, the presidential election was faced with high corruption and delayed transfer of power, which then caused decreased respect for democratic institutions and processes. US political forces intervened for around six months in order to reach the agreement among two main competitors – Abdullah Abdullah and current president Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani. Finally, as they agreed to establish the National Unity Government in September 2014, the presidential authorities were transferred from ex-president Hamid Karzai to Mr. Ashraf Ghani.

Thus, the new government was concentrated in central and provincial administrations, and the complexity of political conditions has had negative effects on government capabilities for gaining trust from the international community. These negative developments again had unfavorable influence on the national economic development.

Environmental complexity: the situation across the neighbor countries, i.e. Pakistan, Iran and Northern Afghanistan were increasingly difficult to be controlled. International terrorism, organized crime networks and cyber threats are creating new challenges against the implementation of Norwegian and international development projects. Also, most of foreigner donors are not expected to have much awareness about Afghan culture and local behavior norms, while the main reason was uncertainty of environment and a vast land size of the country.

Conclusion

During the entire evaluation period Norway has focused on the important links between political, security and development objectives in its foreign aid development policy towards Afghanistan. Notwithstanding all the above challenges involved in its development activities in aid programs and projects, Norway has continued to closely follow the major trends and standards as set out in international agreements.

In line with allied policy it adopted the aim of the Bonn Process in 2001 to support the development of the Afghan state and continues to support state building years later. It is also worthy to note that Norway was one of the first contributors to the ARTF and LOTFA, and, furthermore, its priorities were aligned with the emerging Afghan Development Policy and, when the Afghan National Development Strategy came into being in 2008, priorities had been already in alignment with the three pillars.

Norway's context analysis is helpful in terms of feeding the overall policy debate and taking major decisions on global objectives, addressing the links between political, development and security issues and in shaping a vision and outlining the principles for support.

This research largely focuses on the policy evaluation stage of policymaking. However important this stage may be, further studies should analyze Norway's foreign aid policy in Afghanistan through the prism of decision-making and implementation – two other stages in a policymaking cycle that are found quite popular among modern scholars (as outlined in Table 1). Yet other studies might critically compare Norway's contribution to Afghan stabilization and reconstruction efforts vis-à-vis other nation partners across the EU and beyond.

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